

CREATION

Living Together in our Common House

**One World Theology
(Volume 11)**

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Edited by
Klaus Krämer and Klaus Vellguth



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(One World Theology, Volume 11)

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Preface

The contributors to this volume, the eleventh in the *One World Theology* series, map out perspectives for a theology of creation and, in doing so, focus on a topic which is probably of more global relevance than any other. For the inhabitants of Planet Earth undeniably share a common destiny, which means that the human family depends on cooperation for its survival. Pope Francis drew attention to this in the first of his encyclicals *Laudato Si'*, in which he called for a new dialogue on how mankind can shape the future of the planet: 'We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.' (*Laudato Si'*, no. 14)

That this volume of *One World Theology* should examine a sustainable theology of creation is a reflection of the nature and objective of the series and its focus on missiology and the universal Church. One of the features of the *One World Theology* series is that it addresses issues from diverse vantage points. Each volume provides authors from different geographical and cultural backgrounds with an opportunity to present their views and thus to contribute to the polyphonic universal Church discourse. In their articles the authors examine the crisis of creation, biblical guidance for an up-to-date view of creation, theological concepts of creation, and the active commitment to creation of the Church in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. They also highlight the sense of responsibility which must be developed for a careful and sensitive approach to creation, in particular from a Christian perspective.

The chapter on 'Creation in Crisis' begins with a contribution from Simone Rappel in which the theologian highlights 'an understanding of nature as creation, with all its religious overtones, that offers a valuable stimulus in our post-modern context with its plurality of potential meanings and interpretations – a stimulus which can inspire

a crisis-transforming environmental ethos and support a reconstruction of our society.' She points to the fundamental equivalence of all creatures and to the solidarity of all created beings and goes on to demonstrate the extent to which, in the 17th century, the break with the biblical concept of man and the biblical worldview dispensed with man's concept of 'sym-path \bar{y} ' with and 'participation' in creation and replaced it with a drive to dominate creation. She contrasts this attitude with the principle of retinity, in which man is seen as part of the network of creation.

In his article entitled from 'Life's Splendour to Planetary Crisis' Juan Antonio Mejía Guerra says that the ecological crisis is a global crisis and that climate change has brought mankind to the brink of the sixth mass extinction on the planet. Moreover, climate change hits the poor nations hardest, as they have no means of protecting themselves against environmental crises. Guerra regards the salvation of creation as the biggest challenge facing Christians and calls for greater Christian involvement in social and ecological initiatives.

'God the Creator' is the title the Indian theologian, Savio Vaz, has given to his article in which he investigates the relationship between science and belief in God before going on to examine the relationship between science and the Christian teaching on creation. He draws on theological statements according to which the environmental crisis must be seen as the consequence of man's repudiation of the (Christian) belief in creation. The author shows that the Bible does not advocate absolutist anthropocentrism. On the contrary, the unique nature of humankind lies in its respect for its fellow creatures.

David Kaulem looks at creation spirituality and creativity during a crisis from an African standpoint. He emphasises the spirituality of Catholic social teaching which 'offers a framework that could lead Africa out of crisis'. In addition he demonstrates that this spirituality coincides with facets of African traditions, customs and cultures and enhances their status. In view of the social and environmental challenges, he sees in Catholic social teaching the potential to broaden the African concept of society, although he is at pains to point out that the African notion of social life can simultaneously draw inspiration from African experience.

In the second chapter entitled 'Biblical Reflections' Thomas Söding begins by stating that creation theology in the New Testament

can be characterised by three fields of tension which reconcile creation and redemption, immanence and transcendence, and lament and praise. Referring to the Letter to the Colossians, he shows that the world is regarded as God's creation which is held together in him and is moving towards its fulfilment. The author notes that God is the Creator, he is not part of the world (Gen 1:1). Looking at Jesus, the New Testament shows that God is 'not just outside the world, but that he has entered it'. Creation exists in the tension between present and promise. Prayers for Christ's presence are thus the 'heartbeat of biblical creation spirituality'.

Leonardo Boff looks at ecology and spirituality in the light of the cosmological paradigm. He notes first of all that the call for spirituality becomes more urgent in situations of extreme danger and points out that the question of God in the process of cosmogenesis is crucial for 'genuine ecological spirituality'. In view of the Trinitarian understanding of God in Christianity he says that the Spirit pervades everything in the process of evaluation and that, on the basis of such a pneumatological understanding, cosmic-ontological mysticism comprises the awareness that all human beings are immersed in the field of absolute energy, which can be described as the Spiritus Creator. Looking at ecological spirituality, Boff draws attention to neurological and neuropsychological research and calls for the integration of spiritual intelligence into cognitive or emotional intelligence, since this 'opens us to loving communion with all things in an atmosphere of respect and reverence for other beings.'

In his article headed 'The whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains', Jean Prosper Agbagnon looks first of all at the Old Testament background to Paul's faith in creation. He goes on to describe how Paul came to grasp the 'labour pains of creation' as the hope of a transformation to life. He ends by presenting some thoughts on why, from a biblical point of view, the preservation of creation is an urgent and universal concern.

Writing from an Asian perspective, Andrew Gimenez Recepción uses a 'pilgrimage' to Mount Banahaw to illustrate the Filipinos' very close relationship with nature as they journey to the 'mystical mountain of the Philippines'. He says that a key element of indigenous spirituality is an awareness of the fact that nature is a life-source which must be protected from destruction. The power of nature has

to be respected in order to preserve harmony. *Recepción* sees an indigenous spirituality of creation as a way of life which encompasses both the private and public spheres and makes it clear to people that mankind is only a small part of the whole of creation and must therefore avoid any action that assumes the role of creator.

The chapter on 'Concepts of Creation' begins with a contribution from Ursula Nothelle-Wildfeuer in which the theologian examines the essence of the concept of creation underpinning the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. She first places the papal text in the tradition of the Church's social teaching and deals with the theological and socio-ethical dimension of this understanding of creation. She then explores man's position within creation before concluding with a consideration of the implications for socio-ethical practice that result from this understanding of creation. Nothelle-Wildfeuer says that the three dimensions of the ecological, the economic and the social are inextricably intertwined and must consistently be seen in the context of their mutual dependence.

In his article entitled 'On Creation. Reflections on a Holistic Eco-Theology' Rui Manuel Grácio das Neves starts by pointing out that the origin of all things is explored in both religions and world literature. Having examined the approach taken by creationism and emanantism, he refers to the advance in theology brought about by Sallie McFague in talking about the world as the body of God, although God's presence manifests itself in everything without it being limited to that. He goes on to outline a holistic eco-theology and lists ten holistic prerequisites for eco-spirituality.

'The Concept of Creation in the African World View' is the title of the article written by Anne Beatrice Fayé in which she looks at how the concept of creation in Africa can help to restore the relationship between man and his natural environment as well as his economic, social and spiritual environment. She underlines the importance of respect for nature and calls for a much greater awareness of the links between ourselves and our ecosystem as a location and source of fertility; a society in which there is peace not only between human beings, but among all forms of life; a struggle against all forms of hegemony, domination, power and disparagement; and respect for nature. She regards the African understanding of creation as a major contribution, since it can help to evaluate the impact of human action

on the ecosystems and correct man's asymmetrical relationship with nature by transforming it into a symbiotic relationship.

Mary John Mananzan, a nun from the Philippines, uses her country as an example of how ecological healing can work. She deals first with the ecological crisis in the Philippines, the characteristic features of which are climate change, land degradation, water quality degradation, deforestation, species extinction, wastes and global toxification, and human and cultural degradation. Given that the government pursues an economic policy which allows extractive multinational corporations to cause massive damage to the environment, Mananzan places her faith in creating an awareness initiated by the Church and non-governmental organisations. She cites the example of a signature campaign launched in July 2015 by Cardinal Luis Tagle which called for a drastic reduction in the emissions of carbon dioxide. She also refers to the work of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters, whose General Chapter of 2012 made environmental protection the focus of its apostolate for the next six years.

The fourth chapter surveys the responses of the Church to the ecological challenges of our time in the various local church contexts.

In their article on 'Sustainability in Solidarity and Justice, the Responses of the Churches in Germany', Mattias Kiefer and Markus Vogt review the responses of the churches in Germany to the many different ecological challenges that have emerged over the past thirty years. They note, first of all, that these challenges have elicited theological-doctrinal, ethical-political and concrete-practical responses. Special relevance attaches to the 1997 Joint Statement by the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany and the German Bishops' Conference entitled 'For a Future Founded on Solidarity and Peace' as well as to the documents published by the German Bishops' Conference called 'Action for the Future of Creation' and 'Climate Change – A Focal Point of Global, Intergenerational and Ecological Justice'. In their contribution the authors point out that – in addition to documents published by the Magisterium, official statements and position papers – practical initiatives in Church institutions, dioceses and local churches are of major significance. The environmental commissioners of the dioceses are mainly active in awareness campaigns and educational work, creating theological and ethical foundations,

providing liturgical and pastoral resources and improving ecological standards in Church establishments.

Adopting an African perspective, Moses Asaah Awinongya outlines the responses of the Church in Africa in respect of an adequate creation spirituality. He begins by saying that creation spirituality has both a vertical and a horizontal dimension and that, apart from the relationship with the creator, it is always closely bound up with the concept of solidarity. He demonstrates that creation spirituality 'leads us to view God as the source and principle of life and to praise him accordingly'. However, alongside this vertical dimension there is a horizontal dimension which needs to be developed: 'Since the Church is prophetic in character, it must not remain blind to its own problems. The development of contextual creation spirituality in Africa will give the continent fresh momentum.'

Fernán Gustavo Carreras explores the *sumak kawsay* philosophy, a vision which arose among the indigenous peoples of Latin America. He integrates this philosophy into the concept of Pachasofia, a term coined by Josef Estermann, the characteristic principles of which are relatedness, correspondence, complementarity and reciprocity. He sees the indigenous Pachasofia as an invitation to re-establish the harmony and balance of life: 'The universe is our common house, and within it the whole of life, not only that of humans, deserves respect and consideration.'

Taking into account the multi-religious societies of Asia, Thomas Menampampil begins his contribution headed 'Responding to the Exaggerations of Secularization and Fundamentalism' by dealing with positive and negative forms of secularization. He then sets out the responses of spiritual leaders and shows how the exaggerations of fundamentalism, which he sees as a consequence of secularization, can be addressed. He calls for the representatives of other religions to be treated with respect and appeals to the good sense of the adherents of other faiths. In this respect, personal witness is of crucial importance: 'The creative message with which we wish to shake the world should sound genuinely 'human,' have clear social relevance, and be supported with personal witness. That is how mysticism comes to the frontier of action.'

In the fifth and final chapter of this volume the authors look at the consequences that can be drawn from a responsibility for creation.

In his contribution entitled 'And Apple Trees still have to be planted' Klaus Vellguth states that the encyclical *Laudato Si'* rests on the axiom of sustainable development. He sees the paramount challenge at the onset of the third millennium as being to shape an ecological, economic and social future and he makes it clear that both climate scientists and Pope Francis attach central significance to the issue of decarbonisation. The author argues that it is becoming progressively more difficult to develop national and international rules in an age that has been described as 'post-factual', because – given the complexity of social challenges in a multi-optional age – a growing and ever more vocal minority responds to the complexity of this reality by adopting an escapist approach and by basing its understanding of reality not on empirically verifiable facts, but rather on emotions, media presentations and fictitious projections.

The Chilean theologian, Diego Iruarrázaval, urges humanisation in creation. He looks at the fidelity of God's people, describes spiritual responsibility rooted in community and reviews two poles on the path to faith which he distinguishes in Latin America. The first pole is incorporation of the other into the self (i.e. an assimilation-substitution), while the second pole involves the acknowledgement of differences and growing in a co-relational manner. He urges a co-relational approach to humanisation, because this is how we enjoy the breath of the Spirit in creation.

The Tanzanian theologian, Aidan G. Msafiri, begins his article by outlining African creation spirituality. Having described the impact of human activity on creation, he pinpoints anthropological factors that have led to the destruction of the environment. He ends by setting out ethical principles and values for a credible and sustainable ecospirituality in Africa. He stresses that 'there is an urgent need to reaffirm ethical values, norms and life views for universal responsibility.' For the relevant awareness to develop 'we need to rediscover Christian eco-spirituality values, particularly gratitude, humility, faith, hope, agape, sufficiency and justice.'

The Indian Jesuit Robert Athickal examines the relationship between creation and responsibility from an Asian standpoint and, based on the traditional understanding of creation and responsibility, attempts to elaborate a new approach to responsibility for creation in view of the still incomplete creation and cosmogenesis. He says

it is advisable to draw inspiration from mystics or from mystically influenced academics, since the experience of the presence of God in creation can lead people away from the path of ecological destruction.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the mission staff members Michael Meyer, Dr. Marco Moerschbacher and Dr. Stefan Voges, without whose advice this volume would not have been possible. Our thanks also go to Larissa Heusch and Martina Dittmer-Flachskampf for the careful preparation of the manuscripts and to Judith Lurweg and Christine Baur for their attentive proofreading. We hope very much that this eleventh volume in the *One World Theology* series will generate interest in the theological discourse within the universal Church.

Klaus Krämer
Klaus Vellguth

Creation in Crisis

Reverence for Life as God's Good Creation

Simone Rappel

“Climate change”, “scarcity of resources” and the “energy revolution” – these are phrases which we associate with our environmental footprint and which concern anthropogenic changes to the environment with all their global consequences. They make us aware that it is man's responsibility to seize the opportunity inherent in the crisis and to be swift in initiating a transformation towards sustainability. We can already see some first indications that a change of direction is taking place and that we are moving away from an obsession with feasibility, driven by greed, self-indulgence and the ruthless exploitation of nature. Instead, we appear to be moving towards a lifestyle marked by care for the environment. For example, we can see numerous awareness-raising initiatives as well as attempts to restructure our economic system so that it is no longer purely profit-oriented. We can also see trends to buy regional products, the emergence of an organic boom, a focus on fair trade and the decision to determine what and how much can be responsibly consumed.

Interestingly enough, while analysts tend to concentrate on the apparent concurrence of exploitation and sustainability, the word “creation” is used very little, if at all. Yet it is precisely an understanding of nature as creation, with all its religious overtones, that offers a valuable stimulus in our post-modern context with its plurality of potential meanings and interpretations – a stimulus which can inspire a crisis-transforming environmental ethos and support a reconstruction of our society.

Biblical Stimuli: Existence as an Expression of God's Love

There are many passages in Scripture in which God is described as the one who “created the heavens and the earth”¹, praising His glory

¹ Gen 1:1; 2:4b; 14:19; Ps 115:15; Ps 124:8.

which calls everything into being and which sustains everything. God ensures that His creation does not perish and, in His mercy, always proves Himself to be the “lover of life”². In contrast to other worldviews, God is crucially seen as the one and only Creator. Everything that exists comes from Him and has essentially been “brought forth” and “caused” by Him. The world is a created entity, and there can be no gods within it. It has been “demystified”, “desacralised” and rendered “non-divine”. God has created it by the power of His word, out of nothing. God expresses Himself through His creation.³

God’s love for everything He made⁴ is expressed particularly forcefully in Romans 8:19f. where Paul says that the whole of creation is longing to be liberated. Being created by God, the destinies of both man and nature are joined together inseparably under God’s promise of salvation. The lives they live are connected because they have been called into being by God Himself. Everything has its existence because it comes from God, and it will continue to have an existence because it has a future under God’s Kingdom promise. On this basis we can speak of a “fundamental equivalence of all creatures”⁵ and the “solidarity of all created beings”⁶. Proclaiming God as the Creator and everything that exists as His creation means that man is “entirely on the side of createdness. Everything else is co-created, and man himself is a co-creature to everything. Faith in creation broadens our common humanity [...] into a state of co-createdness.”⁷ Man is God’s creature by virtue of his very existence, but not in the same way as the rest of creation, because man is aware of his createdness and also the createdness of all other creatures. What makes him unique is that he was created in God’s image or likeness.

This predication and, consequently, the mandate to “subdue the earth”⁸ are distinctive qualities of man, setting us fundamentally

² Wisdom 11:26.

³ Cf. Ps 33:8; Ps 19:2–5; Isa 55:11.

⁴ Cf. Wisdom 11:24.

⁵ Altner, Günter, *Naturvergessenheit: Grundlagen einer umfassenden Bioethik*, Darmstadt 1991, 88.

⁶ Kessler, Hans, *Das Stöhnen der Natur: Plädoyer für eine Schöpfungsspiritualität und Schöpfungsethik*, Düsseldorf 1990, 54.

⁷ Ebeling, Gerhard, *Dogmatik des christlichen Glaubens I*, Tübingen ³1987, 308.

⁸ Cf. Gen 1:28.

apart from all other creatures within our shared community of created beings. Moreover, it gives us a duty to follow God, the divine example, in all our creative activities in this world, as God alone can be the benchmark for what we do: “God, however, is the Creator who causes and sustains life. It follows that man’s rule of the earth is mandated by God and must be life-sustaining. It is this theological implication which puts a limit to man’s dominance over creation. For wherever our rule inhibits existence and life, it falls short of our mandate to rule the earth.”⁹

God’s creative activity puts a mirror before man’s eyes, calling upon us to check our dealings with nature against this benchmark while at the same time narrowing the gap to this utopian ideal. As humans, we therefore need to be the “image/likeness of God” towards our fellow-creatures. This means being God-like and therefore life-giving and life-promoting. “Subduing” and “ruling” the earth means nothing more and nothing less than applying integrity and mercy (see Wisdom 9:2) in turning our planet into a place of life, salvation and blessing. Man, however, perverts this responsibility as soon as he “detaches himself from God and loses sight of his own createdness. When he does so, his task becomes transformed into a godless despotism, unfettered [...] tyranny and ‘the most profound disruption and even destruction of his fellowship with creation’”.¹⁰

Genesis 1:28 does not give man a *carte blanche* to exploit creation¹¹. Rather, the reason why biblical anthropology describes man as the “image of God” and the “crown of creation” is that his rulership status has been conferred upon him by God Himself. Man’s activities in the world are the result of divine empowerment and, as our rule comes directly from God, it also has clear limits. We definitely have a special position within creation, and it is this very position which gives us a special responsibility. Man is called upon to rule the earth in the same way as God does, and our own creative work must therefore be modelled on God’s. In the same way, we are under a

⁹ Jüngling, Hans-Winfried, “Macht euch die Erde untertan (Gen 1:28): Der geschaffene Mensch und die Schöpfung”, in: Schmitz, Philipp (ed.), *Macht euch die Erde untertan?*, Würzburg 1981, 9–38, here: 30.

¹⁰ Jorissen, Hans, “Die Welt als Schöpfung”, in: *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie*, No. 5 (1990), 205–218, here 216.

¹¹ Cf. Rappel, Simone, *Macht euch die Erde untertan: Die ökologische Krise als Folge des Christentums?*, Paderborn 1995, 54–78.

duty to change direction whenever our activities are contrary to God's will.

If, therefore, it is man's fundamental responsibility in God's good creation¹² to create circumstances that permit a good, successful life, then it follows from the idea of co-createdness with our fellow-creatures that all existence is interdependent and not merely subservient to some instrumental purpose of non-human creation. To cite Albert Schweitzer, it means that man is "life that wants to live in the midst of life that wants to live".¹³ Man is connected with all other beings whose desire for life we must treat respectfully, "with reverence". After all, it is our unique calling to take responsibility for everything that lives and "wants to live", thus creating "a house of life for all living creatures" (Erich Zenger). This biocentric view of a "shared world" puts the focus on reverence for all life and fellowship and connectedness with all creatures. Furthermore, it adds substantial weight to the environmental debate, as it "naturally forbids any anthropocentrism that sees man and his needs as absolute".¹⁴

Modern Functionalisation of Nature

The break with the biblical concept of man and the biblical worldview was pre-programmed in view of the increasing rise of emancipation and autonomy movements, going back as far as the 17th century, when it started with Francis Bacon (1561-1562) and René Descartes (1596-1650), in particular. Bacon's ideas are inspired by euphoric trust in the power of man and human endeavour, believing that humans will eventually decode the secrets of the world through the mastery of science and thus reach perfect happiness on earth. The purpose of Bacon's utilitarian concept is to show that all knowledge and thus nature, too, must be subservient to the reign of man (*regnum hominis*). In his view, man is tasked with gaining power over the physical world by conducting precise research into the

¹² Cf. Gen 1:4–5.

¹³ Schützeichel, Harald, *Wie wir überleben können: Eine Ethik für die Zukunft*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1994, 52.

¹⁴ German episcopal conference/Commission for social and caring questions, *Handeln für die Zukunft der Schöpfung*, Bonn 1998, section 84; Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2415–2418; Cf. also Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* on Care for Our Common Home, http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf (05.07.2017).

structures and laws of this world so that it can be used for the utmost benefit of humanity.

