



SEÇÃO: ARTIGOS LIVRES

## God's Kingdom, but no Planet B? Religious and Secular Sources for Common Action in Climate Adaptation

*O Reino de Deus, mas não o Planeta B? Fontes Religiosas e Seculares para Ação Comum na Adaptação Climática*

*¿El Reino de Dios, pero no el Planeta B? Fuentes religiosas y seculares para la acción común en la adaptación climática*

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**Abstract:** Environmentally conscious citizen don't think homogeneous. Their different perceptions of the world cause a moral diversity in climate politics. The article shows that religious and non-religious approaches to climate adaptation refer back to a variety of transcendent notions of truth. Claims of validity result from concrete images of the world including community constructing ideas and action guiding notions such as the kingdom of God or the icon "blue Planet". We can therefore not expect worldwide homogeneous climate-politics. But notions of truth do not describe the world as it is, they rather show the images that people follow. This is why even opposing conceptions for climate mitigation such as the demand for and the claim against nuclear power can be open to compromise. Voting for the acceptance of plurality, the article suggests not to ignore the Christian wisdom of Chalcedon that offers a way, how to deal with opposing proclaims. The article originates from the Global Centre for Water Security and Climate Change.

**Keywords:** Environmental Ethics. Plurality. Transcendence. Climate Change. Eschatology.

**Resumo:** Cidadãos ambientalmente conscientes não pensam homogêneos. Suas diferentes percepções do mundo causam uma diversidade moral na política climática. O artigo mostra que as abordagens religiosas e não religiosas à adaptação climática remetem a uma variedade de noções transcendentais de verdade. Reivindicações de validade resultam de imagens concretas do mundo, incluindo ideias de construção comunitária e noções orientadoras de ação, como o reino de Deus ou o ícone "Planeta Azul". Portanto, não podemos esperar uma política climática homogênea em todo o mundo. Mas as noções de verdade não descrevem o mundo como ele é, mas mostram as imagens que as pessoas seguem. É por isso que mesmo concepções opostas de mitigação climática, como a demanda e a reclamação contra a energia nuclear, podem estar abertas a compromissos. Votando pela aceitação da pluralidade, o artigo sugere não ignorar a sabedoria cristã de Calcedônia que oferece um caminho, como lidar com os proclamas contrários. O artigo é originário do Centro Global para Segurança Hídrica e Mudança Climática.

**Palavras-chave:** Ética Ambiental. Pluralidade. Transcendência. Mudança Climática. Escatologia.

**Resumen:** El ciudadano con conciencia ambiental no piensa homogéneo. Sus diferentes percepciones del mundo provocan una diversidad moral en la política climática. El artículo muestra que los enfoques religiosos y no religiosos de la adaptación climática remiten a una variedad de nociones transcendentales de la verdad. Las afirmaciones de validez resultan de imágenes concretas del mundo que incluyen ideas que construyen la comunidad y nociones que guían la acción, como el reino de Dios o el ícono "Planeta azul". Por lo tanto, no podemos esperar una política climática homogénea en todo el mundo. Pero las nociones de verdad no describen el mundo tal como es, sino que muestran las imágenes que la gente sigue. Esta es la razón por la que incluso las concepciones opuestas para la mitigación del clima, como la demanda y el reclamo en contra de la energía



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nuclear, pueden estar abiertas al compromiso. Votando por la aceptación de la pluralidad, el artículo sugiere no ignorar la sabiduría cristiana de Calcedonia que ofrece un camino, cómo hacer frente a las proclamas contrarias. El artículo proviene del Centro Global para la Seguridad del Agua y el Cambio Climático.

**Palabras clave:** Ética Ambiental. Pluralidad. Trascendencia. Cambio climático. Escatología.

### 1. Co-creators walk themselves: Emancipation and Christian Climate Ethics

Climate Justice is nowadays a requirement which is articulated all over the world. All major religions have formulated positions with regard to his issue (ARBUCKLE, 2017; BLANC, 2017; DESSI, 2013; NCHE, 2020; VAIDYANATHAN et al., 2018.). Some of them are groundbreaking for a whole religious community (POPE FRANCIS, 2015.), others are somehow particular.<sup>2</sup> But most of these positions have two basic characteristics. First, they are well informed about the scientific debate or the state of the art in science (SCHAEFER, 2016.). And second, they anticipate a fundamental change in human action (ROLSTON, 2006). But this expectation does not mean that religious climate ethics is basically optimistic about the human ability to engage with the serious environmental situation. The expectation rather is that human action will change either because of environmental consciousness or because of the fundamental threat that will come due to climate change (TORABI/ NOORI, 2019).

