

Pope Benedict, *Light of the World*, 2010, Interview with Peter Seewald, pp. 42-49

... How difficult it was for us to change these criteria of progress was made clear by the World Climate Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009....The compromise draft document ... does not even include concrete goals...Doesn't this outcome necessarily confirm that mankind is altogether incapable of ever resolving a threat such as climate change in a collective effort?

This is in fact a big problem. What can we do? Meanwhile, in view of the threatening catastrophe, there is the recognition everywhere that we must make moral decisions. ...

To this extent a certain potential for moral insight is present. But the conversion of this into political will and political actions is then rendered largely impossible by the lack of willingness to do without. After all, this would have to be implemented in national budgets and finally carried out by individuals...

So it becomes clear that the political will ultimately cannot become effective unless there is in all mankind..a new, deeper moral awareness, a willingness to do without, which is concrete and which for the individual also becomes an acknowledged value for his life.

The question is therefore: How can the great moral will, which everyone affirms and everyone invokes, become a personal decision? ...Who, therefore, can ensure that this general awareness also penetrates the personal sphere? This can be done only by an authority that touches the conscience, that is close to the individual and does not merely call for eye-catching events.

..the Church... is, I would say, often the only hope. For she is so close to people's consciences that she can move them to particular acts of self-denial and can inculcate basic attitudes in souls.

...One sees too few models of what self-denial could look like concretely. In this respect the religious communities are important as examples. They can in their own way demonstrate that a life-style of reasonable, moral self-denial is quite practicable

We have acknowledged the problem of environmental destruction. However, the fact that saving our spiritual ozone layer and especially saving our spiritual rainforests is the prerequisite for saving the ecology seems to penetrate our consciousness only very slowly. Shouldn't we have asked long ago: What about the contamination of our thinking, the pollution of our souls? Many things that we permit in this media- and commerce-driven society are basically the equivalent of a toxic load that almost inevitably must lead to a spiritual poisoning.

There is no overlooking the fact that there is a poisoning of thought, which in advance leads us into false perspectives. To free ourselves again from it by means of real conversion...is one of the challenges that by now are becoming obvious to everyone ...I believe, though, that gradually it is becoming evident that there is something to it when we say that we must reconsider all this.

Hildegard von Bingen ...: "When man sins, the cosmos suffers." The problems of the current hour in history, you write..., are consequences of the fact that people no longer listen to God.

For many people today, practical atheism is the normal rule of life.... If this attitude becomes a general existential position, then everything is ...permissible. that is why it is so urgent also to bring the question about God back into the centre...a God who knows us, speaks to us, and approaches us – and who is then our judge also.