Bacon sees this rational interpretation of nature as the key to a general increase in prosperity, and its victory subsequently demolishes the traditionally speculative view of nature. He sees creation in terms of functionality reduced to nature, even to the point of becoming an object of exploitation. Bacon proclaims that nature's secrets can best be unlocked if it is tortured, the formula "knowledge is power" being ascribed to him. There is no longer any room for the concept of co-createdness – a thought which is clearly expressed in the Bible and which Francis of Assisi emphasises so dramatically in his *Canticum of the Sun* when he refers to the Earth as "sister" and the element of fire as "brother". Bacon's *Instauratio Magna Imperii Humani in Naturam* turns the act of observing into research and no longer allows for any "purpose-free" creation that might be viewed without expectations of its utilitarian exploitation for the benefit of mankind.

For Descartes creation no longer has any intrinsic value at all. He sees it as existing entirely for man's benefit. Creation is, in its very substance, reduced to the things that are objectively measurable through the application of universal mathematics, and it therefore functions on a purely mechanical level. This view gradually leads to the disappearance of a once characteristic reverence for creation in which all of existence was praised as God's good creation. Descartes' separation of form and matter – *res cogitans* and *res extensae* – reduces the relationship between man and nature to something that can be formally quantified. In this view man is the determining subject, the *maître et possesseur de la nature*, and nature is the object of man's greed and exploitation.

Descartes' new model ultimately means viewing nature as systematically subservient to man, heralding an era of dualism whereby man and nature are necessarily defined as counterparts. As a result, man dispenses with any "sym-path" with and "participation" in creation.¹⁵ This functionalisation of nature is accompanied by the increasing disappearance of its teleological content. The position of primacy is no longer held by the possibilities of existence as characteristic features

¹⁵ Kutschmann, Werner, *Der Naturwissenschaftler und sein Körper: Die Rolle der 'inneren Natur' in der experimentellen Naturwissenschaft der frühen Neuzeit*, Frankfurt am Main 1986, 192.

of nature itself, but by the technical changes brought about by man – changes resulting from insights into nature’s structures and therefore allowing manipulative intervention. Nature is thus given its purpose by man who then impacts it as its counterpart. Ultimately, the relationship between man and nature thus becomes a confrontation between man as the “inquisitorial subject and nature as the inquisitorial object”.¹⁶ This paradigm shift is now a significant element of modern optimism with its faith in progress, while the biblical concept of co-createdness is gradually diminishing. Until the Middle Ages,¹⁷ which were considerably influenced by the monastic tradition, there was the prevailing thought that man’s exploration of nature should serve to seek God in all things (Ignatius of Loyola). Such an idea, however, has now been replaced by an image of man as a ruler conquering nature and making it subservient to himself. This gives an interpretation to *dominium terrae* which is radically different from its original meaning, effectively turning it into a “material” anthropocentrism¹⁸ which ignores any co-createdness and therefore leads to the ruthless exploitation of nature. Man’s modern ignorance towards the otherness of reason thus dialectically turns reason into the opposite of what reason seeks to achieve, as shown in the global environmental crisis – a development which endangers mankind itself and the very basis of our lives.

Creation Theology – Stimulated Specifically by the Principle of Retinity

In order to effect a change of direction in the near future, numerous approaches in ecological ethics suggest that we need an

¹⁶ Ibid., 412.

¹⁷ One driving force of monastic culture and its creative output was the Christian’s responsibility for the world, as expressed in the biblical mandate to rule the earth. Man is seen as living in a rhythmic pattern of *ora et labora*, with a programmatic emphasis on man as “God’s collaborator”. Productivity and efficiency are understood as fruits of a fundamental spiritual attitude that seeks to praise God’s good creation. Theophilus, one of the most significant scholars and inventors of the 12th century, sees technical achievements as flowing from God’s gift of creativity, with man being appointed as “co-creator” because he was created in God’s image. Similarly, in the 13th century, Roger Bacon believes that his experimental knowledge of the world is the most suitable way to shed light on God’s revelatory wisdom. The same direction is taken by Renaissance models: man is seen as a *deus in terris* (Marsilio Ficino) with a privileged position in the universe. After all, he has been created in the image of God and is therefore endowed with freedom and special dignity. Man’s creative activities are thus understood as manifesting similar characteristics as God’s creation (cf. Rappel, Simone, op. cit., 132–138 and 211–233).

¹⁸ Auer, Alfons, *Umweltethik: Ein theologischer Beitrag zur ökologischen Diskussion*, Düsseldorf 31989, 54–64.

attitude centred around the idea of integral connectedness, covering everything in existence while showing “respect for life” and having an awareness that one’s life takes place “in the midst of life that wants to live”.¹⁹ Within the polyphonic concert of different approaches in environmental ethics, theology can contribute the biblical idea of creation and co-createdness and can show how indispensable it is within the global mutual support community to practice an ethos of respect for life as God’s good creation.²⁰

A concrete proposal was then formulated by the Commission for Society and Social Affairs of the German Bishops’ Conference in a document entitled “Acting for the Future of Creation” (October 1998), insisting that the established principles of social doctrine should be supplemented by the principle of retinity, based on the value of sustainability. This principle follows Wilhelm Korff in emphasising “that man can only secure his long-term existence if he clearly sees himself as part of the surrounding comprehensive network of creation.”²¹

¹⁹ “‘I think, therefore I am.’ This pathetic, randomly selected beginning” of modern thinking “irredeemably enters the path of abstractness. It cannot find access to ethics and remains bound within a dead view of the world and of life. True philosophy must be based upon the most direct and comprehensive fact of consciousness, i.e. ‘I am life that desires life in the midst of life that wants to live.’” Cf. Jügler Matthias, (ed.), *Wie wir leben wollen: Texte für Solidarität und Freiheit*, 76f.

²⁰ It is significant that there have been so many doctrinal statements on environmental issues. Even before the first report was submitted to the Club of Rome (1972) – the initial spark of environmental public awareness – the need to save resources in the industrialised countries was emphasised in *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) and *De Iustitia in Mundo* (1971). In his message to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (1972), Pope Paul VI spoke at length about the close connection between man and nature and the need to protect the biosphere so that we can secure the survival of mankind.

²¹ Since Pope John Paul II the creation issue has been the topic of numerous doctrinal documents. It reached a provisional peak in the encyclical letter *Laudato si’ on Care for Our Common Home* (2015) in which Pope Francis presents a clear critique of capitalism and consumerism. He demands a change in lifestyle and a rigorous reorganisation of society that is based on the common good as a guiding principle, and he develops an “integrated ecology” which by definition includes social justice. “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development”. (LS 13) Also, the German Catholic Bishops’ Conference issued an official statement called “Future of Creation – Future of Mankind” (1989), and a joint declaration was published by the German Protestant Church and the German Catholic Bishops’ Conference on “Exercising Responsibility for Creation” (1985). Important aspects of the environmental issue are explained in the ecumenical statement “God is a Friend of Life” (1989). Moreover, the second volume of the Adult Catechism (1995) contains stimuli for a Christian environmental ethos that recognises the intrinsic value of our fellow-creatures. A joint statement by the German Protestant Church Council and the German Catholic Bishops’ Conference focuses on the economic and social situation in Germany under the title “For a Future in Solidarity and Justice” (1997), putting the environmental issue clearly into the

“The retinity principle stands for the ethical imperative that we must safeguard fundamental connections and networked relationships between all spheres of life as these are vital to the general well-being of man and nature. [...] The concept of retinity is based on the economic principle focused on ensuring the sustainability of primary resources, and it translates this idea into an ethical action principle which then needs to be applied in a wide variety of social contexts. Retinity is the centrepiece of a fully inclusive environmental ethics. [...] Man’s relationship with nature, which is assumed under the retinity principle, is the same basic orientation as the biblical command expressed in the creation account, i.e. to preserve and cultivate nature. Today, at a time of profound interference with the ecosystem, this responsibility for creation necessitates a drastic shift of emphasis towards the aspect of preservation.”²²

The fundamental biblical understanding of nature as God’s good creation leads to an ethics of universal responsibility, focused on peace and justice between humans, respect for non-human fellow-creatures and the intrinsic value of everything that exists. When an ethics of responsibility is shaped in this way, it leads to a concrete commitment of the individual in at least the following respects: (1) always to evaluate the geo-social/ecological consequences of one’s own actions, to accept responsibility for those actions and, at the same time, (2) to consider and weigh the possible negative consequences that might ensue. Furthermore, (3) one must critically question one’s own actions as to whether they follow God’s good example in fostering existence and indeed life. Finally, (4) one must contribute one’s ideas to society in a way that raises ethical awareness. Living in our common “home of all life” – a home that “lives and wants to live” – we must ensure that creation is shaped caringly, considerately and in a life-promoting manner.

general context of social issues. The concept of “sustainability” is presented as a guiding ethical principle, and the authors demand a fundamental structural change along ecological lines that will lead to an “ecological and social market economy”.

²¹ German episcopal conference/Commission for social and caring questions, *Handeln für die Zukunft der Schöpfung*, Bonn 1998, section 118.

²² *Ibid.*, No. 119–122.

From Life’s Splendour to Planetary Crisis

Juan Antonio Mejía Guerra

The Flagging Festival of Life

“I have had my invitation to this world’s festival, and thus my life has been blessed. My eyes have seen and my ears have heard.”²³ This fragment from a poem by Rabindranath Tagore speaks of nothing but enormous gratitude for the awareness of this invitation to life. Among the things that we have seen, heard and loved in this cosmic festival of Creation is the exuberant diversity of beings, with which we share the beauty that permeates life in all its forms. Science notes the existence of at least 30 million living species, of which we are only familiar with about 1,400,000.²⁴ Such is the mosaic of life that unfolds before us, the splendour of the *Creatio ex amore*²⁵, given to us as the first fruit of the Kingdom of God that is life, love and truth. Genesis recounts how God looked upon His magnificent creation and saw that it was good. Right now, however, things are not going so well for our Sister Mother Earth, especially for living creatures; and the responsibility for this situation rests squarely on the shoulders of us men and women who currently populate our wonderful but wounded planet Earth.

We humans sometimes behave like predators, devastating the world at an unprecedented pace. Indeed, while the average species extinction rate since life began has been 3 species per day, in recent decades it has jumped to 100 species per day.²⁶ Even if the Earth

²³ Tagore, Rabindranath, *Gitanjali: A collection of prose translations made by the author from the original Bengali with an introduction by W. B. Yeats*, Toronto 1913, No. 16.

²⁴ Cf. Leakey, Richard/Lewin, Roger, *The Sixth Extinction: Patterns of Life and the Future of Humankind*, New York 1995, 80–81.

²⁵ Cf. Kehl, Medard, *Contempló Dios toda su obra y estaba muy bien: Una teología de la creación*, Barcelona 2009, 52.

²⁶ Cf. Sepkoski, Joseph John, “Biodiversity: past, present and future”, in: *Journal of Paleontology*, No. 71 (1997) 4, 533–539.

provides a home for some thirty million species,²⁷ we should not forget that the loss of a single species has an exponential impact on the destiny of many others. A recent study cites evidence that since 1500 at least 617 vertebrate species have died out, most of them during the last century. The natural extinction rate for the last two million years has been estimated as 1.8 for every 10,000 species and every 100 years. However, the current pace of extinction is over 100 times this background rate. Data like this lead the authors of the study to “confidently conclude” that the sixth mass extinction is now under way.²⁸ Practically, then, we have plunged all animal kingdoms into an extinction process that palaeontologists already classify technically as *gradually fast*²⁹.

Scientific Evidence for a Planetary Crisis

Climate change, or global warming, is altering the physical and chemical dynamics of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, disrupting the web of life. The Earth is heating up; the report published by NOAA, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, observes that the first half of 2015 witnessed the highest temperatures since 1880, when global climate records began. During that period, global temperature – for land mass and oceans combined – was 0.85°C higher than the 20th-century average, surpassing the previous record increase of 0.09°C observed in 2010. In July 2015, the temperature was 0.81°C higher than the average for the past century. This confirmed the IPCC finding that over the past 100 years average global temperatures had risen by 0.8°C, and that sea levels had risen on average by about 200 mm. By the same token, snow cover has shrunk by around 3 million km², consequently reducing total freshwater resources.

As temperatures rise faster and faster, glaciers and deserts are affected, and this in turn influences other ecosystems. These modifications are the product of dramatic variations in patterns of

²⁷ Cf. Leakey, Richard/Lewin, Roger, op. cit., 31.

²⁸ The study was published in the journal *Science Advances* (2015). A summary in the Spanish newspaper *El País* can be viewed at <http://www.uestromar.org/noticias/categorias/21-06-15/sexta-gran-extincio-n-est-en-marcha> (01.08.2017).

²⁹ Cf. Molina, Éusoquio, “Etapas y causas de la sexta extinción en masa”, in: Arcega, Carolina/Lahoz, Joaquín (eds.), *La vida en el Terciario: Del impacto del meteorito al origen del hombre*, 2008, 187–203.

precipitation triggered by extreme weather events, such as heavy rainfall, flooding, heat waves, drought and other phenomena, which ultimately decimate biotic communities and threaten the survival of the vast majority of human beings. Once we fall victim to such wretched and enduring poverty, we shall never manage to escape it. The most immediate of these dramatic events was possibly Typhoon Yolanda, which struck the Philippines in November 2013, causing the deaths of 6,201 people, with 4.1 million forced to flee their village or region destitute, along with the destruction of 550,928 homes and losses to agriculture and fisheries amounting to 447 million dollars.³⁰

The Glaciers Retreat while the Oceans Rise

Glaciers from snow-covered peaks have been extremely vulnerable to global warming. Of 150 glaciers in Canada only 37 remain. Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa has lost 82% of its snow in the last twelve years, and once it has completely melted no more water will run off slowly to feed the great rivers of the planet's hottest continent.³¹ The GFZ Research Centre for Geosciences in Potsdam has reported the loss of 27% of the ice mass of glaciers in Asia Central, which supply water and energy to Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan and North-West China. The Himalayas are thawing around their lower slopes and in Tibet, although not yet in the higher regions, regarded as the planet's third pole. In Latin America, Venezuela still has two of the six glaciers which existed in 1972. The glaciers of the Peruvian Andes have retreated 20%, and 32% faster in the last three years than in the period from 1963.³²

The poles are yielding to climate change. The Arctic is in the process of melting, apart from having the potential to release 30% of the global carbon stored in submarine deposits of frozen hydrates.³³ The surface area of Arctic ice has shrunk by 18% compared with

³⁰ Cf. National Disaster Risk Reduction & Management Council, Final Report re Effects of Typhoon “Yolanda” (Haiyan), Manila 2013.

³¹ Cf. Study by Ohio State University led by Lonnie Thompson, 2015.

³² Cf. IPCC, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, Chapter 27, 14.

³³ Cf. Cortés, Ángel Fernández, Researcher at the Geology Department of the National Museum of Natural Sciences (MNCN-CSIC) and Marie Curie Fellow at Royal Holloway, London University (United Kingdom).

2007³⁴ and this has influenced the climate of Western Europe and the East of the United States, triggering very hot summers that extend into autumn and intense winters that last into spring. In the Norwegian Arctic, fjords have no longer frozen totally since 2004 and the surface area under ice cover is diminishing.³⁵ Meanwhile, in the south, acceleration of the melt rate for ice shelves in the Western Antarctic could contribute significantly to future rises in sea level.³⁶ If the Western Antarctic ice sheet continues to shrink at the current rate, by the end of the century this polar region alone could release another 80,000 km³ of water into the oceans, resulting in a 20 cm rise in global average sea level.

Since the nineties, ocean levels have been rising by 3.3 mm a year on average. Apart from the various island states which are doomed to disappear, the deltas of the world's 48 largest rivers will be flooded, threatening the lives of some 340 million people living in the immediate vicinity and another 140 million residing within a 25-kilometre radius.³⁷ The deltas of the ten most disaster-prone rivers are in Africa and Asia.

Deserts are Invading Continents

Deserts, meanwhile, are advancing across 35% of the Earth's surface at a rate of 50,000 km² a year, jeopardising the livelihoods of 15% of the world's population who live, or try to live, in these dry ecosystems.³⁸ The Sahel zone is suffering gradual desertification, and following in its tracks is Spain, the part of Europe where arid zones are spreading fastest, notably in the desert around Almería and elsewhere.³⁹ In Chile, desertification has hit 62.3% of the country,

³⁴ Cf. Jarraud, Michel, Secretary-General of the UN World Meteorological Organization. http://www.ecoport.com/Eco-Noticias/Preocupacion_en_la_ONU_El_hielo_del_Artico_se_ha_derretido_a_ritmo_record_en_2012 (01.08.2017). The same statistic is published in UNEP, Annual Report 2013, Nairobi 2014, 4.

³⁵ Cf. Report by the Ny-Ålesund Observatory (Norway), 29 July 2015.

³⁶ Findings from a study recently published by the European Geosciences Union (EGU) in the journal *The Cryosphere* (2015).

³⁷ Cf. NuestroMar, <http://www.nuestromar.org/noticias/categorias/09-08-15/grandes-deltas-mundo-sufrir-n-mayores-inundaciones> (01.08.2017).

³⁸ Cf. United Nations Conference on Desertification, UNCOD.

³⁹ Cf. Geo, Una nueva vision del mundo: Los deseiertos avanzan an España, <http://www.mundo-geo.es/green-living/los-deseiertos-avanzan-en-espana> (28.06.2016).

causing national agricultural productivity to fall to 0.9%, compared with 2.8% at the end of the last century. This is changing the lives of 1.5 million people and contributes to the annual exodus of 3% of the population in affected areas.⁴⁰

In smaller, poorer tropical countries such as Honduras and Haiti, accelerated desertification as a direct effect of climate change has perhaps a far more devastating impact than in countries which are more resilient to adversity because they are larger and have more advanced technology. In the case of Honduras, 137 of the 298 local communities in the country are showing signs of desertification, being vulnerable to drought. The database maintained by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH) records a total of 532 drought events from the last quarter of the 20th century onwards, to which we must add those of the past two years. For August 2015, the agricultural agencies officially declared that 60% of the country's agricultural output of staple grains (maize, rice, millet and beans) had been lost due to the severe drought, which far outweighed the previous worst recorded drought in the country in 1997. Not surprisingly, specific measurements of the impact of climate change on food production indicate that national maize production will continue to fall – from 11% by 2020 to 34% by 2050; for beans the decrease will intensify from 28% by 2020 to 42% by 2050, and 66% by 2080; rice production, meanwhile, is expected to fall 16% by 2020, 20% by 2050 and 27% by 2080.⁴¹ The UN's Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC/CEPAL) has forecast that “the changes in average temperature and precipitation that Honduras can expect will be such that the impact on the productive and social sectors could amount to a disaster”.⁴² Meanwhile, the spectre of hunger is haunting Honduras, with 10,000 children begging in the country's two principal cities and more than 60% of the population fighting to survive in poverty.

⁴⁰ Cf. Unidad de diagnóstico parlamentario, Departamento de evaluación de la ley: La desertificación en Chile, Valparaíso, November 2012.

⁴¹ Cf. Aguilar, Yvette, “Impactos del cambio climático en la agricultura de América Central y en las familias productoras de granos básicos”, in: Observatorio de la sostenibilidad/SUSWATCH, May 2011, 34.

⁴² CEPAL, Honduras: Efectos del cambio climático sobre la agricultura, Mexico June 2010, 10.

These brief observations suggest the following conclusions:

Conclusion 1: Global warming is here for the long haul. Already there is no corner on Earth that is not displaying signs of change to its biogeochemical structure. The United Nations Environment Programme interprets this as follows:

There is no doubt that climate change is the most important and decisive environmental issue of our age. It is a growing crisis and it is affecting our capacity to support practically all factors of human wellbeing and sustainable development, from economic growth to food security. For example, changes in climate patterns threaten food production, given the increasingly unpredictable nature of precipitation; rising sea levels are contaminating coastal freshwater reserves and increasing flood risk; and extreme weather events, which forecasts suggest will be increasingly frequent and serious, can wreak havoc.⁴³

Conclusion 2: Climate change has brought us to the verge of the sixth planetary wave of extinction. So far, life on this planet has managed to recover from a score of biotic crises, including five mass extinctions; we are now entering a new crisis of existence, propelled along by global climate change:

“The sixth mass extinction in the most recent, Quaternary period has doubtless been unleashed by the huge proliferation of humanity (...) with the industrial revolution and now climate change, affecting many species, and it may yet culminate in the extinction of our own.”⁴⁴

Conclusion 3: The poor nations of the world are already facing the worst crises stemming from climate change. The IPCC has concluded with 95% scientific certainty that the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) due to human activity has been the dominant cause of the warming observed since the middle of the 20th century.⁴⁵ An average North American produces 20 tonnes of CO₂/year, and Europeans produce between 10 and 15 tonnes per annum, depending on the country; by contrast, a Honduran produces 0.9 tonnes of CO₂/year. So it is not Hondurans who have provoked

global warming, but it is they who at this moment in time are footing the universal climate bill, and it exceeds their human capabilities. A study by the World Bank indicates that the poor countries, although not to blame for poisoning the atmosphere, will pay 75% to 80% of the costs of the damage caused by climate change.⁴⁶ There are many poor nations like Honduras which are suffering the greatest impact from global warming, and the martyred priest Ignacio Ellacuría was referring to these when, in his theological writings, he called for the crucified peoples to be taken down from the cross, as “this crucified people is the historical continuation of the Servant of Jehovah, whose human face was disfigured by the sins of the world”.⁴⁷

Life on Planet Earth has lost its splendour and is confronting the greatest global threat of recent times as climate change makes its colossal entry on the world stage. The beacons have been lit. The indigenous peoples are demanding more attention for Pacha Mama, Mother Earth, who is suffering one humiliation after another. The famous Naomi Klein calls upon us to share the heavens and care for the atmosphere as the common good of all peoples and, as democracy succumbs to free market fundamentalism, she declares that only “love will save this place”, and this love manifests itself in “resistance taken from outside the dominant culture”⁴⁸; in other words, by indigenous peoples, environmental movements and regional social movements who defend our natural resources.