The pluralism of late-modernity naturally includes secular traditions, in which environmental ethics and activism is building up a global ethos of environmental justice and climate awareness. However, secular approaches manifest themselves not only outside but within the religious contexts, for example Muslims respond to the quest for sustainability through green mosques (AZMI et al., 2019). But religions also teach the secular about care for nature (ROLSTON, 2006; HULME, 2017, 15). The very specific and new situation is that quite complex interactions between religious and non-religious traditions must be taken into account, mainly be-

cause the effects of rational arguments are still limited (EVANS, 2016). Thus, climate ethics is an intercultural topic with epistemological significance.

The Christian approach seems to amount to a different emphasis instead of completely different solutions for climate mitigation. Is Christian ethics just another type of the game or do we find more extensive differences? Ethical competence undoubtedly includes an awareness of the intercultural situation, and perhaps it is even urgent. We might be able to separate our world politically in a Muslim sphere, a sphere of Christian shaped secular countries, a Hindu sphere and so on. This has consequences for climate politics, but we cannot share the climate itself in the same way. In this perspective the quest for a special Christian climate ethics might be problematic. Is it the quest for a hegemonic perspective on a global issue? Is it a singular approach to complex problems? What is special about the Christian access to the global topic of climate change? This virulent question will lead us to the foundations of the understanding of ethics at all. At the same the relationship between inner-worldly and religious notions of transcendence becomes relevant. Thus, I will show why the difference between religious and non-religious approaches to climate is minimal in terms of the epistemological structure.

The relevant Christian notion is the creation order with its differentiation between God's and humans work. Friedrich Wilhelm Graf has mentioned that we can only speak convincingly of God's creation if this symbol remains viable even in the case of a nuclear catastrophe (GRAF, 1990, 222). There is no reason to assume that anything else applies in the case of a climate catastrophe. Thus, we shall not misuse God to fulfill our own tasks (1). On the other hand Christians are told that Protestant work ethics and its link to capitalism have just conjured up the crisis (WHITE, 1967). I emphasize religious resources that prevent from the anthropocentric constriction such as the belief in the coming of God's kingdom and human nature of Christ (2.1). Parallel to the religious perceptions we need to develop a theological understanding of secular notions of transcendence. I will focus on the fundamental apocalyptic state-

<sup>2</sup> KOEHRSEN states: "Research suggests that Islamic environmentalism is still a minority phenomenon among Muslims.": KOEHRSEN 2020, 13.

ment of the climate movement that there shall be "no Planet B" and on the transcendent icon "blue planet". These ideas come with secular notions of truth (2.2). I will finally explain how the religious and the secular perceptions can be made to serve the common goal despite their contradictions (3.1). This includes a decision for a perception-oriented ethics and a voting for compromising in climate adaptation instead of putting too much energy in the fight against the solutions of others (3.2). I will finally explain why the Christian approach is open to compromise while referring back to the ethical meaning of eschatology (3.3).

But now let us focus on the Christian understanding of climate ethics. The most important notion for churches is the creation order which comes in two different versions. The first version limits the depth of human intervention in creation. In this version we put warnings like not to play God or not to destroy God's creation. This was done mainly in the discussion about genetic engineering (DABROCK, 2009), but the dispute goes parallel to Geo-engineering. The point is that these warnings cannot catch at all with those who manipulate nature and environment. After all, the task of engineers is precisely to contribute to emancipation from nature. How shall an engineer distinguish between the manipulation of nature and the intervention in creation? Practically this is impossible because in a fallen and not yet redeemed world all our deeds are ambivalent. No scientist serves only the good and no technician only brings the evil forward.

