JUSTICE, PEACE AND CARE FOR EVERYTHING THAT COMES FROM GOD

Three widespread social debates will, I expect, go into history as positive aspects of the period from 1970 to 1990:
- the discussions on the issue of world poverty and a new international economic order which was punctuated by the five great UNCTAD-Conferences of the United Nations;
- the worldwide protests coordinated by the international peace movements against the nuclear arms race and the balance of deterrence between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact which resulted in the first encouraging INF-Accord between the USA and the USSR;
- the discussions about the worldwide energy issue and about the consequences of increasing industrial production for the climate of life in the world's ecology — especially the discussions following the report of the Club of Rome (Meadows a.o., 1974).

Surprisingly enough scientific reflection, and especially philosophical and theological reflection, on these matters lags somewhat behind the times. Justice, peace and care for the environment have indeed become themes of public discourse and preaching from the pulpit, but — at least in the West — these themes, as yet, scarcely determine the philosopher's and theologian's agendas. During the last twenty years these disciplines have been dominated by the issues of the exegesis and hermeneutics of authoritative texts (probably because their authority is so generally contested) and by the conceptual analysis of human communication (language, symbols, information theory, logic). Philosophy and theology have thus largely become stranded in "grammar", in the art of discourse: how can we achieve acceptable statements, undeniable truth, meaningful and understandable discourse with each other? In the field of ethics (what should we do?) and metaphysics (what may we hope?) the issues have been similarly approached, stressing formal aspects rather than the substance. This way one does not get around to the task of finding answers to the 'real problems', the problems of life and death, peace and violence, destruction and survival.

This explains the appeal for relevant theology and philosophy which furnish not logic but rules of conduct. The dictum of Marx is again relevant for our time: namely, that philosophers (and theologians) try to explain the world, whereas the point is to give the world a new shape (XI\textsuperscript{th} thesis against Feuerbach). But
innovative interpretations of the world and a new vision of humankind's role in it, are preconditions for the necessary changes, as Marx also realized. I consider the call of the World Council of Churches to conduct a worldwide process of meditation and action regarding Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) as a gift of grace, at the very least for theology, for a return to the 'real problems'. Nothing less than the heart of faith in God is at stake with justice, peace and care for the environment: it involves everything that is 'from God' and at the same time it involves the preconditions for everything human.

That this is indeed at issue regarding the "Integrity of Creation" is what I wish to demonstrate in this paper, even though it cannot of course be separated from "Justice" and "Peace". The points that will be treated are: 1. the prehistory of the JPIC-program and especially the attention that was given to the theme of the "Integrity of Creation" in the agenda of the World Council of Churches and 2. some perspectives for an ecumenical theology of creation.

1. The pre-history of the conciliar process with respect to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

The World Council of Churches has met every seven years since 1948 and the list of themes which were the subject of discussion can be seen as a confession of faith giving a very good illustration of what the varied activities of the World Council are all about: "Man's Disorder and God's Design" (Amsterdam, 1948), "Jesus Christ, the Hope of the World" (Evanston, 1954), "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World" (New Delhi, 1961), "Behold, I Make All Things New" (Uppsala, 1968), "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites" (Nairobi, 1975), "Jesus Christ - the Life of the World" (Vancouver, 1983). All these themes give witness to the universal responsibility and global outreach of Christianity which are inherent in the concept of oikoumene. Care for everything human is seen as care for everything that is 'from God'. But that has not stood in the way of political and social action — on the contrary. From 1948 until 1968 these action targets were summarized by the slogan "Responsible Society" which in Amsterdam was given the following description:

> Man is created and called to be a free being, responsible to God and his neighbour. Any tendencies in State and Society depriving man of the possibility of acting responsibly are a denial of God's intention for man and his work of salvation. A responsible society is one where freedom is the freedom of men who acknowledge responsibility to justice and public order, and where those who hold political authority or economic power are responsible for its exercise to God and the people whose welfare is affected by it ... For a society to be respon-