Pope Francis warrants particular recognition for his determined efforts to safeguard the Creation. In such a short time in his Papacy, he has heard the cries of the poor and urges that they and the Earth should tolerate no more: “This system is by now intolerable, (...), communities find it intolerable, peoples find it intolerable ... The earth itself – our sister Mother Earth – finds it intolerable.”⁴⁹ In his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* he is concerned about the pollution of the temple of Creation: “The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth” (21) and about the urgency

⁴⁶ Cf. World Bank Group, World Development Report 2010: Development and Climate Change, Washington D.C. 2010, 6.

⁴⁷ Ellacuría, Inácio, “Discernir el signo de los tiempos”, in: *Diakonía*, No. 17 (1981), 58.

⁴⁸ Klein, Naomi, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism v The Climate*, Toronto/New York 2014, 388.

⁴⁹ Cf. Pope Francis' address to the Popular Movements in Santa Cruz de Bolivia, 2015.

⁴³ Cf. UNEP, Annual Report 2013, Nairobi 2014, 7.

⁴⁴ Molina, Éustoquio, *Etapas y causas de la sexta extinción en masa*, op. cit., 199.

⁴⁵ Cf. IPCC, *Cambio Climático 2013: Base de ciencia física: Resumen para responsables de políticas*, 2013.

of countering climate change: “Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it” (23). He points to the responsibility of the international political class, because the various world environment summits have not responded to humanity’s green aspirations: “due to lack of political will, they were unable to reach truly meaningful and effective global agreements on the environment” (166). He furthermore calls for “a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach” (197), far removed from “a magical conception of the market, which would suggest that problems can be solved simply by an increase in the profits of companies or individuals” (190). We must save this planet Earth for the good of the entire living community, for our own good and for that of all generations to come.

Your Kingdom is Life

The greatest challenge of our day, for those of us who profess the Christian faith, may well be to save the Creation, caught up as it currently is in a mortal process. The greatest of the mass extinctions, at the end of the Permian period 225 million years ago, eliminated 96% of marine species⁵⁰ and almost the same proportion of land species⁵¹, and yet the planet was able to recover and multiply in a crucible of life forms. There is convincing evidence, then, that Earth can recover from the cataclysm that climate change will become if we cannot slow it down; nevertheless, we cannot be certain that the human species will manage to survive under these circumstances. This throws down the gauntlet to the Christian faith, which proclaims not the extinction of humanity but its redemption and salvation in the fullness of time. Today’s believer should be up in the front ranks, identifying, proposing and initiating the most innovative environmental and social campaigns in defence of life. Amen.

⁵⁰ Leakey, Richard/Lewin, Roger, op. cit., 24.

⁵¹ Ibid., 28.

God the Creator. Man as the Statue of God. Biblical and Theological Reflections on the Preservation of Creation

Savio Vaz

Ancient Creation Myths from the Orient

The quest to find the primordial cause and basis of all life and being is one of the most intriguing of human mental activities. Questions about personal origins and objectives in life as well as the very source of life itself are a subject of endless fascination for the human mind. The inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia queried the nature of their own existence and that of the world.⁵² “Why does this world in which I live exist, and why do I myself exist in the way that I do?”⁵³ The Mesopotamians have many stories to tell. The characters appearing in them are gods who respond to man’s probing questions on theogony, cosmology and anthropology.⁵⁴ While the ancient myths reveal almost nothing new about the origins of the universe and man in a scientific sense, they nonetheless harbour valuable information about the nature of human beings themselves.

According to Erich Zenger, the question regarding the emergence of the world and the beginnings of man is essentially about their origins and primeval source. It is not a matter of the precise point in time or the manner of the beginning but rather of the context and objective of the whole.

A myth is not concerned with providing a scientific explanation of the “truth” about the origins of the world and of man. Instead it

⁵² Cf. Bottéro, Jean, “Mesopotamische Schöpfungsvorstellungen”, in: Welt und Umwelt der Bibel: Die Schöpfung, No. 2 (1996), 9.

⁵³ Lacarrière, Jacques, “Keine Kinder des Zufalls”, in: Welt und Umwelt der Bibel: Die Schöpfung, No. 2 (1996), 5.

⁵⁴ Cf. Bottéro, Jean, op. cit., 9.

“narrates the good beginnings of the world – its foundation, endowment with a sound basis and fundamental incorporation in the universe.”⁵⁵ The overarching task of a myth is to extrapolate knowledge from a primeval process which enables all other events to be understood. In a myth people return to the origins, or to the “beginning”, particularly when they are confronted with threatening, catastrophic experiences of the world and of life itself.⁵⁶ Man occupies a prominent place in the creation myths. “Theogony” (the genealogy of the gods), the origins of the world and the origins of man form an inseparable entity. They are a response to the existential question of why man is on the earth. He is not there by chance, but was created by the gods or by the God so that he might serve gods and worship them. The creation myths thus seek to assure people that they are the “precious children” of a higher power.⁵⁷ The creation myths of the ancient world reveal the fertility and diversity of the human mind, which enable it to discover God in his creation and to worship him,⁵⁸ as the psalmist prays: “The heavens declare the glory of God, the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork.”⁵⁹

Ancient myths and the biblical doctrine of creation

The key issue is whether there is room for a concept of God in a modern, scientifically-based view of the world. Although enlightened contemporary scientists such as the British astrophysicist, Stephen Hawking, pose questions related to the existence of God such as: “Where would a Creator fit into all of this?”⁶⁰, there can be no denying that a belief in the God of creation is of eminent importance in the light of the ecological crisis we face. This modern querying of the Creator occurs at the very latest in situations in which natural forces inflict

⁵⁵ Zenger, Erich, “Die Schöpfungsgeschichten der Genesis im Kontext des Alten Orient”, in: *Welt und Umwelt der Bibel: Die Schöpfung*, No. 2 (1996), 21.

⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Cf. Lacarrière, Jacques, *op. cit.*, 6.

⁵⁸ Cf. Tworuschka, Monika/Tworuschka, Udo, *Als die Welt entstand: Schöpfungsmythen der Völker und Kulturen in Wort und Bild*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2005; Müller, Hans Peter, “Schöpfungsmythen – literarisch und theologisch – mit Anslusserörterungen”, in: *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, No. 101 (2004) 4, 506–525.

⁵⁹ Psalm 19:1; Cf. Newton, Isaac, *Mathematische Prinzipien der Naturphilosophie*, edited by Ed Dellian, Hamburg 1988, 226.

⁶⁰ Hawking, Stephen, *Eine kurze Geschichte der Zeit*, Reinbek 1998, 184.

death and destruction.⁶¹ Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker summarises the prerequisites and consequences of science for our world view as follows: “The relationship between philosophy and so-called positive science can be reduced to the following formula: philosophy asks the questions which scientific procedures had to avoid as a *sine qua non* for their success. This would suggest that science owes its success *inter alia* to its refusal to pose certain questions.”⁶² By sidestepping the relevant questions one’s view of the world will be limited to the insights of natural science.

Israel always believed in the God of creation, even though this belief had its origins in a soteriological creed. Quite clearly there was no other possibility for the world’s emergence, no alternative to the reality imposed by God. The people of the Old Testament “did not need to believe that the world was created by God, as this was a fundamental prerequisite of their thinking.”⁶³ The metaphor of the home occurs several times in the Book of Genesis.

The cosmos is a common home (*oikos*) for everything. God created a common home for everyone so that people might experience his proximity and acknowledge his presence as their host.⁶⁴ Just as a good director shuns the stage, putting the focus on the actors and their theatrical performance, so the Creator makes himself invisible in the midst of his creation, giving all nations and individuals cause to discover and experience him in his creation. The Bible makes it very plain that the earth “belongs to the Lord”⁶⁵ and that he has given it to human beings and all living creatures.⁶⁶ God has assigned man a special task in their common home. This says something crucial about his relationship with other living creatures and the earth as a whole. The Hebrew word *saelaem* explains man’s status and his dignity. The primary assertion in Old Testament anthropology that man has been

⁶¹ Cf. Kessler, Hans, “Wo bleibt Gott im Leiden seiner Geschöpfe?”, in: *ThPQ*, No. 154 (2006) 3, 264f.

⁶² von Weizsäcker, Carl Friedrich, *Deutlichkeit*, Munich 1978, 167.

⁶³ Westermann, Claus, *Schöpfung: Themen der Theologie*, Stuttgart 1971, 14; *Idem*, “Das Reden von Schöpfer und Schöpfung im Alten Testament”, in: *BZAW*, No. 105 (1967), 238–244.

⁶⁴ Cf. Zenger, Erich, *op. cit.*, 22.

⁶⁵ Ps 24:1.

⁶⁶ Cf. the ceremonious assignment formula (“Look, to you I give [...]”) Gen 1:29–30.

created in the “image of God”⁶⁷ is an indication that man is to be a kind of living likeness or statue of God in the world, representing the living God on earth. As a “metaphorical statue” of God, man occupies a dual position, which connects him with both God and the world.⁶⁸ The theme of “creation” takes centre stage in the Psalms, many of which reflect optimism and trust in the Creator’s solicitude.⁶⁹ Here, creation and its preservation is the cause and subject of manifold praise. There are four important psalms dealing with creation which sing the praises of the Creator via his creation⁷⁰, thus reminding people of their humanity. Psalm 8:4, for instance, asks: “What are human beings that you spare a thought for them [...]?”

Unity of Belief and Science

Anthropological issues play a significant role in virtually all the sciences and not only in respect of “the anthropological turning point”⁷¹. Down the ages, people have confronted the issue of the demonstrability of God’s existence. However, it is impossible to prove the existence or non-existence of God with absolute certainty. God can only be experienced and witnessed; his existence cannot be proved solely by rationally comprehensible arguments.⁷² Nonetheless, the Christian faith in God as the Creator and preserver of the world is a concept which can be comprehended with the aid of reason. The question of *how* the universe came into being can be answered by scientists and atheists. The answer to the question of *why* the cosmos came into existence exceeds their competence, however.⁷³ Scientific naturalism is concerned with setting out objective knowledge and insights and not with influencing individuals’ personal convictions. At the outset of the

⁶⁷ Cf. Gen 1:26–27.

⁶⁸ Cf. Janowski, Bernd, “Die lebendige Statue Gottes: Zur Anthropologie der priesterlichen Urgeschichte”, in: idem, *Die Welt als Schöpfung: Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testament* 4, Göttingen 2008, 142–156; Groß, Walter, “Die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen im Kontext der Priesterschrift”, in: idem, *Studien zur Priesterschaft und zu alttestamentlichen Gottesbildern*, SBAB, No. 30 (1999), 11–36.

⁶⁹ Cf. Boecker, Hans Jochen, *Das Lob des Schöpfers in den Psalmen*, Göttingen 2008, 20f.

⁷⁰ Cf. Psalms 8:19; 104 and 136.

⁷¹ Bröckling, Ulrich, “Um Leib und Leben: Zeitgenössische Positionen in philosophischer Anthropologie”, in: Assmann, Aleida/Gaier, Ulrich/Trommsdorf, Giesela (eds.), *Positionen der Kulturanthropologie*, Frankfurt on the Main 2004, 172–195.

⁷² Cf. Ex 3:7–8.

⁷³ Cf. Dennebaum, Tonke, *Urknall Evolution Schöpfung: Glaube kontra Wissenschaft?*, Würzburg 2008, 120f.

modern age, creationist beliefs were compatible with natural science. God’s intervention in the world was not a contradiction in the eyes of scientists. In his two chief works, the *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* and *Optics*, Isaac Newton (1643–1727) attempted to answer the question of how theological and scientific findings could form a single entity. In the process the father of classical theoretical physics deemed it important to view God as the pantocrator (universal ruler), who lent order to and reigned over everything.⁷⁴

The progress man has achieved through the unfettered exercise of his “desire to dominate and subjugate”⁷⁵ has disrupted the relationship between man and nature.⁷⁶ The culture of technology and affluence is rooted in the conviction that humans can do anything. The question of God is no longer of any significance.⁷⁷ Commenting on this, Cardinal Lehmann has said: “It would be far more advisable to take as a starting point the demand highlighted by economic studies for an ‘imperative reorientation’.”⁷⁸ Man’s estrangement from nature could be corrected if people ceased to reduce nature to its functional value as determined by scientific and economic interests. In view of the ecological crisis, a reorientation cannot be achieved without an examination of the question of God or the doctrine of God. The issue at stake here is not some new magical transformation of nature. As Jürgen Moltmann correctly notes in the preface to his book *God in Creation, Ecological Doctrine of Creation*: “The contemporary problem with the doctrine of God lies in the understanding of creation

[...] Today, the theological adversary is the nihilistic approach to nature.”⁷⁹ This, in turn, is an exhortation to consider the relationship between Christian anthropology and the Christian doctrine of God and creation as statements in Holy Scripture.

⁷⁴ Cf. ibid., 60f.; Knoch, Wendelin, “Die Welt – Gottes gute Schöpfung? Die Ökologiekrise als Anfrage an die christliche Gotteslehre”, in: *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio*, No. 20 (1991), 169f.

⁷⁵ Meyer-Abich, Klaus Michael, *Wissenschaft für die Zukunft: Holistisches Denken in ökologischer und gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung*, Munich 1988, 18.

⁷⁶ Cf. von Weizsäcker, Ernst Ulrich, *Erdpolitik: Ökologische Realpolitik an der Schwelle zum Jahrhundert der Umwelt*, Darmstadt 1990.

⁷⁷ Cf. Ratzinger, Cardinal Joseph, *Gott und die Welt: Glauben und Leben in unserer Zeit: Ein Gespräch mit Peter Seewald*, Munich 2000, 22.

⁷⁸ Lehmann, Karl, “Kreatürlichkeit des Menschen als Verantwortung für die Erde”, in: *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio*, No. 7 (1978), 39.

⁷⁹ Moltmann, Jürgen, *Gott in der Schöpfung, ökologische Schöpfungslehre*, Munich 1985.

Science versus Belief in the God of Creation

The relationship between science and the doctrine of creation remains strained. A contemporary Christian doctrine of creation must take account of evolution as an authentic, historical process of development and integrate the concept of cosmogenesis advocated by modern science.⁸⁰ In view of the heightened awareness of the ongoing destruction of the environment, the issue of man's relationship with his Creator and his creation is attracting more and more attention. Who are we humans before God and what task or responsibility do we have within creation if we view ourselves as its crowning achievement? This creationist theme, which appears to have sunk into oblivion, attempts to redefine man's relationship with nature and the environment. Christianity's demythologisation of the world was intended to ensure that the relationship between man and nature would prompt man to give God thanks and praise.⁸¹ For the creationist belief, or the doctrine of creation, not only says something about the empirical world, but also about the understanding of God, about the Judaeo-Christian conception of man and man's responsibility for creation with which he has been entrusted.

In their search for cultural reasons for the environmental crisis several scientists have raised the question of the extent to which Holy Scripture⁸² or Christianity is to blame for the imminent ecological crisis.⁸³ They assert that the contemporary world view is rooted in an understanding of creation which is completely focused on man.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Cf. von Balthasar, Hans Urs, *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologische Ästhetik*, No. 2, Einsiedeln 1962, 671; Brun, Rudolf B., "Schöpfungslehre und Herrlichkeit", in: *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio*, No. 21 (1992), 349–360; Bauberger, Stefan, "Schöpfung oder Urknall?", in: *StZ*, No. 125 (2000), 695–696.

⁸¹ Cf. Münk, Hans J., "Umweltkrise – Folge und Erbe des Christentums? Historisch-systematische Überlegungen zu einer umstrittenen These im Vorfeld ökologischer Ethik", in: *JCSW*, No. 28 (1987), 133–206.

⁸² The more recent exegetic interpretation of the *dominium-terrae* concept in Gen 1:26–27 demonstrates that man's dominion over animals and nature does not result in exploitation and destruction. Cf. Daecke, Sigurd M., "Natur und Schöpfung im Christentum", in: *KatBl*, No. 117 (1992), 234–241; Hilpert, Konrad, "Verantwortung für die Natur: Ansätze zu einer Umweltethik in der gegenwärtigen Theologie", in: *Theologie und Philosophie*, No. 60 (1985), 379.

⁸³ Cf. White Jr., Lynn, "Die historische Ursache unserer ökologischen Krise", in: Lohmann, Michael (ed.), *Gefährdete Zukunft: Prognosen anglo-amerikanischer Wissenschaftler*, Munich 1973, 20–28; Rappel, Simone, "Macht euch die Erde untertan": Die ökologische Krise als Folge des Christentums?, Paderborn 1996.

⁸⁴ Cf. Amery, Carl, *Das Ende der Vorsehung: Die gnadenlosen Folgen des Christentums*,

The American historian, Lynn White Jr., believes that Christianity in its Western form is "the most anthropocentric religion [...] the world has ever seen."⁸⁵ Are the accusations laid at the door of Christianity acceptable? Is it not the case that technology and science are viewed as the guarantors of unlimited progress?⁸⁶ We would counter such accusations by saying that the real cause of the problem is that man no longer views himself as part of creation but as its lord and master. The environmental crisis plaguing the modern world has to do with the calamity arising from the crisis of faith. It is easy to imagine a world and its creation which forgoes God and appears convincing from a scientific point of view. This hypothesis does not presume one Creator and one creation. For the Christian faith a loss of belief in creation would have very serious consequences. To quote Wolfhart Pannenberg: "The assertion of the world's creation by the God of the Bible thus becomes an empty phrase, and the biblical God himself becomes a powerless shadow if he can no longer be interpreted as the originator and consummator of the world, as is the case in our experience."⁸⁷ In his book *Jesus of Nazareth* Pope Benedict XVI says the following: Man should recognise the primacy of God, for "where he is not, nothing can be good. Where God is not seen, both man and the world fall into decay."⁸⁸

The universe cannot be explained from within itself. Although modern sciences can provide physical explanations of the origins of the world, they are unable to explain why it arose and in what context. The strict polarisation between faith and science precludes all religious interpretation. Here, faith and reason, creation and evolution, naturalism and faith are at odds with one another. Can scientists remain neutral in their world view? Is their intention in doing so to banish God from his own garden and no longer to recognise him as the owner of that garden or of creation?⁸⁹ Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI says: "Even

Reinbek 1972; Drewermann, Eugen, *Der tödliche Fortschritt: Von der Zerstörung der Erde und des Menschen im Erbe des Christentums*, Regensburg 1981.

⁸⁵ White, Lynn, op. cit., 24.

⁸⁶ Cf. LS 75–90.

⁸⁷ Pannenberg, Wolfhart, "Theologie der Schöpfung und Naturwissenschaft", in: Dorschner, Johann/Heller, Michael/Pannenberg, Wolfhart (eds.), *Mensch und Universum: Naturwissenschaft und Schöpfungsglaube im Dialog*, Regensburg 1995, 146.

⁸⁸ Benedict XVI., *Jesus von Nazareth*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2006, 179.

⁸⁹ Cf. Elßner, Thomas R., "Vom Garten Eden zum Paradies", in: Schmiedl, Joachim (ed.),

now, belief in creation is not unrealistic. It remains rational to this day. It is also the better hypothesis in terms of the findings of science; it discerns more and explains more than all other theories. Faith is rational. The rationality of creation arises from God's rationality; there is no other really convincing explanation of the reason that exists within creation."⁹⁰

Biblical Anthropology and Modern Anthropocentrism

True to the tradition of the Church, the Second Vatican Council paid anthropocentric tribute to creation in its document *Gaudium et spes*. The Council states: "Sacred Scripture teaches that man was created 'to the image of God', is capable of knowing and loving his Creator, and was appointed by Him as master of all earthly creatures that he might subdue them and use them to God's glory."⁹¹ "All things on earth should be related to man as their centre and crown."⁹² The special status accorded to man with respect to nature in the Bible and in Christianity led to a misunderstanding.⁹³ Nature was removed from the realm of man's responsibility to God for creation. Christianity and its message of God's creation are not responsible for the ecological crisis. On the contrary, it is the outcome of the rejection of the belief in creation and of radical secularisation.⁹⁴ The arbitrary treatment of nature was merely exacerbated by the fact that individuals, particularly the inhabitants of the Western world, abandoned the idea of Creation in favour of "an impartial approach to pre-existing material"⁹⁵ and material affluence. Today, human creation has increased out of all proportion, distorting the view of creation. "The world of contemporary technology [...] appears to have lost all semblance of receptiveness

Dann legte Gott einen Garten an: Theologische Anmerkungen zu einem Ursymbol der Menschheit, Vallendar 2011, 12f.