One of the most dangerous methods to produce energy is one of the most climate friendly actions: nuclear power. Who will decide whether it serves the integrity of creation or not? The debates about the theology of nuclear power (KAUFMAN, 1985) as well as genetic engineering (SCHWARKE, 2000) show how technology influences faith and order. I suggest to regard this ethicization of the theological debate as a special Christian-theological access to environmental and especially to climate issues. Ethicization means to ask for inner motivations that determine our direction in life and to examine how these motivations are shaped through life style, economy, technology etc.

Simple explanatory avenues such as confessions or commandments do not always explain the whole story of climate or energy policy choices. Become people vegetarian because of the creation order or does the order offer an interpretation to do so? Do Christian engineers follow their faith or do they just interpret their professional doings on a religious basis? First and foremost a religious notion like creation is an aid to understand how one's own actions fit into the bigger picture. Action is embedded in God's work and thus believers can understand themselves as "co-creators of the universe" (MENAMPARAMPIL, 2016, 34-35).

This goes ahead with the second type to interpret the creation order which is related to the ancient understanding of the King's Liturgy. God enables humans to act creatively due to their own capacity (BROWN, 2019, 290-298). As we can understand the biblical order historically in its relation to the practice in the ancient monarchy, God gave his power to the king and from there the lower hierarchies were gradually empowered to act on their own. In democratic societies we can therefore understand the creation order as an emancipative word that enables humans to use God's gift of creativity self-responsible.

This has two consequences. First, people shall really enjoy and endure the consequences of their action and second, they cannot hold God accountable for what they do. Human action is embedded in God's work, but it remains human. There is no Theodicy in environmental issues so that "climate change could destroy human civilization, even though our world was produced by a creator with perfect power and goodness" (GRIFFIN, 2018, 233). The second specifically Christian approach to climate ethics is that we cannot use God to prohibit ourselves a priori from possible courses of action. Co-creators never work alone, but they walk themselves.

## 2. Ideological Resources for Climate Adaptation

"[...] the underlying ideas and values surrounding nuclear energy are deeply embedded in conventional belief, or 'doxa'-like, and as such are very

difficult to challenge or change." (LOUNASMERI, 2022, 12). This is true for the whole question of moral attitudes towards climate adaptation and so it is necessary to examine this belief and the 'doxa'-like. Even if we understand climate change as a call to environmental engineering (AUTHOR, 2021), we need to ask for common ideological resources. I will concentrate on transcendent notions from the Christian and the secular sphere. Doing so, I regard ideologies as an outcome of transcendent ideas. These ideas are unavailable for us in the sense that we receive them from an imaginary sphere stored in the collective memory. In this sense both, God's kingdom and the secular icon "blue planet" are transcendentally stored and we make use of them when they lead our actions.

## 2.1 Religious Resources

I have already mentioned the creation order as a resource for Christian environmentalism, other resources are the kingdom of God and the human nature of Christ. Biblical scholars have shown that the order to master the earth has never been a one-way-road and thus, theology is revisited permanently (CHRISTENSEN, 2022, 88-89). Anthropocentric narrowing of the creation belief is mainly grounded in the modern awareness of liberation and not in the religious order (IRRGANG, 1986). Nature is representing the creationist power of God in the same way as mankind so that humans cannot destroy creation, because the meaning of creation is grounded in the nature-culture-process, not in any particular entity. This is why Martin Luther in his interpretation of the first article in the "Small Catechism" of 1529 says:

"I believe that God created me with all creatures, and gave me body and soul, eyes and ears, and all parts of the body, reason, and all the senses, and has given me and will give me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and farm, wife and child, field, cattle and all goods with all necessities and food of this body and life abundantly and daily provided ...".<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Ich glaube, daß mich Gott geschaffen hat samt allen Kreaturen, mir Leib und Seele, Augen und Ohren und alle Glieder, Vernunft und alle Sinne gegeben hat und noch erhält, dazu Kleider und Schuhe, Essen und Trinken, Haus und Hof, Weib und Kind, Acker, Vieh und alle Güter, mit aller Notdurft und Nahrung dieses Leibes und Lebens reichlich und täglich versorget, ...": Luther 1529.

