

Preface

In the last decade radical uncertainty has made itself felt in new and powerful ways. The financial crisis of 2007-09 blew away the illusion of certainty among decision-makers. The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have made us all aware that our world is deeply interconnected and vulnerable, and that the future is radically uncertain. The focus of this study is on radical uncertainty in the context of climate change.

In this publication I combine theology and economics, disciplines often considered as incompatible as cat and dog. This incompatibility has intuitively always dissatisfied me, because what both disciplines have at least in common is the same reality or the same 'oikos', to use the Greek word for household, that can also be found in the word 'eco-nomics'. Climate change should challenge us to come out of our comfort zone, because addressing such a multifaceted and global issue can never be the task of one discipline alone. In this study I go on a journey to discipline my intuition, investigating whether and how the two disciplines can strengthen each other in developing a social response to radical uncertainty in the context of climate change. My point of departure is theology.

Anthropogenic climate change, distinguished from climate change caused by natural factors, can be easily described as an economic problem, because it is the result of many economic exchanges between consumers and producers. However, Amartya Sen (Nobel Prize Winner in Economic Sciences 1998) has argued that non-economic factors like political, sociological and philosophical ones are often at the heart of economic problems:

Taking an interest in them [non-economic factors] is part of our own heritage. After all, the subject of modern economics was in a sense founded by Adam Smith, who had an enormously broad view of economics... An economic analyst ultimately has to juggle many balls, even if a little clumsily, rather than giving a superb display of virtuosity with one little ball. (Klamer, 1989, p. 141)

This study considers climate change not just as an economic problem, but as a shared problem in both theology and economics. I have therefore taken up the challenge to juggle the balls of theology and economics in order to contribute to a fuller and wiser understanding of our response to radical uncertainty in the context of climate change.

The title of this study is '*Climate Change, Radical Uncertainty and Hope: Theology and Economics in Conversation*'. Radical uncertainty in the context of climate change is often surrounded by a widespread atmosphere of fear and apocalypse, but I argue here that radical uncertainty does not carry with it its own interpretation. There is more than one way of interpreting radical uncertainty in climate change. In this research I investigate an interpretation of hope. In everyday language hope is often used glibly, for example in the remark: I hope that tomorrow the sun will shine. The focus here is on a neglected understanding of hope based on the work of Jonathan Sacks, leading British intellectual and former Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. Sacks' understanding of hope, derived from the ancient narrative of the Exodus, orients us to the possibility of gradually starting together something new and liberating in the midst of radical uncertainty. This research is in the field of theology. However, I will argue that the theological approach employed is not contrary to economics insights, but emerges out of economic debate, and is remarkably compatible with certain lines of economic thought. What is more, I show that theology and economics can learn from each other in the conversation developed in this research. Jonathan Sacks passed away during this study. May his memory be a blessing to us all.

In this research I do not use the Christian designation Old Testament, because this can be seen as implying that the Old is completed in the New. This would be a wrong and outdated implication. The real challenge is to consider both Testaments as old-new sources of inspiration in every time and context. Instead of using the term Old Testament I will refer to the Hebrew Bible. In quoting the biblical text I use the version commonly quoted in scholarship, namely the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), except in the chapters dealing with the work of Jonathan Sacks. If required by the context, I use his translation

The chapters 1 and 3 through 8 of this study draw upon previous work of mine published in *The International Journal of Public Theology* (2020a), *Fullness of Life and Justice for All* (2020b), *Water in Times of Climate Change* (2021), *De moderne theologen* (2022a) and *The Calling of the Church in Times of Polarization* (2022b).

This interdisciplinary research has been a thoroughly enriching journey. It has been a project I could not have done on my own. I am very grateful for the people who have supported me directly and indirectly. Many people I would like to thank, but I cannot list them all here. There are some, however,

I don't want to pass over, since without their commitment, support and friendship I do not think this work could have been done. A special thanks to Professor Azza Karam, Professor Erik Borgman, Professor Arjo Klamer, Dr. Roel Jongeneel and Professor Toine van den Hoogen. It has been a joy and a privilege to work with you on this publication. With gratitude I thank the sisters of the Priorij Emmaus monastery in Maarssen for their hospitality, daily structure and prayers I experienced several times during this project. Unfortunately, your doors are closed now. I pray that the spirit in your monastery of seeking a balance between *vita activa* (active life) and *vita contemplativa* (contemplative life) may find other ways to serve our reality. I am grateful to Myra Scholz for editing this book. Any errors remain my own doing, of course. Lot, thank you for designing together the front page of this publication.

Finally, I'd like to thank my parents Jan Hasselaar and Hannie Hasselaar-Kelderman. Ma, you have shown how we can embrace radical uncertainty in times of corona. In the first lockdown (2020), when nursing homes were closed for visitors, you put your trust in love by bringing Pa home when his condition worsened and he entered his last phase on earth. At home, meaning and perspective were created in a situation that could have been very different in the nursing home. From one moment to the next, Pa and all of us were surrounded by love and attention. Heaven became a place on earth. Last, but surely not least, 'thanx' to my beautiful and beloved nieces and nephews for who you are, and the joy, play and pizzas that you bring.

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