⁹⁰ Ratzinger, Joseph, Gottes Projekt: Nachdenken über Schöpfung und Kirche, Regensburg 2009, 30.

⁹¹ GS 12.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Cf. Krolzik, Udo, "Die Wirkungsgeschichte von Genesis 1,28", in: Altner, Günter (ed.), Ökologische Theologie: Perspektiven zur Orientierung, Stuttgart 1989, 149–163.

⁹⁴ Cf. Löhr, Gebhard, "Ist das Christentum für die gegenwärtige ökologische Krise verantwortlich? Das Naturverständnis der Religionen in der gegenwärtigen Diskussion", in: Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift, No. 14 (1997), 93–117, here: 113f.

⁹⁵ Knoch, Wendelin, op. cit., 168.

to a mystery lying beyond itself; it has stopped conceiving itself as part of God's creation."⁹⁶

The sacerdotal texts Gen 1:26f., Gen 9:6 and Ps 8 demonstrate that man's kingly position of dignity has a functional purpose in the context of creation as a whole. It follows that the dignity accorded to him must be viewed as an appeal to all individuals to regard themselves as empowered to exercise responsibility. The Creator wishes to use man "in order to be represented in the sight of all his creatures"⁹⁷. It is "up to man to preserve the vital, life-giving potential of organised creation"⁹⁸. Man's dual dominion (*terrae et animalium*) is a reminder to him that he "is created as a creature amongst God's other creatures"⁹⁹. As a result, the interrelationship between dignity and dignified action becomes constitutive. The Bible does not advocate an absolutist anthropocentrism. The unique nature of humankind lies in its respect for its fellow creatures. Both animate and inanimate nature are endowed with intrinsic values and individual rights and they are in no way subsumed by man's special status.¹⁰⁰ According to the Book of Wisdom, man's unique nature resides in the fact that humans, as creatures, live with other creatures "in the sight of" and "with" God. "Yes, you love everything that exists, and nothing that you have made disgusts you, since, if you had hated something, you would not have made it." (Wis 11:24). A world view based on the natural sciences must include an in-depth examination of the doctrine of creation.

⁹⁶ Link, Christian, "Die Transparenz der Natur für das Geheimnis der Schöpfung", in: Altner, Günter (ed.), Ökologische Theologie: Perspektiven zur Orientierung, Stuttgart 1989, 166–195, here: 193.

⁹⁷ Groß, Walter, "Gen 1:26, 27; 9,6: Statue oder Ebenbild Gottes?" in: JBTh, No. 15 (2000), 35.

⁹⁸ Neumann-Gorsolke, Ute, "Mit Ehre und Hoheit hast Du ihn gekrönt", (Ps 8:5), in: JBTh, No. 15 (2000), 64.

⁹⁹ Janowski, Bernd, op. cit., 210.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Höhn, Hans-Joachim, "Verwundbare Natur? Thesen zum Ethos der Mitgeschöpflichkeit", in: ThG, No. 56 (2013), 174f.

Spirituality of Creation: Creation During a Crisis

David Kaulem

I want to talk about the spirituality of the Church's political project to support Africa to overcome the crisis of governance. I write as one who is simultaneously embedded in the traditions of both the Church and Africa. This project demands of both Africans and the Church to be creative and to think on their feet, as it were, as they collaborate and engage their social and political realities. This creativity may benefit from the guidance of a certain spirituality whose values and principles can be discerned in Catholic social teaching and consistent with a certain reading of African customs, cultures and traditions.

This special political project is over and above the day-to-day activities, work and practices of the Church. I discuss the Church as a political agent, for it is in the politics of the Church that the Church's creativity and people's participation is demonstrated concretely. I do not suggest that the Church is merely or solely a political agent. The Church is a lot more than a political agent. I assume, for example that in its everyday activities, the Church is involved in liturgy, baptism, confirmations, and many other activities often associated with it and its spirituality in general. Yet every now and then, the Church faces a crisis and is stretched by new circumstances that are often sudden and unpredictable. Also, the world in which the Church is located often faces crises. For example, while Africa has made great strides towards democracy, the continent still faces crises in governance. In these circumstances of crisis, the Church is called upon to be creative and respond to people's special needs, challenges and requests. Equally, the Church is called upon to listen to the people and to encourage them to be creative and participate in finding solutions to the crisis. Pope Francis calls us to the importance of listening when he says, "we need to practise the art of listening which is more than simply hearing. Listening in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual

encounter cannot occur.”¹⁰¹ It is this spirituality of genuine encounter that contemporary African political experience can benefit from the teachings of the Church.

People who experience crisis and need to go beyond the crisis are always imbedded in specific customs, cultures and traditions which can either facilitate the movement towards peace or become part of the problem. Any framework for transitional justice will have to take this into account. In this paper, I suggest that the spirituality of Catholic social teaching provides a framework that could lead Africa out of crises. This spirituality is consistent with and greatly enhances some reading of African traditions, customs and cultures. Catholic social teaching has the potential for widening the African social imaginary while it is itself enriched and deepened by African experiences.

In a crisis, old questions and old answers lose their meaning and force. The response in a crisis situation must necessarily be creative. I argue for a critical treatment of the social artefacts that we call culture, custom and traditions. To declare them as artefacts is not to demean their importance. It is, however, to recognise that as human creations, they can be re-created, deepened and expanded in order to use them as tools for transitional justice, social justice, development and peace. I recognise and emphasise the potential productivity that cultural traditions and customs can deliver in the interest of transitional justice. Yet the potential dangers of the same social and historical artefacts producing oppression, conflicts, and injustice have been demonstrated. This deep ambivalent and reflexive relationship between tradition and justice – between customs and justice, calls for more self-conscious handling of both traditional cultures on the one hand and social/political transitions on the other. In Africa, one available opportunity is the existence of Catholic social teaching which can provide the values, principle and spirituality that is capable of helping Africans to navigate through the social, political and economic crises facing us.

This must be our special creative project. Our response to the political, cultural and economic challenges in Africa, accompanied by the Church’s spirituality, can be a project that creatively combines

¹⁰¹ Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel: Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* of the Holy Father Francis, Rome, 24.November 2013, 91.

local and universal values and encourages solidarity and respect between peoples living in one world. Pope Francis, in his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, emphasises how all of us live in “Our common home”. He points out how without an appropriate spirituality the whole is in trouble as, “The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.”¹⁰²

Politics as a Vocation for Social Justice

The Church, like Christ, announces the ‘good news’ and denounces injustice. Good news always promises to move people from the gutter, from suffering and from despair.¹⁰³ Working for good governance to push towards a just social and political order is, in a wide sense of the term, a political project which the Church has already embarked on in Africa and in the world. Summarising this project in *Ecclesia in Africa*, Pope John Paul II wrote about how the Church Fathers grappled with this project in Africa at the First Special Synod of Bishops in 1993:

During their discussions the Synod Fathers, fully aware that they were expressing the expectations not only of African Catholics but also those of all the men and women of the Continent, squarely faced the many evils which oppress Africa today. The Fathers explored at length and in all its complexity what the Church is called to do in order to bring about the desired changes, but they did so with an attitude free from pessimism or despair. Despite the mainly negative picture which today characterizes numerous parts of Africa, and despite the sad situations being experienced in many countries, the Church has the duty to affirm vigorously that these difficulties can be overcome. She must strengthen in all Africans hope of genuine liberation.¹⁰⁴

The spirituality of hope leads the Christian who finds himself or herself in a political crisis on a trajectory that rejects pessimism and despair. The political move towards good governance and just social order must be a journey, or more accurately, a series of journeys

¹⁰² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home, Rome 24.May 2015, 7.

¹⁰³ This point is emphasised by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Rome 24.November 2013.

¹⁰⁴ *Ecclesia in Africa*, No. 14.

towards hope and “genuine liberation”. Many of us in Africa have been through liberation struggles. Many of our countries, since Ghana’s celebration of political independence, are celebrating more than fifty years of political independence. And yet we are still searching for true liberation. We are still in short supply of hope. It really requires creativity to maintain sanity and be attuned to the spirit of creative tension.

Deconstructing Local Customs, Culture and Traditions

While culture and traditions are usually presented as clear and cast in stone, this paper emphasises a sense of ambiguity and ambivalence in the development and practice of culture, customs and traditions. Because culture and traditions are human, they are always historical and social. Even if culture and traditions were cast in iron and therefore unambiguous, following them would always raise ambiguities and ambivalences. As Wittgenstein postulated, there are an indefinite number of ways in which any rule can be followed and in which traditions and cultures can develop. Cultural rules are always ambiguous because human beings are human beings and not machines. Human beings have feelings, memories, relationships and aspirations that always inform how they proceed in following rules, practices and principles. Attempts to banish ambiguity have been the major drive towards modern forms of oppression. Rationalisation of modern social and political life understood as being in direct opposition to human feeling has been seen as the basis of immense suffering in the modern world. The colonial project as a rationalising project that involved imperialism, colonisation and colonialism caused much human suffering in Africa. The patriarchal projects to define women and their roles have been at the core of the oppression of women in most traditions and religions. Definitions of citizenship in colonial and post-colonial societies have led to social conflicts. The Apartheid system, for example, which led to one of the longest conflicts on the African continent, was an attempt to enforce a certain exclusive definition of citizenship. The modernising forces that led to the invention of modern ethnicity in Africa helped to create some of the deepest conflicts that any continent has experienced. The modern politicisation of ethnicity in places like Apartheid South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Nigeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe has been at the centre of the major conflicts in Africa. Politics, people’s needs, power, access to

resources, corruption and greed are some of the factors that influence the development of cultural traditions.

Negotiating an Inclusive Political Project for Social Justice

As Pope Benedict XVI cautions that the Church carries out this political project not only in the spirit of hope, as indicated in *Ecclesia in Africa*, but also in the spirit of charity and love. He points out that, “Love – *caritas* – is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace”.¹⁰⁵ The political project that I am talking about is the one which people embark on when they are inspired to act courageously and generously in the world because of love.

It is political because it involves fighting for (reconciliation, justice, peace, good governance, solidarity, the common good, etc.) and fighting against (poverty, injustice, oppression, exploitation, greed, hateful conflict, etc.). It is a project because it requires special attention over and above the everyday life of the Church and the lives of her members. It is not surprising, therefore that the challenges of Africa have called upon the Church to organise special assemblies of bishops to meet in Rome in 1993 and 2009 followed by many other meetings of church groups and institutions as special responses to these challenges. Of course the Church’s response is not merely political but there is no doubt that the Church feels that a political response is required.

Many political leaders in Africa, like King Herod, are not comfortable with the Church criticising their governments and taking a more proactive role in translating the Gospel values into concrete life. They want the Church to feed the poor, to provide shelter, and visit the sick and those in prisons. But they do not want the Church to teach about human rights, good governance, and how to assess the economic and political performance of their governments. This is unfortunate, for the Church, like all genuine political leaders, aims at contributing to the creation of a better world with people and for people.

I must explain the sense in which I think the Church is a genuine political leader. I do not mean by that that the Church takes part in

¹⁰⁵ Pope Benedict XVI., Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* about the holistic development of love and truth, humanity announcements of the Holy See, No. 186, Bonn 2009, No. 1.

party politics or that the Church vies for political power in government. And yet the Church affects politics and, if she is to be relevant at all, she has to do so. The Church provides leadership in politics in that she has values and visions for how society ought to function. She provides leadership if she succeeds in being “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (*Mt* 5:13-14). In the light of the values of the Church, one political project that Pope Benedict clearly encourages the Church in Africa to embark on is saving the family. Writing on this project he says, “The Universal Church is calling upon Africa to save the Family! It is therefore our imperative duty to tirelessly to strategically work in ways that make this protection effective and durable. Hence Africa is called to make available its already existent wisdom and promote it as a model of most human protective unit, the family! All anti values must be challenged, discouraged and eradicated from the constitutions of countries, laws and domestic practices. Africa should put its creative genius into this salutary endeavor.”¹⁰⁶

There is no doubt that the activities that the Church is called upon to do are part of a political project for it involves engaging and combating negative social values, engaging national constitutions, governments and political movements. All this is part of a wide political project to encourage society to work towards a just social order in which life is protected, human dignity is enhanced and the rest of creation is respected. While the Church herself does not take part in political contestations for power in government, she however tries to influence the various political forces that are engaged in this process through education, lobbying and advocating for certain values, behaviours, cultures and social arrangements.

There is no doubt that the building of a just social order is part of the competence of the political sphere. Yet one of the tasks of the Church in Africa consists in forming upright consciences receptive to the demands of justice, so as to produce men and women willing and able to build this just social order by their responsible conduct.¹⁰⁷

Politics in this wide sense is not partisan but is inspired by a sense of the common good. It is politics in the sense of pushing for a

¹⁰⁶ Pope Benedict XVI., Subapostolic letter *Africae Munus* about the Church in Africa in her service of appeasement, justice and peace, 19 November 2011, announcements of the Holy See, No. 190, Bonn 2011, No. 7, 42–46.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *Africae Munus* 33.

certain way of looking at things and gathering resources, skills, power and capabilities in order to realise this preferred way of looking at reality. It is informed by a defined spirituality. It is politics in the sense that it involves fighting against certain ways of looking at reality and certain ways of organising social reality. It is politics in the sense that it is organised since “Organized programs are necessary for directing, stimulating, coordinating, supplying and integrating” the work of individuals and intermediary organizations¹⁰⁸. Explaining the Church’s political project in this wide sense, Pope John Paul II wrote, “The progressive development of peoples is an object of deep interest and concern to the Church. This is particularly true in the case of those peoples who are trying to escape the ravages of hunger, poverty, endemic disease and ignorance; of those who are seeking a larger share in the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities; of those who are consciously striving for fuller growth.”¹⁰⁹

The Church understands that human beings were not created to suffer but to be free and happy through being fulfilled physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, culturally and spiritually. God gave us varied talents and capabilities so that we can create the social, cultural, political, and economic environment in which we can all flourish and be happy. We therefore, have responsibilities to contribute to the creation of conditions that make everyone flourish. The conditions of injustice must be confronted.

We want to be clearly understood on this point: The present state of affairs must be confronted boldly, and its concomitant injustices must be challenged and overcome. Continuing development calls for bold innovations that will work profound changes. The critical state of affairs must be corrected for the better without delay.¹¹⁰

Thus, we need a basic spiritual and ethical perspective which is inspired by the common good. It is this morality and spirituality which becomes the cement of our local, national, regional and global political universe. This morality and spirituality must necessarily and creatively engage the local customs, cultures, and traditions and learn

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Ecclesia in Africa* 33.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *ibid* 1.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ibid* 32.

from them as they also make their own contributions. An example of such creative collaboration and engagement can be seen in the creativity of Africans as they confront the crisis of governance in Africa.

Traditional Metaphors in Governance

One of the major challenges of societies in transition in Africa is of how to construct a system of governance that guides us on how to live with our political opponents. Traditional metaphors of governance could suggest useful insights for contemporary Africa. Our political leaders should have big hearts and wide minds, capable of helping all of us to live together but without attempting to abolish politics. This is the spirituality of genuine spiritual encounter. In African traditional societies that role seems to have been played by the Old Man and the Old Woman – grandfather and grandmother. This role is critical in the system of social governance. Part of what it means ‘to grow old’ or ‘to mature’ is to give up close involvement in the narrow or day-to-day political fights. When someone says, “You have met me when I am now old.” it may mean “You met me after I have matured, mellowed and grown to be more responsible”. The suggestion is that ‘to grow up’ and to grow old is to develop into a more responsible, socially sensitive and politically mature person. The old man and old woman is given the socially responsible role of looking at the big picture – reconciling people, defending the weak and helping the powerful to be responsive to the needs of the others especially the marginalised. *Sekuru*¹¹¹ and *ambuya*¹¹² are people who are considered to have lived their lives and are now ready to help the young live their lives, too. In modern terms, *sekuru* and *ambuya* are the retired – those who do not compete with the young on the job market – those with few direct vested interests – those unlikely to be vexed by clash of selfish political and business interests. They are the people who are supposed to have given up the old grudges partly because most of their peers will have died and some of the issues they fought for will have been taken over by others using new techniques and approaches. This is why they are people to whom even murderers, political malcontents and social transgressors turn to for advice and support.¹¹³ They play the role well because they

¹¹¹ Shona term for ‘grandfather’.

¹¹² Shona term for ‘grandmother’.

¹¹³ The Church teaches that her door must always be open to everyone. African traditions

have long life experiences which protect them from being shocked by any transgressions referred to them. They tend to play the role well because they know everyone and because of this, they can talk to anyone in ways that can help resolve difficult issues. In contemporary times, this should be the role of eminent persons, retired presidents and other political and social leaders. This is why limits to presidential terms can be helpful to African political governance.

African leaders who led us to political independence tried to imagine the new nation-states in what they thought were traditional terms. They helped to build social imaginaries informed by “traditional” experiences to justify their modes of governance. Unfortunately many of them tried to play double roles. They tried to be *eminent persons* while they were also acting as *revolutionaries* with many direct vested political and economic interests that brought them into confrontation with fellow citizens. They wanted to be respected as eminent persons yet they were still deeply engrossed in live combat with fellow citizens. They either failed or refused to defend their own citizens because those citizens had different political opinions from theirs. One-party states were defended by images of African traditional societies. In this discourse, nation-states were conceptualised as cattle *kraals* where there needed to be only one bull or chicken runs with only one cock. What we were not told, however, is that cattle *kraals* and chicken runs were human constructs and not natural institutions. Humans prescribed that there be one bull in the *kraal*. Hence the *kraal* paradigm could not act as a moral ideal to guide humans. Yet this simple and false idea inspired many good people and inspired them to hate, fight and sometimes commit murders in its name.

Much imagination was invested by those who invoked “African socialism” in conceptualising the nation-state as an African family governed through the African court which is said to have relied on the building of consensus. What we were not encouraged to question were the moral legitimacy and power dynamics of the African court itself. Could it adequately work as a metaphor for an ideal family or a morally adequate system of social and political governance and conflict resolution at the level of the nation state? If you were African, you were supposed to accept and defend this understanding of African

and customs can be enriched by this teaching. Of course, the Church herself needs to listen to her lesson.

traditions without asking whether this paradigm was the best that we could use to handle contemporary African social, political, economic and technological challenges. In this way, oppressive African customs and traditions were being constructed.

But these African traditions were presented as if today's African people had no role in interpreting them and selecting what was relevant to them and in their context. Our ancestors were intelligent people who creatively reflected about their situation and tried to provide answers to their own live social and political questions. They were not perfect. They did not always agree with each other. They sometimes even fought with each other. But they tried to be rational and creative about their traditions. In other words, they rationally selected values, systems, and attitudes from their elders to solve their own challenges. They debated about the best ways of following their respective traditions. Yet some of our modern African traditionalists present our ancestors as if they never cherished debates on the meaning of their traditions. Hence, we now have exclusive, self-appointed interpreters of African traditions, *Ubuntu*, African liberation struggles and African governance traditions. We now end up with African traditions being forced down our throats. Someone now appoints himself to be the arbiter of what it means to be fully and authentically African. This has been a source of some of the deepest conflicts of the post-colonial era. This has been one of the fundamental causes of our political crisis.

For example, some of these leaders have suggested that African participatory governance could be inspired by the African court system. Others suggested that the African family system could be a paradigm for contemporary African political governance. Experiments inspired by the African court and the African family systems were rife and spearheaded by liberation movements. Nyerere's *Ujamaa*, Moi's *Nyayoism*, Kaunda's *Humanism*, etc. African victims of these experiments have a clear view of the moral limits of these experiments. The philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah has talked about how his father suffered harassment and arrests perpetrated by 'the father of African liberation', – Kwame Nkrumah. Women have raised serious issues about some of the ways that participatory governance has been conceptualised by the dominant political leaders on the continent. Serious questions about the blindness of these paradigms

to the rights of many Africans have been raised. These political efforts, inspired by invented African traditions, struggle to handle the complex multi-tradition, multi-cultural, and multi-religious character of modern African states. The ideas of the village court and that of the African extended family system have many good points to inspire us. Yet the irony is that many Africans have suffered and lost their lives in the name of African traditions of participatory political governance and conflict transformation and resolution. It is really sad and tragic when Africans persecute other Africans in the name of making them more African.