Instead of a cosmological perspective, Luther looks from the daily affairs to the outside. He starts with the self-perception of the human beings living here and now as God's creature. Then the perspective widens to the fellow human beings, gifts and life references. Today the orientation towards the world around would also include virtual realities as well as the technosphere. Creation is therefore directly related to life and survival of humans. In difference to a purely anthropocentric perspective Luther follows all this is done

"out of pure fatherly goodness and mercy without all my merit and worthiness, all of which I owe to Him to thank and praise and to be obedient for it; this is certainly true".<sup>4</sup>

Thankfulness lies in contradiction to any anthropocentric view and therefore, the creation belief first makes a statement about the given character of life. Second, it concentrates on the presence of God within the daily affairs. In relation to our topic this means that we do not speak about creation to explore *how* God will save humans habitate but *that* His mercy will lead humankind to path through the situation. Climate issues are the specific task of our generation, but at the same time its destiny. The religious notion is not a relief of action in relation to work for concrete solutions, but rather in relation to deal with success and failure. This is also true with respect to the expectation of God's kingdom.

While "creation" marks that our perspective on the not yet redeemed world is not bound to the limits of perception, the eschatological view reverses the direction of our request. In view of God's kingdom believers relate the political and technical options to the redemption of the world that has happened but is not yet fully visible. The symbol of God's kingdom shows that mankind has not to redeem the world while rescuing the planet. The difference between salvation and rescue is relevant for the differentiation between the urgent and the permanently important things. HOFHEINZ has shown how this differentiation works in peace ethics,

<sup>4</sup> "aus lauter väterlicher Güte und Barmherzigkeit ohne all mein Verdienst und Würdigkeit, des alles ich ihm zu danken und zu loben und dafür zu dienen und gehorsam zu sein schuldig bin; das ist gewißlich wahr": Luther 1529.

and in climate ethics it is similar (HOFHEINZ, 2017, 270f.). In difference to secular apocalyptic movements, the eschatological hope of faith remembers to consider the whole of human existence without breaking at the load of the whole. This helpful approach especially in disaster-prone areas leads to a re-lecture of the relationship between God's justice and human action in ways that are relevant for climate victims:

"[T]heology provides the Pacific churches reasons to supporting material adaptation spiritually, rather than see the material adaptation and God's protection as opposed. Luther also encourages seeing the interconnectedness of all creation, with important implications for human behavior toward other creatures, including viewing the land and sea as bothers and sisters worthy of love and protection." (Davis 2021, 112).

Thus, religion is a source for climate awareness and for climate action. This shows also the third symbol apart from creation and God's kingdom, the human nature of Christ. It is about the proxy action of God, and with this another relief becomes true. The creation order allows us to emancipate ourselves from the specifications of nature. The expectation of God's kingdom makes it possible to concentrate on the things that are urgent today instead of all eternally valid contexts. And finally, the human nature of Christ remembers us to do the necessary, while having other perspectives still in mind. Later I will show how to make use of this wisdom practically (3.2).

## 2.2 Secular Resources

The short overview shows that religious people ask how we can manage the complex reality of climate change without overexerting ourselves and how to deal with the fact that we do not really know how our doings will work. The difference between religious and non-religious notions of climate awareness is that the first interpret the non-constructed parts of human existence as something like an assembled destiny (Fügung), whereas for non-religious environmentalists destiny is just another word for complex processes. But the secular approach to climate change comes with transcendent perceptions, too. These perceptions are prior

to reason and regularities and I want to concentrate on two of them, the "no Planet B"-saying and the icon "blue planet".

The message that there would be no Planet B refers on the one hand to the sciences which say that the development of alternative habitats for mankind is not yet state of the art (HERRMANN, 1981, HERRMANN, 2021). On the other hand it refers to the emotional conditions of our media-controlled society by storytelling (BOJE, 2019). The everyday understanding is that planet earth is a singular place in the universe and that every speculation about any other potential place for life is exactly this, a speculation. But nevertheless the saying includes some unavailable moments apart from the scientific thought.

First, the existence of any planet B is not yet put up for debate. Evidences for non-existent entities are epistemologically very difficult and therefore, the non-existence of planet B is just a claim that strengthens the political demands of environmentalists. The power of impact is the only one justification for the story! It doesn't matter whether there is a Planet B or not or if there could be a real or virtual alternative to the earth. The assertion stands on the level of a transcendent idea that creates a sense of community. This community-creating sense is directed against the claim to leave the earth if mankind wants to survive (HAWKIN, 2018, 203).