While the Church in Africa has sometimes been the problem bringing conflict and oppression, in its social teachings, the Church has a wealth of an inclusive spirituality, and values and principles capable of widening the African social imaginary in ways that could make invaluable contribution to going beyond the crises we face.

Most of our invented political traditions and governance frameworks still rely on binary oppositional paradigms of us/them; friend/enemy, local/foreigner, insider/outsider, etc. We still don't know how to handle ambiguities. Our social imaginaries are yet to handle adequately the question of citizenship. Many Africans still suffer persecution in the hands of fellow Africans. Even within the same country boundaries, country compatriots still kill each other. Our political emotions still cannot handle the possibility of a white child being fully African. The white child in Africa still struggles to see himself as African. Deep down in our hearts, the idea of a woman president still appears ridiculous in the way that Americans used to scoff at the idea of a black president. For as long as we only want to be with the people who think, talk and look the same as us, we will continue to fail on social participatory governance. Just as Hitler caused much suffering by embarking on a project of eliminating difference and banishing ambiguities in people's identities, we find ourselves, as essentially good people, plunged into horrible human tragedies for trying the same.

Crisis of Governance and the Expansion of Social Imaginaries

What we imagine good governance to be informs our sense of who will participate in it and how. Our various historical traditions and cultures have informed our imagination, conceptual frameworks and

emotional responses to the issue of participation in governance. We conjure up images, metaphors and vocabularies from our various traditions to express our understanding and prescriptions on governance. However, situations of transition destabilise these social imaginaries and social frameworks. Contemporary multi-cultural societies demand the respective expansion of our various historical social imaginaries. In the past, each group, steeped in its traditions, has tried to universalise its particular values. Each group has closed itself in its fort – starting with the white settler communities, followed by the various ethnic groups, classes, and other social and political groups. This has made it difficult to establish universal participatory governance.

Our societies in Africa have been undermined by the narrowness of our social imaginaries. We have been let down by the sorts of things people imagine governance to be and how that imagination informs and guides our respective values, attitudes and conduct. We must learn from our various moments of madness that certain emotions and attitudes can be dangerous to the nation when fed into the national psyche. Certain political slogans which cultivate emotional responses geared towards turning political opponents into enemies and political debates into wars are based on narrow visions of our various societies. Africans must develop inclusive systems of governance that recognise that politics cannot be banished, disagreement cannot be wished away and neither should political opponents be silenced by intimidation or elimination. Inclusive systems of governance plan for and deliberately develop respectable spaces for political opponents. They cultivate appropriate emotional responses towards them, always treating them as human beings. This is what we can learn from the values of the social teachings. Politics based on genuine spiritual encounter and done in the spirit of love and the search for the common good will always respect the dignity of every human person including those we fight.

Challenges

There are a number of challenges that we must meet as we struggle towards good governance and the establishment of a just order in Africa.

1. Most Catholics (lay and religious) in Africa do not use Catholic social teaching as the windows through which to look at political

reform. Catholic social teaching is still largely the “Best Kept Secret”. At the African Forum for Catholic Social Teaching (AFCAST) where I was coordinator for 11 years, we tried to create a laboratory for making more visible the teachings of the Church. As a network, we tried to be a think-well for reflecting on how Catholic institutions and individuals could be inspired to take the teachings into their constituencies, professions, work places and programmes.

2. Most church leaders are evangelised by African political leaders and not the other way round. Many church leaders speak the language of political parties and political movements. That way, they also imbibe the attitudes and emotional responses of anger, violence, woundedness and trauma behind those vocabularies. Yet they have the Catholic Social Teaching at their disposal. It is indeed a challenge to get Christians to look at politics with Christian eyes and to act politically but with Christian inspiration. It is a big challenge to look at politics not as dirty, but a creative way of manufacturing, accumulating, distributing and consuming political power for the sake of the common good.
3. It is a challenge in some countries that bishop’s conferences are divided on how to apply the social teaching to political reforms. While there is nothing wrong in church leaders disagreeing and debating with one another, it appears curious that such disagreements have often taken tribal and party-political lines rather than being matters of values and principles.
4. It is a big challenge that Africa’s political challenges have always used help from other governments and international non-governmental organisations which have their own interests and priorities. Sometimes these institutions that include church organisations such as CRS, Cafod, Misereor, Missio, Caritas International and others, forget that they were invented to help human beings in need as they focus more on the technical demands of programme implementation than on the needs of those in need and the genuine spiritual encounter especially of the impoverished and marginalised.
5. Some political leaders who associate with the church have given terrible counter-witnesses to the values of Catholic social teaching.

It is indeed a challenge to work towards integral development and to orient and capacitate church structures and personnel to work towards the vision of development that Pope Francis articulated and I want to conclude with a quotation from him:

“The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. ...Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.”¹¹⁴

Biblical Reflections

¹¹⁴ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 13.

Paradise Lost and Paradise Promised.

The New Testament View of Creation

Thomas Söding

The *Finale Furioso* of Biblical Creation Theology

The Christian Bible ends with a glorious picture of hope. “A great city is created and descends from heaven to earth” – this is the picture painted in a hymn of praise written by Silja Walter in 1966 and put to music by Josef Anton Saladin in 1972. The hymn became so popular that it found its way into Germany’s Roman Catholic prayer book and hymnal *Neues Gotteslob* (no. 479). The words pick up the spectacularly joyful conclusion of the history of salvation which is depicted so daringly in the Book of Revelation: At the very end, after all the turmoil of history with its fighting, civil wars, famines, plagues, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis, everything on earth will be well again – and indeed infinitely better than anything we have ever dreamt of or hoped for.¹¹⁵ This “great city” is the Heavenly Jerusalem – the place where God’s people long to be. Jerusalem is the most important place in Israel, the site of the Temple, the scene of major victories and defeats and the city where Jesus was crucified and then appeared to His disciples. It is profoundly significant that this new City of God should be the heavenly Jerusalem. Nothing that has ever happened in history since before the creation of the world will be lost. Everything will reach its fulfilment, everything will be caught up in God’s power and love, and everything will be well again: “Look, here God lives among human beings. He will make his home among them; they will be his people, and he will be their God, God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness or pain. The world of the past has gone.” (Rev 21:3-4)

¹¹⁵ Cf. Wick, Peter, “Das Paradies in der Stadt: Das himmlische Jerusalem als Ziel der Offenbarung des Johannes”, in: von Bendemann, Reinhard/Tiwald, Markus (eds.), *Das frühe Christentum und die Stadt* (BWANT 198), Stuttgart 2012, 238–250.

The heavenly City will open its gates to the entire world. Sin and impurity will remain outside these gates, and so a broad global horizon will open up: “The nations will come to its light and the kings of the earth will bring it their treasures. Its gates will never be closed by day – and there will be no night there.” (Rev 21:24-25) The Heavenly City will be continually as bright as day, because God himself will have His dwelling place there, radiating His everlasting light.

Upon entering the city through numerous open gates in its walls, the nations will find themselves in a new Paradise. John writes: “Then the angel showed me the river of life, rising from the throne of God and of the Lamb and flowing crystal-clear. Down the middle of the city street, on either bank of the river were the trees of life, which bear twelve crops of fruit in a year, one in each month, and the leaves of which are the cure for the nations.” (Rev 22:1-2). This heavenly place is the promised Paradise, yet it has changed since the first one that was lost. Its location is not just anywhere, but within the heavenly City. The four streams of the earlier Paradise have now been united into a single broad river. Instead of a single tree of life whose fruit was forbidden, we can now see entire avenues of such trees bearing fruit throughout the year – fruit that is not just nourishment but which also brings healing. There is even peace among the beasts, following the picture of the future painted by Isaiah (Isa. 11), as there is now no longer any need to breed and slaughter any of the animals (see Gen 9:3-4).

This Paradise is not untouched nature as conjured up by Jean-Jacques Rousseau who saw Paradise as something which could only be found among the “savages” – the only truly good and undefiled people.¹¹⁶ Rather, it is a garden that will be managed by God Himself and cultivated by man. This is why the early Paradise, which was lost by Adam and Eve (see Gen 3), always had a specific location in the history of Israel: in its Temple – a Temple which was built, destroyed and then longed for.¹¹⁷

This hope comes to life in Revelation, not as a copy of an older version, but as a new original which bears the imprint of Jesus Christ,

¹¹⁶ Rousseau, Jean Jacques, *Emile ou de l'éducation* (Amsterdam 1762), Paris 2009.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Keel, Othmar/Zenger, Erich, *Gottesstadt und Gottesgarten: Zur Geschichte und Theologie des Jerusalemer Tempels* (QD, No. 191), Freiburg im Breisgau 2002.

the Lamb of God.¹¹⁸ This Christological perspective shows the characteristics of a New Testament creation theology which is based on the Old Testament and shares its premises but which goes further in that it also transforms its models.¹¹⁹

The *Sinfonia Concertante* of the New Testament View of Creation

Creation theology in the New Testament can be characterised by three fields of tension which reconcile creation and redemption, immanence and transcendence, lament and praise. All three are directly related to Jesus.

Allegro: Creation of the World and the History of Fulfillment

In the Letter to the Colossians¹²⁰ (written by the Apostle Paul or one of his students) the author criticises an esoteric “philosophy” (Col 2:8-23) which apparently had a major impact on the Church at the time. This “philosophy” sought to reconcile faith in Christ and creation spirituality, but did so on the basis of false premises. It assumed a contemporary worldview which saw the universe as being in a sensitive and continually vulnerable balance between the “universal elements” of fire, water, earth and air. In ancient – and indeed also philosophical – mythology these elements were regarded as divine powers which had to be served in order to lead a good life and to maintain harmony with those supernatural forces. In Colossae’s world of Christian “philosophy” – which was very much in vogue at the time – those elemental forces were apparently perceived as metaphysical dimensions which threatened to disrupt any relationship with God. It followed that, for religious reasons, one had to be on good terms with them, and they had to be worshipped as angels (Col 2:18). So asceticism was required with regard to eating, drinking and sexuality, at least during specific religious festivals (Col 2:16): “Do not pick up this, do not eat that, do not touch the other” (Col 2:21). The idea was to practise Christianity in a way that was humble, yet superior and in harmony with nature.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Backhaus, Knut, *Theologie als Vision: Studien zur Johannesapokalypse* (SBS, No. 191), Stuttgart 2001.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Janowski, Bernd/Scholtissek, Klaus, Art. “Schöpfung”, in: Bjerkelund, Angelika/Frevel, Christian (eds.), *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe zum Alten und Neuen Testament*, Darmstadt 2015, 385-387.

¹²⁰ Cf. Bormann, Lukas, *Der Brief an die Kolosser* (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament, No. 10/1), Leipzig 2012.

The author of Colossians did not think much of this model at all. He felt that the significance of baptism and of faith was being undermined by a belief in mythological concepts and so he emphasised the importance of a direct line to God. If someone wants to come to God, there is no need to take a detour, since he can be approached directly through Jesus Christ. This is the Good News. Any confusion on this point is born out of fear, and although such fear is humanly understandable, it is theologically fatal.

To spread this message, the author pulled no punches, using the full force of his Pauline theology which, in turn, was deeply rooted in the biblical view of creation. The key sentence in his theological critique of that “philosophy” sums up this entire chapter of New Testament religious criticism: “In him, in bodily form, lives divinity in all its fullness” (Col 2:9). To gain a better understanding of these words it is helpful to look at the author’s meditation in the previous chapter, where he uses a canticle from a liturgy that was probably sung by Early Christians at the time and where we can hear a recurring theme reverberating like a refrain (Col 1:15-20): “For in him [...] all things were created through him and for him” (Col 1:16), all God’s fullness dwells “in him”, through him he reconciled all things “to himself”, and he has made peace through his blood, shed on the cross (Col 1:19-20). The canticle centres around a sense of connectedness that characterises God’s presence: “He exists before all things and in him all things hold together” (Col 1:17).

In this prayer Jesus Christ is described as a figure not just of the past, but also of the present and the future, and indeed as more than a human being among humans, but as the central figure of creation as a whole. One of the insights of Old Testament wisdom theology is that man and animal can only find their bearings in this world because God Himself has given meaning to His creation. It is in His wisdom that God designed a masterplan which holds the world together in its innermost being. And if God called the world into being, it cannot be His will for the world to vanish into nothingness. There has to be a future for the world that lies beyond all futures, as otherwise God would have contradicted Himself.

In Colossians we can see God’s wisdom being given a name, a face and a narrative – the name, face and story of Jesus. It is Jesus who shows that the world is God’s creation, that it is held together by

God’s will and that this will find its fulfilment in God’s own fullness. Yet at the same time the cosmic width of the canticle also shows that the story of Jesus as God’s Son did not have a beginning. If that were the case, it would also end after a certain period of time. Rather, it is God’s story in the midst of creation; it started before all time and it will continue throughout all time and into eternity. Jesus Christ is the “first-born” (Col 1:15), not so that He could remain alone, but so that all God’s children might enter into fulfilment through Him, with Him and in Him, and so that mankind might not stay alone but experience God’s peace as His creatures and therefore as part of His one and only creation.

The New Testament has various ways of expressing the connection between creation and redemption, starting with Jesus’ parables and finishing with the apocalyptic imagery in the Book of Revelation. The Christian hope of fulfilment is fed by two roots. One is the existence of so much suffering, distress and guilt in the world: distress and misery which cannot possibly have the final word if God is merciful in His judgement. In fact, our Christian hope of fulfilment is a serious expression of faith in the God who is love (1 John 4:18, 16). The other root is the very existence of life on earth: if it was created by God, then the best is still to come – necessarily, as otherwise God would be unfaithful to Himself.

In our everyday world this hope is continually contested and regarded as illusory. It requires celebration, liturgy and prayer to praise God as the one who leads His creation towards fulfilment and who therefore changes the world even now, starting in the hearts of believers.

Adagio: The Ruler of the Universe in the Midst of Creation

The Bible begins with the words: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth” (Gen 1:1). This makes all the difference: God is the Creator, He is not part of the world; the world is His creation. None of His creatures are divinities. This fundamental monotheistic difference is a core tenet of biblical theology. The Early Christians wholeheartedly shared this view.

Looking at Jesus, the New Testament shows that God is not just outside the world, but that he has entered it. This Christological concept is reflected most clearly in the prologue of John’s Gospel

(John 1:1-18).¹²¹ These words, too, are a prayer. They form the introduction to the fourth Gospel which contains a different perspective from the other three in talking about Jesus' teachings, suffering and resurrection. What distinguishes John's Gospel is that it presents a special focus on Jesus' oneness with God and His people. "The Father and I are one" (John 10:30), says Jesus at the climax of His sermon about the Good Shepherd (John 10) in which He picks up the theme of Psalm 23. "Here is the man", says Pontius Pilate as he parades the tortured King of the Jews with a crown of thorns and addresses the masses who clamour for Jesus' crucifixion (John 19:5).¹²²

There is no contradiction here as, according to John, Jesus not only proclaimed God's Word, but also embodied it. We can also see this reflected in the prologue: "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1) – the *logos* in Greek, a word which expressed a concept in Jewish wisdom literature: "Through Him all things came into being" (John 1:3), "What has come into being in him was life, life that was the light of men" (John 1:4). But what follows is very clearly Christological in character: "The Word (the *logos*) became flesh, He lived among us" (John 1:14). So is the incarnation a major breach? Or is it the ultimate consequence of Jesus' role as a mediator within creation?

Marcion, who – in the second century – saw an irreconcilable contrast between the creation and redemption, did indeed tend to see it as a breach and refused to include John's Gospel in his biblical canon. In the 19th century Adolf von Harnack attempted to reinstate Marcion. He saw John's prologue as a great sin in that it had led to the Hellenisation of Christianity and should be reversed in the modern age by returning to the (supposedly) simple teachings of Jesus.¹²³ However, Marcionism puts a *caesura* into the very heart of the Bible, mutilating the New Testament and turning creation into a world without God.

John takes a different route. The incarnation has a double edge. Firstly, it is a response to a situation in which God's Word was proclaimed to mankind but was not heard by the vast majority

¹²¹ Cf. Kruck, Günter, Der Johannesprolog, Darmstadt 2009.

¹²² Cf. Ratzinger, Joseph (Pope Benedict XVI.), Jesus von Nazareth: Zweiter Teil: Vom Einzug in Jerusalem bis zur Auferstehung, Freiburg im Breisgau 2011, 233.

¹²³ Cf. von Harnack, Adolf, Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott (1921, 21924), Darmstadt 1985.

(John 1:10f.) – a situation which required a final act on God's part. Secondly, however, the incarnation of the *logos* is more than an emergency solution. It is the strongest intensification of affection that God could ever show the world. He called it into being through His Word, He spoke His Word over it through the history of His people (John 1:6-13), and He gave His Son and thus His greatest gift of love (John 3:16).

When it says in verse 14, as a confession of faith, that God's eternal Word became "flesh", then this expresses the closest imaginable link between creation and redemption. After all, according to the biblical view of man,¹²⁴ the "flesh" is precisely the side of man that specifies him as part of creation:

Man is born and will die, he has sensory organs, he is capable of passion and suffering, he is beautiful and ugly, he is weak, and he is finite. In Jesus, God's Word became nothing more and nothing less than a mortal human being, and this could not be expressed more clearly than through the incarnation. The Christology of John's Gospel starts right at the top – and arrives right at the bottom. It spans the full width of the universe – and it goes even further because it is based on God's perspective. The same, therefore, is also true in reverse: God Himself has entered His own creation through Jesus. This is the ultimate form of showing esteem and, indeed, the most intensive form of love.

Such a theology of God's real presence lets God be God and lets creation be creation, yet it also shows how infinitely close God comes to humanity and the entire world through Jesus. Seeing this means seeing God's glory – in a man who greatly influences those who put their faith in him.¹²⁵ By stating "I am", Jesus turned specific creational and cultural elements into divine symbols in the midst of this world: water, wine, bread, the way, the shepherd, light and the door. This perspective of the hope of salvation is expressed particularly clearly in Jesus's high priestly prayer (John 17): Those who put their faith in him become partakers of that love between the Father and the Son, a love that is older than creation itself (John 17:24) and which overcomes

¹²⁴ Cf. Frevel, Christian/Wischmeyer, Oda, Menschsein: Perspektiven des Alten und des Neuen Testaments (NEB, Themen 11), Würzburg 2003.

¹²⁵ Cf. Söding, Thomas, Der Gottessohn aus Nazaret: Das Menschsein Jesu im Neuen Testament, Freiburg im Breisgau 2008.

the gulf between God and the world, not by secularising God, but by trusting that God will deify the world and bring it to its fulfilment.

What John presents in such a condensed form is part of the fundamental structure of New Testament theology. In the Book of Revelation we can see the fulfilment of the heavenly Jerusalem and thus the fulfilment of God's covenant with His people: that He will live among them and be with them forever (Rev 21:3). The Second Epistle of Peter promises Christians that they will "share the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Paul sees Jesus' divine sonship not as an exclusive relationship with God, but as a chance for humans to enter fully into their status as God's children by becoming brothers and sisters of Jesus. According to Colossians, God's entire fullness lives in Jesus "in bodily form" (Col 2:9): It is man who becomes its vessel and who is then defined by it. What is central here is a theology of love that overcomes the world, yet does not despise it. Rather, it affirms the world, and indeed so much that it becomes transformed.

Presto: All Creation crying out with the Voice of Hope

As Jesus and Christians are so closely connected with creation, this also affects their spirituality and ethics. This is expressed most clearly in Paul's Letter to the Romans in which he formulates a theology of righteousness (Rom 1:16f.), showing that God's grace is not random. Rather, it follows from His will as the Creator and expresses His faithfulness to His promises. Moreover, it does not tie people to their sinfulness but lets them live in their status as God's children and thus in their true identity.¹²⁶

This theology of righteousness creates a sound bridge between preaching salvation and practical ethics (Rom 6:12-21, 12:1f. and 9-21), and it also builds a bridge between salvation and spirituality. As soon as Paul reaches the climax of his reasoning on justification by faith, he widens the panorama to include the whole of creation. There is a profound point of identification – both in suffering and in hope –

¹²⁶ On this doctrine of justification see: *Biblische Grundlagen der Rechtfertigungslehre – Eine ökumenische Studie zur Gemeinsamen Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre*. The study was commissioned by the Lutheran World Federation, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the World Methodist Council and then submitted by a workgroup of Old Testament, New Testament and systematic theologians. Ed. by Klaiber, Walter, Leipzig/Paderborn 2012.

between Christians and all of creation. On the dark side, Paul points out the sensitive awareness of Christians that "the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth" – a side which is also reflected in Christian suffering (Rom 8:22). Yet creation is unable to express its lament – just as Christians are speechless in the face of affliction (Rom 8:26).

However, it is Christians who have received the Holy Spirit, so that they have access to God in prayer, crying *Abba* in the words of Jesus' native language (Rom 8:14-15) and in the theme-setting first line of the Lord's Prayer. By praying in this way, Christians do more than express their own distress before God, asking for relief. They also intercede on behalf of the entire world which has no voice of its own.

This has its equivalent on the bright side, as hope of fulfilment is available not only for Christians, but for the whole of creation. A believer is well aware "that the whole creation itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God" (Rom 8:21). This hope finds expression when Christians cry out to God as "Father". We can see this particularly clearly in the Lord's Prayer as the background to Paul's reasoning. After all, God's name is that of the Creator, God's Kingdom transforms the world, God's will claims universal validity "on earth as it is in heaven", the daily bread we need is the "fruit of the earth and of human hands", our guilt has wounded creation, and deliverance from evil encompasses the entire universe, as otherwise its impact would be halved.

Believers are blessed in that they already have this hope. Prayer creates fellowship not only among humans, but with all of creation. In 1843/44 Karl Marx said in his introduction to his "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law": "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the soul of soulless conditions."¹²⁷ These words, which might well have been copied from Paul, appear to ignore two important aspects. First of all, the focus is on humans alone, while Paul looks at creation in its entirety; secondly, God is left out, thus foregoing the thought that there might be inspiration in

¹²⁷ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/df-jahrbucher/law-abs.htm> (05.07.2017): "Abstract from The Introduction to Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" [sic].

the face of all our affliction and that all earthly happiness – even in the most equitable of societies – is merely a shadow of the heavenly fulfilment which God will eventually open up to the entire universe. This is the main theme of the symphony of creation which we hear in the New Testament. Jesus put it into words when he gave his Sermon on the Mount. The canticle that is presented in Colossians sheds light on the bright side, i.e. the joy of those who know that they have their place within the rhythm of creation and that, together with creation, they are destined for fulfilment. The Book of Revelation goes to great lengths in emphasising man's culpability in poisoning the water and air and in destroying nature prior to the rise of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1, Isa 65:17 and 66:22).

The *cantus firmus* of Christian Creation Spirituality

The première of Joseph Haydn's oratorio *The Creation* took place in Vienna in 1798 and it finished with a sentence for the choir and soloists: "Sing the Lord, ye voices all, / Magnify His Name through all creation, Celebrate His power and glory, / Let His Name resound on high. Jehovah's praise for ever shall endure. Amen!" (No. 37). Apart from the Bible, the most important source was Milton's *Paradise Lost*. At the time of Isaac Newton, Haydn did not stubbornly defend a biblical belief in creation against science but celebrated God's unseen presence in a world that follows the laws of nature. He put to music the calling that rests on all creatures to praise God – creatures that are not divinities, but living beings and things at this time and in this place in the universe.¹²⁸ Physics is very much in tune with such music – just as the Bible with its creation theology has not become obsolete, but has gained several new aspects: the distinction between faith and knowledge as a basis for dialogue, the specific quality of this world without which there would be no dialogue with God and the finiteness of creation surrounded by God's infinity.¹²⁹

Christian creation spirituality follows from the theological theme of creation that resounds like a symphony in the Old and New Testaments. Silja Walter's hymn of the "great city" that "descends from heaven to earth" (German Roman Catholic hymnal *Gotteslob*, 479),

continues with a description borrowed from the Book of Revelation where it primarily refers to God Himself (Rev 22:5): "They will not need lamplight or sunlight, because the Lord God will be shining on them." There are two sides to this apocalyptic image: firstly, our natural light can never be bright enough to illuminate eternal life and, secondly, God's everlasting light shines brighter than a thousand suns and moons. It follows that the light of the sun and the moon can already give us a glimpse of God's light. The whole of creation points to the Creator and serves as a signpost to that final fulfilment. This hope should not be destroyed by the disasters of this world. Instead, they should inspire us with hope because God can never be resigned to them.

This hope is also expressed at the very end of the Book of Revelation, concluding the entire Bible. First the risen Lord Jesus Himself says: "I am indeed coming soon" (Rev 22:20a), words which are then echoed by the Church: "Amen; come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20B), and finally we hear the words of the prophet who knows himself to be inspired by God: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen." (Rev 22:21). This universality of salvation is the other side of creation theology, and it is the heartbeat of biblical creation spirituality that we should pray for Jesus' return when He will bring life to all.

¹²⁸ Cf. Rohls, Jan, "Haydn's 'Schöpfung' und ihr theologischer Hintergrund", in: *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie*, No. 55 (2013), 465–494.

¹²⁹ Cf. Schmidt, Konrad, *Schöpfung* (UTB), Stuttgart 2012.

Ecology and Spirituality in the Light of the Cosmological Paradigm

Leonardo Boff

The Earth Charter, one of the most robust ecological documents of recent years which was adopted by UNESCO in 2003, and the Encyclical Letter from Pope Francis *Laudato Si', On Care For Our Common Home* in 2015, doubtless represent the best that humanity's ecological consciousness can offer. The text of the Earth Charter opens with the dramatic words: "We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life."¹³⁰

The Papal Encyclical declares: "We need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair... The present world system is certainly unsustainable from a number of points of view... Humanity has disappointed God's expectations."¹³¹

The alarm is not unfounded, for in the past few decades we have constructed for ourselves a principle of self-destruction, inaugurating – some scientists claim – a new geological era known as the *Anthropocene*. The term was designed to signal that the great threat of the present day is not posed by a racing meteorite, but by the human species itself, transformed into a geological force that seriously threatens the life system and the Earth system. The death machinery of atomic, chemical and biological weapons is so destructive that a mere percentage of them would allow us to harm the biosphere severely and abort the human project. As a species

¹³⁰ Die Erd-Charta, ed. by Ökumenische Initiative Eine Welt und BUND, Diemelstadt-Wethen 2003, 7–8.

¹³¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (LS) about the care for the common house, Announcement of the Apostolic See, No. 202, ed. by the office of the German episcopal conference, Bonn 2015, No. 61.

– *homo sapiens et demens* – we already occupy 83% of the planet, exploiting almost all nature's goods and services for our own benefit. And on top of this, the steady increase in global warming is likewise generating conditions that jeopardize our future.

Such is our voracity that, in 2015, Earth Overshoot Day fell on 13 August, the date in the year when we exceeded the Earth's biocapacity to cater for humanity's annual requirements. We would need 1.6 planets to cater for this demand. The marker demonstrates, in other words, that our lifestyle is unsustainable. The calculation does not even include the needs of the biocommunity as a whole (flora, fauna and micro-organisms). This makes our responsibility for the Earth's destiny and our planetary project all the more urgent.

It gets worse: we are hostage to a predatory and consumerist model of civilization which, if it were to be adopted everywhere, would require three planets such as our own to cater for its demands. That is obviously impossible, and it reveals that the way we produce, distribute and consume goods and services is utterly unsustainable. There is no shortage of geo-analysts who now warn that either we change the paradigm on which our relationship with the Earth is founded, or we brace ourselves for the worst.

The Urgent Need for Spirituality in the Present Crisis

This is the dramatic context in which the pressing need for spirituality arises. It has its own value, regardless of historical scenarios like the one described above. But at present, in this high-risk scenario which most human beings barely notice, it is an urgent imperative, as it constitutes one of the secret sources of a new manner of living which might rescue us.

Why spirituality, of all things? Because it harbours within its core the *hope principle*, and that is what usually drives the great visions that carry us onwards and upwards, visions which can inspire the practices needed to save us. Notable anthropologists like Claude Lévy Strauss and Clifford Geertz confirm that, whenever a civilizational paradigm confronts a crisis, when our guiding stars hide behind the clouds, and when people lose sight of their horizon of hope and can no longer generate meaning, spirituality will irrepressibly emerge. And that is what is happening today, practically, in all cultures and across the world.

What does spirituality mean here? Without pre-empting the reply below, spirituality is a new experience of being, the flowering of a new dream, the vision of a different order which can structure the spreading chaos. It is an experience of new meaning, rather than codified knowledge. Everything that concerns profound human experience as it reaches down to touch the roots of reality, before things are organized into an order and system, into knowledge and institutions, constitutes experience of spirit, and it is from here that spirituality comes. Spirit is that creative, structuring Energy which, in spiritual tradition, has been given such different names as Tao, Shiva, Allah, Yahweh, God, and which dwells within humans. It is the capacity to derive new meaning from the potential which resides within reality.

This spiritual experience is the fountain of religions, of the paradigms on which civilizations are built, of the ability to create another history and to kindle hope in human communities and as individuals. As it says in the Encyclical Letter "On Care For Our Common Home" from Pope Francis, "spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an 'interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity'".¹³²

Usually, spirituality finds a natural niche within the bosom of religions. But these actually follow later; they are born out of the spiritual experience of a founder, a prophet, a charismatic thinker. Within them, the great human utopias take shape, visions of a pathway that can overtake the transitory world to achieve transcendence and eternity. In an age of crisis, these provide the fertile soil where new perspectives can germinate. These permit the passage from one paradigm to another, upholding the *continuum* of human history.

But spirituality is not the monopoly of religions, even if they offer a privileged sphere for it to emerge and find expression. Spirituality is an anthropological fact, a profoundly human dimension. Structurally, then, it is a human characteristic, just like civil rights, power, sexuality, rationality and caring. That is why it can occur in people of no defined

¹³² LS 216.

religious affiliation. It is to this anthropological spirituality that we must refer when addressing the theme of spirituality and ecology.

Finally, we must overcome anthropocentrism, which is so visceral in our culture as to overlook the intrinsic value of every being and assume that worth is entirely measured by the extent to which another being serves humans. That is why human beings believe they are outside and above nature, rather than among it, living with it and caring for it.

Spirituality occurs in religions and in every human being, but more than this, it exists within the very structure of our universe. Spirit is within us, because it is first of all within the universe of which we are part and parcel. The Earth Charter alludes to this when it speaks of our “kinship with all life” and to the “mystery of being”, to which we owe “reverence, humility and gratitude”.¹³³

In this paper, we shall adopt the following strategy: first, we shall consider the role that religious spirituality plays in preserving ecology; second, we shall examine anthropological spirituality and its significance to ecology; and lastly, we shall reflect upon cosmic spirituality as the ultimate expression of benevolence towards and in communion with all reality.

Religious Spirituality: the World is Sacramental

All religions look upon reality *sub specie aeternitatis* (from a perspective of eternity), which means from the vantage point of God. God is experienced as the original Source of all being. He is the creator, provider and sustainer of Heaven and Earth and everything within them. “Creation is of the order of love. God’s love is the fundamental moving force in all created things,” as the Papal Encyclical underlines.¹³⁴ So “all is yours, Lord, lover of life”.¹³⁵ As He created, He left traces of His divine act in all things. They are all His sons and daughters. He does not reveal Himself directly, but He shines through in everything made by Him. That is why the universe, the stars, the vast diversity of beings, especially living beings and among them human beings, appear as sacraments of God. We might say

¹³³ The Earth-Charta, op. cit., 8.

¹³⁴ LS 77.

¹³⁵ Cf. LS 89.

that they are signs of His ineffable presence and instruments of His action in the world. Only through our hands can He move the human world.

For a religious person, everything is permeated by divine energies, as the Afro-religions in Africa and the Americas – among others – also testify. Everything elicits reverence, respect and devotion. God is present in the world and the world in God, without distance and mediation. This is what Christian theology calls panentheism, and there are equivalent terms in other traditions. But it is important not to confuse panentheism with pantheism. In pantheism, everything without distinction is God – things, mountains, individuals – which is manifestly a philosophical and theological error. In panentheism, an irreducible difference remains (one is the Creator and the other is created), but an emphasis is placed on mutual presence and interweaving.

After these reflexions, we shall briefly consider the question of where God fits in the cosmogenic process, because this is the basis for a truly ecological spirituality.

The Cosmological Narrative is about God

The religious traditions and wisdoms of humanity call God that principle which creates and orders all things. The word God represents the ineffable, a Reality that precedes all realities. Strictly speaking, we cannot say anything about God, because all our concepts and words came after and are derived from the universe. And we want to speak of That which is before the universe. How?

Those who know God from experience, the mystics, rightly say that when we speak of God, we negate rather than affirm, we offer more falsehoods than truths. Nevertheless, we must speak of Him with reverence and ardour, because we have questions to ask which we can only answer, dimly, by appealing to the category God.

The word God is bound or unbound by our powers of representation and by the supreme utopia of order, harmony, conscience, passion and that supreme sense that moves individuals and cultures. The word God only has existential significance if it channels human sentiments towards these dimensions, in the sense of infinity and supreme plenitude.

The thing that most fascinates scientists is their observation that the universe is harmonious and beautiful. It all seems to have been set up in such a way that, out of the deep abyss of an ocean of primordial energy, there emerged elementary particles, then ordered matter, followed by the complex matter that is life, and finally, matter that vibrates in complete concordance to form a supreme holistic unity: consciousness.

According to those who formulated the strong and weak anthropic principle – Brandon Carter, Hubert Reeves and others – if things had not happened as they did (expansion/explosion, formation of the red giants, galaxies, stars, planets, etc.), we would not be here to talk about the things we are talking about. In other words, for us to be here at all, those cosmic factors had to emerge and converge over a period of 13.7 billion years in such a way as to enable complexity, life and consciousness. If they had not, we would not exist, and we would not be here to reflect upon such questions.

Thus, everything is interrelated, and nothing exists outside of this relationship: when I lift my pen from the floor, I make contact with a gravitational force that attracts every body in the universe and causes it to fall. If, for example, the density of the universe – in those infinitely brief moments after the expansion/explosion – had not hovered at the right critical level, the universe could never have been constituted: matter and anti-matter would have cancelled each other out and there would not have been sufficient cohesion for mass, and hence matter, to form.

So there is evidence of a minutely calibrated sequence of steps without which the stars would never have been born, thus permitting life in the universe. For example, had strong nuclear interaction (which upholds the cohesion of atomic nuclei) been 1% more powerful, hydrogen would never have formed, and when hydrogen combined with oxygen produced water, it became indispensable to life. If the electromagnetic force (which ensures atomic and molecular cohesion and permits chemical bonding) had been only slightly greater, it would have ruled out the generation of the DNA chain, and hence the production and reproduction of life.

In all things we encounter the whole, forces interacting, particulates linking, matter stabilizing, new relations opening up, and life creating ever more sophisticated orders. Above all, we find nature's

registered trademark, a signature that sends messages we can decode.

Noting this order in the universe inspired feelings of awe and reverence in scientists like Einstein, Bohm, Hawking, Prigogine and others. There is an implicit order in all things. From its first moment, it is pervaded by consciousness and spirit. This implicit order indicates a supreme Order, consciousness and spirit represent a Consciousness that is beyond this cosmos and a transcendent Spirit.

How can we explain the existence of being? What was there before this inflationary universe or before the Big Bang? Science has nothing to say on the subject. Its point of departure is the universe as given. But scientists, as human beings, do not stop asking those questions. Max Planck, who formulated quantum theory, put it this way: *“Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of nature. And that is because, in the last analysis, we ourselves are part of nature and therefore part of the mystery that we are trying to solve.”*

The silence of science does not stifle speech. There is still the ultimate speech that derives from the other field of human insight: spirituality and religion. Here, knowledge does not mean stepping back from reality so as to strip it down into its parts. Knowledge is a form of love, of participation and communion. It is the discovery of the whole beyond the parts, the synthesis beneath the analysis. This knowledge is about discovering oneself within the totality, internalizing it and merging into it.

Indeed, we can only know what we love. David Bohm, the well-known physicist who was also a mystic, remarked: “We could imagine the mystic as someone who is in contact with the astonishing depths of matter or of the subtle mind, regardless of the name we give it.”

Out of the wonderment science arises as a force for deciphering the hidden code in all these phenomena. Out of the reverence derives mystical and ethical responsibility. Science seeks to explain how things exist. The mystic is drawn into ecstasy by the sheer fact that things are and exist, venerating That which is revealed and veiled behind every thing and the whole. The mystic seeks to experience this and enter into communion with it. What mathematics is to the scientist, meditation is to the mystic. The physicist examines matter down to its smallest possible divisions and its potential beyond detection,

breaking through to fields of energy and the quantum Vacuum. The mystic captures the energy that is distilled on many levels, breaking through to its supreme purity in God.

Today, more and more scientists, the scholars and the mystics, feel this awe and reverence when contemplating the universe. Both know that they are coming from the same underlying experience. Both are heading in the same direction: towards the mystery of reality, as grasped rationally by science and experienced emotionally through spirituality and mystic engagement. This all converges in the name of That which has no name: God.

How can we trace the image of God that shines out of contemporary cosmological reflection? It emerges from the chain of references which research is obliged to undertake: from matter, we refer on to the atom, to elementary particles; from here to the quantum Vacuum or the Abyss that generates all being. This is the ultimate reference for analytical reason. Everything stems from this and everything returns to this. It is the ocean of energy, the continent of all contained possibilities, of everything that can happen. It might also be the “great cosmic attractor”, for we can observe that the universe is being pulled towards a mysterious central point.

But is the Vacuum still part of the universal order? What happened before time? What was there before the quantum Vacuum? Intemporal reality, in an absolute equilibrium of movement, a totality of perfect symmetry, an energy without bounds and a force without frontiers.

In the “moment” of fullness, God decided to create a mirror able to see itself, He tried to create companions for His life and His love. To love is to decay, that is, to allow something to arise that is not God and does not have God’s exclusive characteristics (fullness, absolute symmetry, life without entropy, coexistence of all opposites). Something of that original plenitude decays. However, decadence is understood here in the ontological, not the ethical sense.

God creates that tiny point, a billion times smaller than an atom, the quantic Vacuum. An immeasurable flow of energy is transferred into it. Here all probabilities and possibilities are open. A universal wave prevails. The supreme Observer observes them and in so doing lets some of them materialize, compose themselves. Others collapse and return to the realm of probabilities. It all expands and,

then, explodes. The expanding universe is born. The Big Bang, rather than a point of departure, is a point of instability which – by means of relations (consciousness) – allows holistic units and increasingly interconnected orders to emerge. The universe in formation is a metaphor for God Himself, an image of His power to be and live.

If all the universe is a tissue of relationships, if all is in communion with all, if the image of God can manifest as structured in the form of communion, that is a sign that this supreme Reality is fundamentally and essentially also communion, life within relationship and supreme love.

Indeed, this reflection is endorsed by the mystical institutions and by humanity’s spiritual traditions. The essence of Judeo-Christian experience is articulated along this line, of a God in communion with His creation, a personal God, a life manifested in three Living Beings: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The dynamic principle of self-organization in the universe operates in each of its parts and in the whole. Without name and without image. As we said earlier, God is the name that religions found to extract Him from anonymity and place Him in our consciousness and our celebration. It is a mysterious name, an expression of our reverence. He is at the heart of the universe. Human beings sense Him in their own hearts in the form of enthusiasm (in its philological sense, *enthusiasm* means *to have a god within*). They feel integrated within Him like sons and daughters. Christian experience testifies that He drew close to us, became a beggar to be near each of us. This is the spiritual significance of God’s incarnation.

The fundamental human yearning is not only to know God in order to hear what He says, but to seek to experience Him. In our own day, it is the ecological mentality, especially that of deep ecology, which provides the most fitting space for this experience of God. To immerse oneself, then, in the Mystery that encloses everything, permeates everything, illuminates everything, braces everything and embraces everything.

But there is not just one road or only one door that leads to Him. This is a Western illusion, particularly among Christian Churches with their claim to a monopoly on divine revelation and the best route to salvation.

For anyone who has ever experienced the mystery that we call God and has peeped over the top of “Planck’s wall”, everything is the way, and every being becomes a sacrament and a door onto the encounter with Him. Life, for all its tribulations and its difficult combinations of chaos and cosmos, and its *diabolic* and *symbolic* dimensions, can then be transformed into a festival and celebration. Its lightness comes because it is full of supreme significance.

The Spirit Pervades Creation

In the Christian faith, it is the Holy Spirit that inhabits creation and has been present within it every since the beginning (Gen 1:2). For Christians, there is nothing new about describing how the Word became flesh, but they are less used to hearing about how the Spirit dwells within His creation. Just as the Son “became flesh and He lived among us” (John 1:14), so too the Holy Spirit “lived among us” through Mary (cf. Luke 1:35) and “set up home” in the universe. He was the first to be sent into the world.

To say that He made His dwelling and inhabits the creation means that He is party to all the ups and downs that this entails. He rejoices with the creation, suffers with it, sighs alongside the other creatures awaiting full redemption and liberation. Because He loves it and set up His dwelling in it, He can be “quenched” and “aggrieved” by its dramas, as the Scriptures suggest (cf. 1 Thess 5:19; Eph 4:30).

From the Orient comes a little poem which translates this pan-spiritualism: *“The Spirit sleeps in the stone, dreams in the flower, awakens in the animal and knows its wakefulness in the human.”*

The Spirit undergoes it all, the ever more complex process of evolution, the awakening of consciousness, of desire, of enthusiasm, of the sigh for liberty and the force of communication and communion.