Second, the story is meaningful only with respect to the participatory listeners themselves. Today we can observe a growing number of climate refugees all over the world. Many of them have already experienced that there is no home for them, although they might find new places to settle. If the coastal strip of ones childhood is washed away, the message is rather an experience than an assertion about the future. At the same time others are afraid that they could loose their habitats and this mixture of real experiences and genuine fears makes the sentence an existential statement. Thus, listeners become confessors. Again, it does not matter whether the idea is true physically, but it is true with regard to the personal life.

This is parallel to what Martin Luther said in his interpretation of the 1<sup>st</sup> article (see above). The No-

-Planet-B-saying and the creation belief claim that the earth is given to us and that this gift remains relevant for our existence. In this sense the singularity of planet earth is made into a transcendent idea, regardless the scientific truth. In conclusion both, the non-existence of planet B and the singularity of planet A, are action guiding standards and no testimonials about reality.

The same happens to the icon "blue planet". The special perspective here is caused by space travel. Whenever astronauts see the planet from outside, they emphasize the singularity of the blue planet. An icon is a symbol that includes the meaning itself. The iconic character of the "blue planet" is therefore that it represents what it designates. One cannot distinguish the designated reality and the represented entity. But a deconstruction of the icon is possible. Actually, the "blue planet" is mediated through mass media and hence became a representation of a representation. Is this the place where we

live? Yes it is, but only, if we decide to adore it and not only to look on the icon indifferently. Adoration comes regularly together with the perception and exactly this is why we need to make aware that the icon was made by (space) technology, screen-based perception and mass media. What we adore, is the total of this. The outcome are Eco-awareness, community building and a feeling of fragility, but all these aspects represent a constructed reality. Fragility is not a statement about the physical conditions of the earth, but about our relation to it.

To summarize, we can say that the religious notions of God's kingdom and the human nature of Christ together with the secular notion of "no Planet B" and the "blue planet" fulfill four main tasks of transcendent perceptions. They motivate practical action, help to imagine a universal context, support community building, and people can manage contingency. The sum of this surplus of meaning is shown in the table:

	<i>Religious resources</i>		<i>Secular resources</i>	
	<i>Creation/ God's kingdom</i>	<i>Human Nature of Jesus</i>	<i>No Planet B</i>	<i>Blue planet</i>
<i>Guide to action</i>	Work for the common good	Humanitarian assistance	Political action	Eco-management; "Handle with care"
<i>Imagining a universal context</i>	Man, world, and God	The individual and Christ	today's and future generations	Singularity at an exceptional place
<i>Community building</i>	Communion of Saints	Communion of Followers	Humankind on earth	Mankind as a community
<i>Contingency management</i>	Eschatological salvation instead of catastrophe	God's participation in sufferings	Naturalness of physical and biological destiny	Solidarity, Manageability

Transcendent notions about earth produce different convictions, but they help us to act jointly. As they are not at all testimonials about reality, we can make use of them when it comes to controversial disputes about climate adaptation. We do not need to decide between opposing perceptions, we just need to ask for common concerns that are related to these notions.

### 3. Making Use of different Beliefs for Climate Adaptation

#### 3.1 Contradicting Beliefs and the Reconstruction of Images

Beliefs anchored in an unavailable space do not arise arbitrarily. In fact, we can even produce the transcendent. Construction and unavailability are not a contradiction if we recognize that both are

only two perspectives on the same thing. From the perspective of a gardener a dry summer is his destiny and he must deal with. Also people of 21<sup>st</sup> century must accept that the alpine glaciers in Europe will melt and disappear and that the rain forest in Brazil is already decimated. But there is another perspective that says that all these present conditions were created by humankind. Thus, climate change is human made from the perspective of mankind over long periods, but it is destiny from the perspective of a single person or a single nation today.

The unavailability and the human origin of climate change come parallel to transcendent *and* constructed ideas. While storytelling is the art of construction ("no Planet B"), believers receive the notions in a way that the constructive elements remain uncovered. Believers regard the kingdom of God as His empire and therefore unavailable for man. But the trust in God's kingdom is an outcome of its inner-worldly proclamation in preaching, religious writings, education, and therefore produced. The same concerns secular confessions. Given the practical insight, that there is no other habitate available, the truth of this confession is unavoidable unchangeable. But if we regard the colonization of the universe as a technically feasible option, the saying becomes a construction cementing the status quo. We can even say that this confession was constructed to motivate environmental awareness.