This vision proposes a cosmic, ecological mysticism. We find ourselves immersed in the field of absolute Energy – the **Spiritus Creator** – manifesting in the energies of universe and in our own vital, spiritual energy. We form a whole with the Spirit. The spirituality born of faith senses a connection with natural and cosmic processes. It lets them imbue and charge it and lives naturally and consciously in accordance with the Spirit.

The Cosmic Christ

It is an essential tenet of the Christian faith to proclaim that the Son of God was made flesh and came to live among us (John 1:14). Stated in terms of a holistic ecology, this means that He was formed of cosmic dust and from the very same elements which compose all beings and bodies. Today we know that, apart from helium and hydrogen, which are original and cannot be reduced to other simpler elements, all the elements in the cosmos were formed inside the red giants in a process called nucleosynthesis.

Our solar system, the Earth, every being and every human person, contain matter recycled from those ancient stars. The body of Jesus, then, is of the same ancestral origin and contains matter made from cosmic dust that may be older than our own solar and planetary system. The iron that flowed in His veins, the phosphorous and calcium that strengthened His bones, the sodium and potassium that permitted the transmission of signals along His nerves, the 65% of oxygen that composed His body along with the 18% of carbon, all this made His incarnation truly cosmic. The Son was invested with all this reality when he emerged from cosmogenesis. The Christological Council of Chalcedon (450 CE) reaffirmed the dogma that Jesus in His humanity is consubstantial with all this, in body and soul. This means, in our cosmology, that Jesus is a product of the Big Bang and the red giants, that His roots can be found in the Milky Way, his cradle is the solar system and His house is the planet Earth.

He took part in the emergence of life and the formation of consciousness. Like any human being, He is a son of the universe and the Earth, a member of the human family. Humans are those beings through whom the cosmos itself achieves consciousness of itself and discovers the Sacred, the biological, anthropological place where Divinity bursts into matter.

This reality enables us to grasp why the incarnation concerns not only Jesus made man, but all human beings. All of them, as brothers and sisters of Jesus, are summoned to be assumed in their own ways by the Word. And so the incarnation turns out to be a process that is still underway. The Word continues to emerge from world matter and human mass, transforming the entire universe into the Word and introducing it into the Realm of the Trinity.

For the resurrection, however, all bonds of space and time were shattered. Christ acquired a cosmic dimension. Evolution was transformed into a true revolution.

The cosmic Christ, then, becomes a motor of evolution, a liberator and a designer. St Paul tells us that “there is only Christ: He is everything and He is in everything.” (Col 3:11) and “in him all things were created” (Col 1:16). Without Him, things would be mere torsos without their most expressive part, which is the head. Hence, in his Letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminds the recipients to “bring everything together under Christ” (1:10). This sums it up.

The most expressive text in this cosmic Christology is found in an agraphon (a saying of Christ not included in the Gospels) in Saying 77 of the Coptic Gospel of Thomas. There the cosmic uniqueness of Christ acquires its full force:

*“I am the light which is above them all; I am the All. From Me did the All come forth, and unto Me does the All return. Split a log of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone and you will find Me beneath.”*¹³⁶

This is pan-Christism, derived from a global reading of the mystery of Christ. When we embrace the world, when we penetrate matter, when we feel the field of forces and energies, when we carry out the humblest and hardest of tasks such as chopping wood or lifting stones, we are in touch with the resurrected, cosmic Christ.

Here a space opens up for an ineffable experience of communion with the total Christ, constantly replenished in the mystery of the Eucharist. The host and the wine are not merely portions of matter, a slither of bread and a drop of wine on the altar. Through faith in the cosmic Christ and the dwelling of the Spirit the entire universe is transformed in the bread and wine to become the cosmic body of Christ, as described by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

The Holy Trinity as a Set of Inclusive Relationships

Ecological discourse makes it possible and plausible for us to talk of God in the Christian mode, that is, of God as a Personal Trinity. This

¹³⁶ Quoted from Boff, Leonardo, In ihm hat alles Bestand: Der kosmische Christus und die modernen Naturwissenschaften, Kevelaer 2013, 89.

is the language of Christians who believe in the existence, simultaneity and co-eternity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Because God is Trinity, Pope Francis rightly observes in his Encyclical that “the Trinity have left their mark on all creation”¹³⁷ ... and so “the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships”.¹³⁸ Thus “everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity”.¹³⁹

Ecology is structured around the tissue of relations, interdependences and inclusions that sustain and compose our universe. “Everything in the world is connected,” as the Encyclical *On Care For Our Common Home*¹⁴⁰ constantly reiterates. Alongside unity (a single cosmos, a single planet Earth, a single human species, etc.) there is also diversity (galactic clusters, solar systems, biodiversity, and the multiplicity of cultural ethnologies and individuals). This coexistence between unity and diversity opens up a space where we can locate an understanding of Divine Trinity and Communion. The fact that we speak of the Trinity rather than simply of God supposes the passage from a monotheist, substantialist idea of divinity, found in Hebraic and Islamic monotheism. The Trinity places us at the centre of a vision of relations, reciprocities and inter-retro-communions similar to the way that ecology thinks and speaks.

So when Christians speak of God and the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, they are not adding up the numbers 1+1+1=3. If there is a number, then God is only one and not Trinity. We Christians do not use the Trinity to multiply God. What we want to express is the singular experience that God is communion, not solitude.

John Paul II phrased this well in Puebla, Mexico, on 28 January 1979, during his first visit to Latin America: “It has been said, in a beautiful and profound way, that our God in His deepest mystery is not a solitude, but a family, since He has in Himself fatherhood, sonship and the essence of the family, which is love. This subject of the family

¹³⁷ LS 239.

¹³⁸ LS 240.

¹³⁹ LS 240.

¹⁴⁰ LS 16, 42, 92.

is not, therefore, extraneous to the subject of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁴¹ God-Trinity, therefore, is relationality par excellence.

In the language of the medieval thinkers who formulated philosophical and theological reflections on the Trinity, the Three Persons are “subsistent relations”, affirming the total relationality of each with respect to the others, in such manner that they imply and include one another reciprocally always and at all times, so that one is never without the other.

Each divine Person is unique. But these unique beings inter-relate so absolutely, are so intimately interwoven, love one another so radically, that they unify. That is, they become one. This communion is not the result of Persons who, once constituted in and for themselves, begin to relate. No. Their communion is simultaneous and original, and the Persons are eternally inter-related. They are, since all time, Persons-in-Communion. Thus, there is one single God-Communion-of-Persons.

St. Augustine, the great thinker on this question, wrote in his “*De Trinitate*”: “So both each are in each, and all in each, and each in all, and all in all, and all are one”.¹⁴²

It would be hard for any modern ecologist to come up with a better expression for this set of relationships formulated by the Christian faith, for this constitutes the basic logic of cosmogenesis and of the ecological vision.

If God is communion and relation, then everything in the universe is living in relation and everything is in communion with everything else at every point and at every moment. Everything arises as a sacrament of the Holy Trinity.

In spirituality rooted in an experience of faith rather than in doctrine we might express the Holy Trinity thus: God who is **above** us and is our original Source, we call the Father. The same God who is **at our side** and revealed as our brother, we call the Son. And the same God who dwells **within us** and is revealed as enthusiasm, we call the Holy Spirit. They are one sole-God-communion-and-love.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Pope John Paul II., Puebla Document, *Voces*, Petropolis 1979, 46.

¹⁴² Augustinus, *De Trinitate*, VI, 10, 20.

This is how those who profess the Christian faith understand it. However, this is not yet spirituality, but doctrine. Spirituality occurs when the teaching ceases to be teaching and becomes inner experience, when it shifts from the mind to the heart, when it leaves the realm of intellectual intelligence and enters sensory and cordial intelligence. Then it is transformed into emotion and celebration. It is not enough to say that all beings are sons and daughters of God. To bring about spirituality, we must feel this truth, embrace every being, care for it as we would care for a loved one, and encounter the unknown God that is present in them. This is what Francis of Assisi experienced in his cosmic mysticism. By embracing the world, he was embracing God.

Perhaps nobody has expressed this intimate universal communion better than Pope Francis in his Encyclical, in those poetic words: “Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of His creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.”¹⁴³

This ecological experience is charged with spiritual consequences. It calls for reverence and care towards every being. It enables us to discover universal brotherhood and sisterhood. Only thus will we set limits to our voracity and return to the earthly and cosmic community from which we have banished ourselves.

Anthropological Spirituality: the God Spot in our Brain

Let us now turn to a secular vision of spirituality. Firstly, we humans possess an *exteriority* expressed by our body. Through it we are part of the universe, composed of the same physical and chemical elements as the stars, and through it we enable others to perceive our presence.

Secondly, we humans also possess an *interiority* expressed by our psyche. This is the universe within us of desires, emotions, powerful imagery, archetypes, ideals, visions of the world. As we capture things with our corporeal and spiritual senses or our intuition,

¹⁴³ LS 92.

they are internalized and transformed into pictures and symbols. They speak and we can hear their message. A mountain is not just a mountain. It evokes majesty for us. A stormy sea is not just sea. It helps us to understand untamed violence. The eyes of a child are not just eyes. They show us the mystery and profundity of life. A loved person, as Freud once explained, is always also an imagined, idealized, transfigured person.

We do not exist, we co-exist, always together with other beings with whom we maintain relationships of exchange and inter-retro-dependence. Our “I” does not withdraw into itself, but is inhabited by the house where we dwell, by the familiar road we live in, by the native city we reside in, by the workplace where we go about our employment, by our pet animals, by the unforgettable landscapes of our personal history, by the homeland we love, and by the Earth, the unique Common House we must inhabit. These realities are not mere facts, they are values, a world of excellences. Without them we would die of sterility and solitude.

Thirdly, we humans possess *depth*. This is what provokes those ultimate questions which persistently remain on the human agenda: where do we come from, where are we going, what are we doing in the world, what can we expect in the after-life, why do we suffer if a friend betrays us, and why do we cry when someone we love dies? What is hidden behind the stars? What is the common thread that holds all this together, prevents our universe from falling on our heads and creates that subtle harmony that once enchanted psalm writers like Davis and has fascinated scientists like Einstein?

Why are human beings so imbued with an infinite yearning for happiness and eternal life? They have identified in cosmic evolution that fertile Vacuum, that State of unfathomable deep energy from which everything emanates, that presence of Mystery shrouding all things that human cultures call God. They can relate with Him in prayer that is loving dialogue and exchange with God. They can give themselves to meditation in order to hear what He has to say. When such blessed events occur, they seem to indicate the profundity of human existence, what we call spirit. The spirit manifests in particular when we sense with our consciousness that we are part and parcel of the Allness that surpasses us. And this is when we feel within us a responsibility for the world around us. We become aware that we

can be Earth’s Satan, but also its guardian angel. We are called to be the gardener who tends and completes the work God left unfinished. And that is when there arises within us the ethical dimension, the stewardship and responsibility for the things around us.

Spirituality consists in cultivating that space for depth, in enriching the Centre of our selves, in nourishing our spiritual dimension with love, solidarity, compassion, forgiveness and care for all things. Through such values and attitudes, the spirit is revealed and spirituality is constructed. When we experience this spirituality, we feel that we have grown bigger and we discover ourselves as an infinite project. Only the Infinite can satisfy our infinite hunger.

Recent research dating from the late 20th century, conducted by neuropsychologists (Michael Persinger and V. S. Ramachandran), neurologists (Wolf Singer), neurolinguists (Terrance Deacon) and developers of magnetoencephalography detected what has been called the “God spot” in our brains. Whenever we address the spiritual questions described above, there is empirical evidence of abnormal neurological stimulation in our frontal lobes. These temporal lobes are linked to the limbic brain, the centre of our emotions and values. That means that perception in the “God spot” is linked not to an idea, but to an emotional and experiential factor, or what we would call spirituality. Spirituality, then, has a biological basis.

This “God spot” arose in the cosmogenic and anthropogenic process in response to an evolutionary goal: to capture and create an awareness – through human beings – of the presence of God in the dynamics of the universe and of all things. It is in humans that this awareness of God and the Sacred occurs, in humans that spirituality takes shape. Because of this, scholars such as the quantum physicist Danah Zohar and the psychiatrist Ian Marshall argue that human beings combine not only intellectual intelligence and emotional intelligence, but also spiritual intelligence.

Transforming this objective fact, spirituality, into a conscious project, we reinforce spirituality as a central dimension of an open, sensitive life, attentive to the multiple dimensions of humanity. This spirituality leads us to care for life in all its forms, because we recognize excellence and value in it. All that exists deserves to exist. All that lives deserves to live. This helps us to overcome the dangerous logic of vested interest, so predominant today, through which we command

and appropriate things for our own use and gain. It enables us to give space to shared existence, cordiality, reverence in the face of difference, and communion with all things and with God. Integrating spiritual intelligence into the other two forms of intelligence (intellectual and emotional) opens us to loving communion with all things in an atmosphere of respect and reverence for other beings, most of them more ancient than ourselves, welcoming them as companions in the great terrestrial and cosmic adventure.

A Self-aware and Spiritual Universe

Reflections on modern cosmology and quantum physics (like those of David Bohm, Ilya Prigogine, Danah Zohar, Brian Swimme, A. Goswami and others) endorse the hypothesis that consciousness and spirit are quantum phenomena arising from the depths of the infinite virtualities of the Source that feeds everything (quantum vacuum). Just as our physical being emerged in the cosmogenic process so, too did, our spiritual being. Both are as ancient as the universe. Spirit means the ability of primordial energies and matter itself to interact and self-create (autopoiesis), to self-organize, to self-constitute in open systems, to communicate and form increasingly complex webs of inter-retro-relations that sustain the entire universe.

The spirit is fundamentally relation, interaction and self-organization at different levels of realization. In the very first instant of that primordial explosion, relations and interactions were created, yielding as yet rudimentary units (Higgs bosons, two top quarks and protons) which proceeded to organize themselves in increasingly complex forms. This was the dawn of the spirit. The universe is full of spirit, because it is reactive, pan-relational and creative. In this sense, there are no inert beings distinct from other beings categorized as living. All beings participate, to their own degree, in the spirit, in consciousness and life.

The difference between the spirit of a mountain and the human spirit is not one of principle, but of degree. The principle of interaction and creation is fulfilled in both, only in different ways. The human spirit is the cosmic spirit that achieves self-awareness, with conscious language and communication. The spirit that pervades all things acquires a specific concretization in men and women.

If the spirit is life and relation, then its opposite is not matter, but death, absence of relation. Matter is a field highly charged with

energy and interaction. Spirituality, in this context, is the maximum potentiation of life, it is commitment to the protection and expansion of life. Not only human life, but life in all its incommensurate diversity and in all its stages of realization. The spirit is especially present in those who have less life, the poor, condemned to die before their time.

To experience the universe as living, Earth as Gaia, a living super-organism and Great Mother, to sense nature as a source of vital emanation and to partake of every being we meet as the carrier of a goal, a brother or sister in the adventure of our wide universe, is to reveal oneself as a spiritual being and to display an eminent degree of ecological spirituality, which today is absolutely essential for the survival of the biosphere.

The future of the Earth as a small, finite planet, of Humanity which does not cease to increase, of ecosystems worn down by the excessive stress of industrialization, of people who are confused, lost, spiritually blunted yet anxious for simpler, more transparent, authentic, meaningful ways of life – that future depends on whether or not we are able to develop an ecological spirituality. It is not enough for us to be rational and religious. Most of all, we must be sensitive to one another, cooperate in all our activities, respect nature's other beings – in a word: we must be spiritual. Only thus will we radiate as beings responsible and benevolent to all forms of life, lovers of our Mother Earth and worshippers of the sole Fountain from which springs every being and every blessing.

'The whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains.' (Rom 8:22)

On Creation's Need for Redemption

Jean Prosper Agbagnon

Creation's Cry for Redemption

The latest environmental disasters and the never-ending flows of refugees make it all too clear 'how deserted the modern world has become, even though, paradoxically enough, the earth is filled in demographic terms with more and more people – in fulfilment of the behest in Gen 1:28. The merciless optimisation of the global markets and the destruction of habitats mean that people are increasingly being left in dehumanised surroundings and in a state of disorientation. Human autonomy and freedom are not to be had without responsibility either in God's garden of Eden or in the world outside – from the very beginnings right up to the present day our history is one of guilt."¹⁴⁴

Creation has never stopped groaning since the events in the garden of Eden (Gen 3). Evil and suffering are tangible in all their cruelty and senselessness wherever human beings and their fellow creatures are to be found. The whole of creation still seeks orientation and support. It seems that the drive for technical progress leads *homo technicus* to exploit natural and human resources in arbitrary fashion. Nature fights back and forces mankind to consider the disastrous consequences. How can the reference in the Bible to God's good creation be reconciled with all this cruel and senseless suffering? Man's striving for absolute and undisputed mastery is not only unbiblical; it also reveals his delusions of grandeur. Is this the right way to interpret

¹⁴⁴ Frevel, Christian, 'Menschenkinder!?' Einige Anmerkungen zum Stand der Forschung zur alttestamentarischen Anthropologie – zugleich eine Einführung in den vorliegenden Band, in: idem. (ed.), *Biblische Anthropologie, neue Ansichten aus dem Alten Testament*, Freiburg 2010, 8.

the Biblical command to 'fill the earth and subdue it'? There is clearly a continuing need to re-examine the biblical perspective of creation. The title of this article 'The whole of creation is groaning' has been chosen with care. Its purpose is apparent: to explain creation's need for redemption and to see it as the common aspiration of both testaments. In drawing on the creation myths of the peoples and religions the Old Testament and the New Testament strive to find a symbolic and meaningful answer to the fundamental human question as to why the children of Adam are threatened and what support they are given in a fragile world.

According to Paul, 'The whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains' (Rom 8:22). I will examine creation's need for redemption, to which Paul refers, from the following perspectives:

- a) The Old Testament background to Paul's faith in creation: To what extent did the Torah teacher's advanced study of the scriptures, his experience (especially in pastoral practice), his intensive life of prayer and his prophetic inspiration enable him to give an account of the tradition of creation? Does the *groaning of creation* exist in the Old Testament?
- b) Paul's philosophical and theological affinities: What basic personal requirements and special innovative emphases exert an influence on Paul's understanding of the suffering and hope of creation? Proceeding from there, I will illustrate how Paul interprets the *labour pains of creation* as the hope of a *transformation to life*.
- c) The preservation of creation as an urgent, universal concern: Man is both *born to hope* and *under an obligation to the whole of creation*. It must be man's concern to revive creation spirituality.

If the Letter to the Romans is understood not just as Paul's theological 'testament'¹⁴⁵, but also as the mature fruit of his sustained theological and philosophical reflections, this striking image of the

¹⁴⁵ Bornkamm, Günther, "Der Römerbrief als Testament des Paulus", in: idem, *Geschichte und Glaube: Gesammelte Aufsätze IV* (BevTh 53), Munich 1971, 120–139. Recent research raises doubts, however, as to whether the Letter to the Romans should be interpreted as Paul's testament (cf. Schnelle, Udo, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament/Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Göttingen 2015).

groaning of creation and its hope of redemption assumes a very critical significance for current environmental concerns.

The Groaning of the Whole of Creation in the Old Testament

In etiological terms, the first two narratives of creation (Gen 1:1-2:4a and Gen 2:4b-3:24) emphasise certain aspects of the concept of the world and of the image of God and man. In essence they both formulate key anthropological and ethical questions.¹⁴⁶ Whereas Gen 1:1-2:4a focuses on the conditions of life by describing the world as it is, Gen 2:4b-3:24 draws attention to the order in the world in a lengthy exposition of God's initially good and well-ordered plan. Gen 1:1-2:4a describes a transcendental God who manifests Himself in the word-event as *Elohim*. In Gen 2:4b-3:24, by contrast, JHWH appears in very anthropomorphic form as a potter and gardener. It is worthy of note that in Gen 1:1-2:4a human beings need not fear punishment if they fail to meet their obligation to multiply and subdue. The emphasis in Gen 2:4b-3:24, however, is on prohibition and punishment.

To arrive at a clear understanding of man's role I will take a brief look now at Gen 2:4b-3:24. Man's creaturehood is at the heart of the narrative. Although this creaturehood was originally intended by God to be *good*, man's experience of hardship, illness, disease and death means that he lives in a fractured reality. In the living space that has been created man has many and varied relations with God the Creator, with the surrounding environment and with himself. As administrator he assumes responsibility for the environment and his fellow creatures. The task he is given of being master of all the living creatures represents the transfer of responsibility from a king to mankind in general.¹⁴⁷ A link is established here with Gen 1:28 and the creation of man in the image of God.¹⁴⁸ The verb *וְהָרָא* 'to

¹⁴⁶ The topics dealt with concern, for example, man's ambisexuality, partnership and sexuality, shame and sin, moral autonomy and freedom, responsibility and work, natural shortening of life and likeness of God, etc.