Thus, the unavailability of fundamental beliefs and its mutability are not a contradiction. We just have to ask what are the occasions that lead us to modify the anchors of our convictions? I suggest two occasions which are relevant for climate adaptation, that is the unchanged progress of climate change and the interlocking crisis situations.

The fundamental scientific reasons for climate change were formulated by Svante ARRHENIUS in 1897. In difference to 21<sup>st</sup> century, he expected a longer process and he was interested in a better climate for the North. Therefore, climate change was a promise. The situation changed in the 1970s, but during the last 50 years we could not even slowdown the process. Today we face other crisis situations, but there is one common expectation, that is the climate change itself. Even though the BRIC-countries do not share the European sense of mission with regard to

climate change, they have already started to adopt to it. The competition for raw materials that were previously inaccessible in permafrost is just one example, another is the engagement in Africa for food security. Climate adaptation is still going on, because climate change has become a motivating source for the modification of our guiding images of the world.

In this situation, Christian ethics can be built upon the emancipative understanding of the creation order (1.) and the eschatological meaning of God's kingdom (2.1). Secular ethics is grounded in the no-Planet-B-saying and the transcendent icon "blue planet" (2.2). Actually, there are diverse contradictions between the different notions. Waiting for a "new earth", created by God, is somehow different to the expectation of "no Planet B". And the emancipative understanding of creation opposes against the description of limitations. The normal state of creation is abundance. But neither this religious testimony nor the secular statements of limits are testimonials about reality and therefore there is no need to regard contradicting beliefs as hindrances for common action. Instead, every single notion guides people to act, creates a sense of community and helps to deal with the contingency of life.

Now, what about climate adaptation practically? The point is, that the main topic of our debates is not the reality – neither a scientific nor a religious – but the images we follow. What do the images of mother earth that we produce in our heads look like? Do the glaciers in Swiss and the rain forests in Brazil belong to the collective memory of the global society? If so, then they will lead us to act. If not, our doings will be different. In this situation, we should not wait that opposing images of the world will adapt to each other. We rather need to find out, how climate adaptation can be practically implemented by using the different fundamental beliefs and perspectives. This is still done when development aid goes together with indigenous thought (FRÖMMING/ REICHEL, 2012). It should also be possible when it comes to controversial programmes.

### 3.2 Nuclear Power for Climate Mitigation: Open to Compromise?

The ability to compromise between different approaches to climate mitigation is especially necessary in negotiating processes. I explicitly do not

speak about the so called climate-deniers. Dealing with them is another issue. My point is that the community of environmentally conscious people is not a homogeneous block. Even environmentalists select information in a special way, mainly based on the question whether the information fits to the images of nature, mankind, and the world which they already have. This is why we need to start at school with "changing the thinking pattern and attitude of people" (VERMA, 2019, 3). The limited effects of ratio has political consequences. In Europe there are even Green-Party-leaders who fight for nuclear power plants (Finland) and others who condemn the same (Germany).

Supporters and opponents of nuclear power have a different understanding of how the world is:

"[P]olitical decision-making is not based on being able to count the causes and effects . . . but it is based on what they want and what they believe they can accomplish. In other words, it is based on images." (LOUNASMERI, 2021, No 5.1).

Politicians deal with different imaginations and they deal with these supposed realities (Wirklichkeiten). If the supporters mention that this kind of energy prevents the emission of millions of tons of CO<sub>2</sub> every year and therefor nuclear power shall be regarded as climate friendly energy, then the opponents ask, which climate shall be saved after a nuclear fall-out? The other way around the supports ask, which planet shall be saved from the nuclear dangers as long as coal and oil destroy exactly this planet? By the way, both sides might agree that the best solution would be sun, water and wind, but this is not the point.

The decisive factor is that the proponents are led by a world view that weights the danger of CO<sub>2</sub> higher than the danger of nuclear accidents and the opponents weigh it the other way around. To deal with his situation is not a matter of rational risk management, but a matter of constructing world-views on the basis of notions of truth. Once we reflect that world-views emerge not primarily from studies, but from adventures, conversion experiences and emotional events, then it becomes clear that one cannot re-construct his world-view such as an old car in a repair shop.

We are in need of a culture of diversity that makes use of the different notions of truth when we regard them not as statements about how the world is but as descriptions of a specific perception. Late-antique knew how to deal even with opposing perceptions. The formula of Chalcedon describes that two natures may exist unblended and unseparated parallel to each other. The Concile did not end the debate, but it has clarified the terms. Can't we make use of this wisdom? Concerning nuclear power, we face exactly a situation of confessional divisions. Actually, we cannot decide between the different perceptions, but we could make it possible that both sides recognize their specific positions as permissible and relevant. In this sense christology in 5<sup>th</sup> century was as significant as today's quest for climate adaptation.

### 3.3 The Secular Character of Climate Adaptation

Environmentalists behave with a sense of mission. This is necessary to bring the topic forward, but it is hindering to motivate people to join. Especially when it comes to absolute claims about a possible end of the world it will be helpful to remember that in climate issues the unavailability of fundamental beliefs regularly comes together with mutability. We regard the climate as our destiny that we cannot impress. But parallel to the apocalyptic message we try to overcome its absoluteness through the change of our behavior, similar to praying believers that influence the absolute will of God. We claim that we cannot change the conditions of the climate, but at the same time we mention that we have already changed it through industrialization. As long as we fight against climate change, natural conditions are made into something untouchable. But from a historical perspective they are not as we have changed the climate and we are changing it still.

Actually, we decide which aspects we subordinate to unavailability and which we want to modify. When it comes to the limitations of global warming through CO<sub>2</sub>-reduction, we vote for modification; when it comes to Geo-engineering (with the same goal), we vote for unavailability (BLACKSTOCK, 2018). The point is that our votes are not arbitrary.



Instead, the construction of unavailability follows rational rules. The untouchability of the climate (geo-engineering) and its mutability (CO<sub>2</sub>-reduction) fall together in one point, this is our perception of the world. But this perception is more and more determined by technological abilities. In conclusion, the fight against climate change and the untouchability of the climate itself is limited by the means of environmental technology. It is just because of our ability to engineer the climate in principle, that we put lots of resources in the construction of untouchability.

Today we make the climate into a holy sphere to hedge against uncertainties. Instead, making the future predictable to the extent that is needed in a technical civilization would mean to free the climate from an assumed holiness. This would be something like a secularization in the tradition of enlightenment. We need to consider the "storytelling and embeddedness of decisionmaking" in a wider, moral and practical context (BROWN, 2017, 16).

The eschatological perspective opens up a path to regard the climate as a secular issue apart from the question of truth. In view of the already saved world that will come, God's kingdom remains unavailable. But Christians look from the perspective of a not yet redeemed world in which the climate as a worldly entity is put under the creativity of the co-creators of the universe. The differentiation between the holy (that comes) and the profane (that is) makes the climate a secular issue. Therefore, the quest for climate adaptation is an ethical issue and hence open to compromise. Once we reflect the plurality of perceptions the necessity of this differentiation may become clear.

When a Christian group from Papua New Guinea came to Northern Germany observing the efforts to safeguard land from the North Sea, one asked, why do the Germans put so much money to safe such a little piece of land? People should rather come to PNG, where there would be a plenty of space. They could settle and use the money to develop a new country.<sup>5</sup> Hence, why do Europeans do not go to PNG to settle? Besides many practical questions it might be the idea that there is no Planet B and

that we need to secure the land that we have. And why the guest from PNG invited them to come? Perhaps because for him development was more important than land issues.

The leading ideas about our future differ, but our thoughts about climate change are not at all testimonials about the reality, but merely statements about our perceptions. Thus, climate adaptation does not simply mean to "follow the sciences". It is about following world-images. Once the sciences form these images with, the global community will follow them, too. But every image competes with many others. This is why climate adaptation needs to remain open to compromise and especially in democratic societies it will be still impossible to unite behind just one single image.

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<sup>5</sup> Rendered from P. Majyupa Par/ PNG, June 2014.

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