¹⁴⁷ What Gen 1:26-28 says about man being created in the image of God is not a statement of quality used to indicate that man enjoys a special status. Thus it does not provide any grounds for the negative development of the command to subdue in line with the motto: 'Man is thus a little God in his own world' (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz). That this misconceived mastery over nature was intended to serve as the objective of the unbridled development of modern civilisation has regularly been vehemently refuted in traditional research.

¹⁴⁸ As a result of this transfer of responsibility to man (cf. Ps 8) Adam is pragmatically integrated as a collective figure into the preservation of creation in the context of the promise

subdue', which is used for the task, in no way signifies the indiscriminate handling of creation in the sense of 'violently trampling enemies underfoot' but rather a wise leading, steering, protecting and grazing in the sense of shepherding. This 'working contract' is not a punishment but a creation assignment which is in essence an invitation to codetermination. Endowed with this liberal responsibility, man can self-confidently take charge of creation, but not on his own. Man is given a task to perform by God the Creator, but he does not take the place of God the Creator.

The naming of the creatures of the animal world enables man to establish an order based on a higher or lower ranking in his approach to nature and to make himself the master of this world. From the very outset, moreover, mankind has been moulded in such a way that there is to be communion between man and woman. They are drawn to each other by the power of erotic attraction. Woman becomes the bearer of life. The domination of woman by man in Gen 3:16b can be explained, from the viewpoint of the narrator, as a sinful situation, the responsibility for which is attributable to God.¹⁴⁹

Man, as a collective figure, has harmed himself, damaged his relationship with God and had a negative impact on the rest of creation by virtue of his behaviour towards God, the world and himself:

- i. eating forbidden fruit from the tree (Gen 3:1 ff.);

The tree of knowledge and life represents the absolute limit to the freedom man enjoys. The ban on eating from the tree is designed to keep man from ignoring the specific nature of God and his control of the living space and from grossly interfering with the order God has created. The eating of the fruit from the tree of knowledge signifies man's self-empowerment. The breaking of this taboo is an initial instance of man's exemplary sinful situation. Shamed and disgraced, he groans inside and yearns to return to the pristine harmony he enjoyed with God the Creator and the environment.

of multiplication, the assignment to rule and the provision with food. Ps 8 in particular, which dates to the period of exile / post-exile, reflects as an integral component of universal creation a majestic image of man which is tantamount to the implication of an ethical responsibility.

¹⁴⁹ It would be fundamentalist nonsense to justify this by reference to canonical inspiration.

- ii. Cain's killing of Abel (Gen 4:1-16);

Man's presumptuousness and false behaviour towards God is followed in Gen 4:1-16 by Cain's killing of his brother Abel. The relationship between tiller and herder serves to illustrate man's excessive selfishness, which can have a devastating effect on inter-personal relations:¹⁵⁰ The question is how man himself responds to God's reaction. The issue here is one of envy.

- iii. intercourse between the sons of God and the daughters of humans (Gen 6:1-4)¹⁵¹ and

Set against the mythical background of the taboo on sexual relations with the deity, intercourse between the sons of God and the daughters of man in Gen 6:1-4 reveals the excessive exaggeration of human potential.¹⁵²

- iv. the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9).

The Tower of Babel in Gen 11:1-9, finally, provides confirmation of the way in which the arrogance of man's self-apotheosis manifests itself in his technical ambitions.

The great flood in Gen 7:17-8:1 ff. is not merely a reaction on God's part to man's wickedness. It is also a warning omen of how nature as the 'third party' can impose limits on man's development potential. Furthermore, it shows how arbitrary interference with the order of creation can lead to man's destruction.

These original models of the violation of God's order, of the destruction of the social environment and of man's excessive presumptuousness do not merely illustrate the sinfulness of man, which originates in his freedom. The consequences are devastating. What happened in the garden of Eden shows that man has not only corrupted the creation that God wanted to be good, but has also had

¹⁵⁰ In view of his מלצ 'statue' / 'representative image' and at the same time תומד 'image / likeness God not only feels at one with the murdered brother but also personally affected.

¹⁵¹ If מיהלא ינב is taken to mean 'sons of God', then it is they who have sinned, even if only man is punished as a result.

¹⁵² Similar developments are to be found throughout almost the whole of ancient mythology, for example in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Cf. Binder, Edith/Binder, Gerhard (eds.), P. Vergilius Maro: *Aeneis*, Stuttgart 2010.

a negative impact on the rest of creation. Man has thus forfeited the ideal heavenly situation he once found himself in. The perfect world has slipped away from him. All that remains, at best, is his memory of it in the form of a utopian nostalgia. Ever since then the whole of creation – animals, plants and man – has not ceased to groan. Has the good world created by God finally ended up in the hands of criminals?¹⁵³ *Obviously not.* In this apparently hopeless situation God remains loyal and the narrator again offers a contrasting image to human insufficiency and infirmity: God does not allow man to make his way through the world wearing blinkers. Man is offered the promise of improvement; there is hope of re-establishing harmony with God and the environment, of completion (Gen 1:28; 12:1-3; 17:16-20; Ex 1:7; 39, 43). The whole of creation can hope to be freed. The basic mood, despite everything, remains one of optimism.

In the Old Testament JHWH, who gave man the task of cooperating and made him His representative on earth, is the guarantor of this restitution (see also Ps 8). Again and again in the various Old Testament traditions, especially in the Psalms, as well as in the wisdom literature and the apocalyptic writings mention is made of a messianic figure who will bring this project to completion.

This dual dimension of the suffering of creation and its yearning for redemption, which is set out in Gen 1-9, is developed in several Old Testament traditions. Paul takes up this tradition of suffering creation and denounces its human origins; he puts the emphasis on salvation through God's mercy and the on responsibility of the faithful for the whole of creation.

The Labour Pains of Creation: Transformation to Life

Neither in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) nor in the Gospel according to St. John nor in other New Testament traditions is there any development of a direct, let alone a systematic theology of creation. The fact that creation, in the sense of an act of making, is not a subject in its own right in the New Testament does not by any means imply that the problems associated with creation are left out

¹⁵³ Graupner, Axel/Oeming, Manfred (eds.), *Die Welt in Verbrecherhand gegeben? Annäherungen an das Theodizeeproblem aus der Perspektive des Hiobbuches*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2015.

of account.¹⁵⁴ Creation is taken rather as a given; it is understood to be καταβολη the 'beginning of creation' (Mk 10:16; 13:1; Mt 24:21; 2 Pet. 3:4; Heb 1:10 and others) and, therefore, extended to τα παντα 'all things' (1 Cor 8:6; 11:2; Rom. 11:32). The Jesuanic understanding of creation is part and parcel of the Old Testament belief in creation, in which creation, the Covenant and the Messianic Kingdom must be seen as inter-related. Thanks to a Christological intensification, the act of creation is taken so much for granted and continued in such a way that the father of Jesus Christ is hailed as the creator of the world. This Christological element ensured that belief in God the Creator became the core content of the Christian confession, which in turn had ethical implications. It is pointed out several times in the parables that God cares for the current creation (Mt 6:26; 10:29-31; 7:7-11; Mk 11:22-25). The concept of creation in the New Testament is very much focused on Christ, to whom a special creative mediation is attributed. Christ, the divine *logos* ('word'), is the mediator of creation, through whom all things have come into being (Jo 1:3). Generally speaking, Jesus is associated with a reversal of the system of values in the current creation and the emergence of a new creation which has already begun in anticipation of eschatological fullness. Those on the fringes of society (the poor, the blind, the sick, the outcasts) experience the materialisation of an ideal world (Mt 5; 6; 7; Mk 10:35-45). The belief in a complete renewal of creation in Is 65:17f. is incorporated in Rev 21 and associated with the notion of a heavenly Jerusalem. Of importance here for the issue we are addressing is that, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, creation is regarded as an act of healing on God's part. Thus Jesus regularly associates the proclamation of the coming of God's Kingdom with the restitution of creation (Mk 1:23-28). This is most readily apparent in the symbolic removing of the threats to people's lives in the miracles he performs. For Paul κτισις 'creation' is closely related to the doctrine of redemption. He formulates his creation theology as a combination of fundamental revelatory and anthropological reflections.

Paul examines creation's cry for redemption in chapter eight of the Letter to the Romans, in which he links God's saving presence

¹⁵⁴ Bornkamm, Anders Günther, *Jesus von Nazareth*, Stuttgart 141988, 105: "Almost no mention is made in Jesus' message of the word 'creation', let alone anything resembling the word 'nature', which has its origins in our Greek way of thinking."

with the future redemption of the whole world. In the previous chapter he dealt in detail with Adam's cry for God's mercy. Now it is no longer Adam as the collective figure but the whole of creation which cries for redemption. In Rom 8:18-23 note is taken of the creature's suffering and emphasis is placed on the hope of redemption (Rom 8:24 f.). Paul sets store by praying in the spirit (Rom 8:26 f.) and points to the calling of the believers (Rom 8:28 f.)

In Rom 1-3 God's anger at man's injustice as the outcome of his behaviour was justified by reference to the Book of Psalms (Ps 5; 14; 36; 140), Is 59:7 and Eccl 7. Now, in Romans 8, Paul uses a philosophical argument (in an implicit dialogue with Stoic philosophy) to explain that a culpably distorted relationship with God is the reason for man's social behaviour. God makes Himself known primarily through the creation of the world, not in the law or the Gospels (Rom 1:19 f.). Thus God reveals *that* He is and not *how* He is. With the help of terms such as ἀορατὰ 'invisibility', δυνάμις 'eternal power' and θειότης 'eternal divinity' Paul points out that God as τοῖς ποιήμασιν is revealed in 'what is created'. In other words, Paul argues that it is only possible to recognise what has been made and come into being. Something that is recognisably unmade ought to be eternal, which is out of the question for visible creation. Since creation has been made and come into being, it must have a 'maker' / 'creator' who is outside the causal chain and determines everything in eternity. It is God who created the world and is all too familiar with it. These rational and logical descriptions of God's divinity are characteristic of Paul's teachings on creation theology. It is difficult to know whether Paul assumes that the church in Rome is familiar with this notion. It is certainly conceivable that Paul deliberately uses the image of the labour pains of creation here to tacitly denounce the ongoing abuses and irregularities in the golden age of the so-called Pax Romana.¹⁵⁵ He might thus have motivated the Christians in Rome (the local church, in other words) and in the whole world (i.e. the universal Church) to hope for the end of suffering. A comparison between the ancient philosophical trends in circulation at the time and Paul's writings might well prove worthwhile not only in illustrating the spiritual background of the addressees, but

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Bieberstein, Sabine, "Die Schöpfung in Geburtswehen: Röm 8, 18-25, das Leben unter der Pax Romana und die Ideologien des goldenen Zeitalters", in: BiKi, No. 60 (2005) 1, 38-44.

also, and above all, in enriching the interdisciplinary debate.¹⁵⁶ This begs two critical questions: What philosophical affinities can Paul draw on in addition to his proven theological competence? To what extent can he expect to be understood by his readers? Whatever the case, the philosophical deduction of the experience of reality to its root cause had an enormous impact in the tradition, the continuation of which is most readily apparent in Thomas Aquinas.¹⁵⁷ My reflections are intended to draw attention to the ethos which is of the utmost importance for what Paul has to say about creation's need for redemption: man's freedom and responsibility in the world created by God. Paul does not regard himself explicitly as a philosopher, but he knew better than anyone else how to clearly formulate his theological concerns in a rational and persuasive manner.

Having impressed his understanding of creation on his readers in philosophical terms, Paul can transfer the suffering and the hope of Christians to the whole of creation: 'for the whole *creation* is waiting with eagerness for the *children of God* to be revealed. It was not for its own purposes that *creation* had frustration imposed on it, but for the purposes of him who imposed it – with the *intention* that the whole *creation* itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the *children of God*. *We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains*. And not only that: we too, who have the *first-fruits* of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free. In hope, we already have salvation; in hope, not visibly present, or we should not be hoping – nobody goes on hoping for something which is already visible.' (Rom 8:19-24)

Verse 22 reveals some fundamental characteristics of Paul's theology of creation: the subject 'we', the 'whole creation', its 'suffering' and, above all, its 'hope' of redemption. 'We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains.' (Rom 8:22)

Whatever or whoever might be meant by this *we*, it articulates not only an incorporation of the addressees, but also a skilful monopoli-

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Divjanovic, Kristin, Paulus als Philosoph, das Ethos des Apostels vor dem Hintergrund antiker Populärphilosophie, Münster 2015, 19 f.

¹⁵⁷ In his main work *Summa Theologiae*, Th. I.2.3 Thomas Aquinas examines the *Quinque viae* (Five Ways) of proving the existence of God.

sation of them as a collective in respect of the responsibility that flows from knowledge.¹⁵⁸ Paul is speaking here on the basis of his own conviction, which he passes on. In referring to the *whole* creation, Paul extends the previously mentioned need for redemption not just to all people (Jews, Christians and heathens, men and women, masters and slaves), but also to all living things. The suffering of the environment, as Paul himself makes clear (Rom 8:23), affects man, too. Hence the hope of transformation applies to all. This makes it possible to understand the personification of creation by reference to the experience of a woman in childbirth. 'Labour pains', the term used for this purpose, expresses the tension between the pending arrival of the child and the patient endurance requires in awaiting it. Whereas the 'child' stands for the 'children' of God, the birth symbolises the release from tormenting pain. Luzia Sutter Rehmann¹⁵⁹ rightly points out that the apocalyptic metaphor of labour pains means more than a quiet groan in the sense of 'showing patience'. This is a fierce cry and a vigorous protest expressing a demand for more equitable living conditions. In this sense Paul's intention might have been to encourage his addressees to practise ideological and political resistance.¹⁶⁰ The metaphoric imagery of groaning and the labour pains of creation thus take on an apocalyptic dimension and have ecological implications of justice. The preposition *εν* 'in' / 'among' (in Rom 8:23) suggests a dual perspective of groaning from both inside and out. This groaning may be inaudible deep down *in* every creature (humans, animals and plants), but at the same time it is perceptible *among* us creatures (humans, animals and plants). The past, the present and the future are incorporated into the redemptive process of the whole of creation. Divine adoption manifests itself essentially in prayer. Paul sees the baptised as being at one with the whole of creation in the suffering that is undergone, although at the same time he emphasises the spiritual privilege that believers enjoy in incorporating their experience of the world into their prayers.

¹⁵⁸ To what extent the addressees have this knowledge remains hypothetical. The images Paul uses express fundamental human experiences that will surely be familiar to every listener.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Sutter Rehmann, Luzia, "To Turn the Groaning into Labor: Romans 8:22–23", in: Levine, Amy Jill (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Paul*, FCNTECW, No. 6, London 2004, 74–84.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Bieberstein, Sabine, *op. cit.*, 38f.

The apostle to the gentiles thus makes a significant contribution to creation theology and the doctrine of justification. That Paul, in pointing to creation's yearning for redemption, supposedly does not express any anthropological or soteriological views but rather makes cosmic statements devoid of any connection between creation and redemption is a misunderstanding that must be corrected.¹⁶¹ The overemphasis on an anthropocentric or ecocentric world view, which assigns man a quasi moral responsibility towards the rest of creation, merely leads to 'hair splitting'.¹⁶² To deny the non-human world any significance and to make its redemption dependent on its relations with baptised human beings is certainly not what Paul intended. He cannot afford to separate human redemption from the liberation of the rest of creation, let alone play the one off against the other. For Paul, hope applies not just to Adam and humankind (see Rom 5) but to all of creation. This is in the spirit of Gen 1–3 and at the same time it highlights the redemptive universalism of the one God:¹⁶³ God manifests himself through every creature, in and among all creatures. Without mentioning any details from Gen 1–9 Paul establishes a connection between the wounds and suffering of creation and the strokes of fate which afflict all human beings. The Spirit of God plays a special role here. Since the faithful are filled with the Spirit of God, Paul considers they are under an obligation to the whole of creation: a) to verbalise the lamentations of the suffering creatures and b) to bear witness to hope on behalf of them all. The possibility and necessity of hope thus become a tenet of Christian life in the tension between present and future salvation. There is always room for hope as long as the Spirit remains effective and promises to penetrate the frontiers of death. Hope is sorely needed as long as pain, torment and death are in the world. That this hope is not only founded in faith but also generates knowledge is the starting point for Paul's perception of creation, with which he associates a degree of certainty: 'We know'. Since such knowledge rests not on human reasoning but on a dynamic experience of the Word of God, it remains in the realm of hope. Paul thus

¹⁶¹ Cf. Bolt, John, "The Relation between Creation and Redemption in Rom 8:18–27", in: CTJ, No. 30 (1995) 1, 34–51.

¹⁶² Cf. Lambrecht, Jan, "The Groaning Creation: A Study of Rom 8:18–30", in: LS, No. 15 (1990) 1, 3–18.

¹⁶³ Here he has his sights fixed on the whole of prehistory in Gen 1–9 as the background to Rom 8:18–27 and is probably alluding both to Gen 1–3 as well as to the covenant with Noah (Gen 6–9), including 1 Hen 6–12.

emphasises that there is possibly divine predestination, but it is for the good. Human freedom must, therefore, be seen as an integral aspect of divine mercy. In his Letter to the Romans as a whole it is noticeable how closely Paul links this experience of creation with the experience of history. He recalls the great figures in the tradition of Israel and refers to God's various covenants with them (see the covenant with Abraham in Rom 4, Gal 3). For Paul, creation and history are closely related. From the biblical perspective, at least, every form of creation spirituality is obliged 'to treat ecological and social problems, environmental commitment and concern for the poor as a single entity.'¹⁶⁴

Against the background of the creation theology of prehistory, Paul is quite specific about the suffering of creation, which has wide-ranging implications. He stresses the responsibility of creatures and of history for the environment, highlights man's consternation at the state it is in and points to the threefold hope of redemption: 1) God's assistance in view of the promise he has given; 2) the creation mediation of Jesus, the new Adam; and 3) the special responsibility of the baptised. Man's experience of contingency notwithstanding and in the light of his infirmity, the emphasis is once again on the fact that he is not born to die but born to lead a fulfilled life.¹⁶⁵

Born to Hope – Committed to Creation

The biblical belief in creation presumes that the world is God's creation and the habitat of all creatures. It underlines two key principles which provide orientation for any form of creation spirituality: the shaping of the environment and its preservation. The mythical backgrounds and the universal spread of the belief in a good creation show that man's responsibility for creation is rooted not just in the religions but also, and above all, in each and every human being. Pope Francis rightly draws attention to Franciscan spirituality, in which the earth, the living space, 'our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.'¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Press release of the German Bishops' Conference on the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis, 18 June 2015, 1.

¹⁶⁵ The day's prayer for Christmas says: 'Almighty God, You created man wonderfully in his dignity and recreated him even more wonderfully.' A formulation of this kind suggests that redemption not only repairs the damage, but also that creation redeemed even surpasses original creation.

¹⁶⁶ Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home, No. 1,

In many ways the reference at the outset of this article to the increasingly destructive emptying of the living space provides confirmation of creation's great need. The suffering of the created world often touches the heart, for example the inexplicable strokes of fate which affect both man and animals, and the irresponsible way man treats himself, his fellow creatures and his environment. We are witness to 'the plight of many fellow creatures, to the need of many individuals. The earth has been exploited out of all proportion and is contaminated. Many living things, which respond more sensitively than we do to the things that slowly but surely damage health and destroy life, fall ill and die. They are a warning to us of what the hour has struck.'¹⁶⁷

According to the Bible, the fact that man is created in the likeness of God does not mean that he holds sway over nature in the sense of its random, greedy and thoughtless exploitation: 'While it is true that man is created in the image of God and is called upon to subdue the earth, this entails a responsible approach to nature, not the freedom to exploit it. As part of creation, man has the special task of responsibly using the scope God has given him to shape the world. In his shared responsibility for the whole he is called upon – in the biblical understanding of creation – to tend and transform nature and to create a culture, but without destroying the essential foundations of life. Creation's mandate for man is not an invitation to try out everything that appears possible. On the contrary, it should be understood rather as a caring responsibility within the limits of the life-promoting scope man has been given.'¹⁶⁸

If, from a biblical point of view, everything is interconnected, then this entails the development and promotion of an integral ecology which encompasses not just the environment and the economy, but also cultural ecology and the ecology of everyday life; it helps to provide orientation for all social systems and serves as an option for action. The different backgrounds in the Old Testament for Paul's thoughts on creation and their contemporary contextual prerequisites

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclica-laudato-si.html (03.08.2017).

¹⁶⁷ Kessler, Hans, *Das Stöhnen der Natur*, Düsseldorf 1990, 72 .

¹⁶⁸ "Landwirtschaft im Spannungsfeld zwischen Wachsen und Weichen": Eine Denkschrift der Kammer der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, Vol. 2/3 Soziale Ordnung, 2000, No. 73.

make it clear how old, universal and yet how topical the groaning of creation is. The remaining hope of salvation, which Paul sets against any form of hopelessness, leads to a new return to the quality of the created world and urges commitment to its preservation. Only by recognition and respect for the lasting dignity of all creatures and through the conscious encounter with God in them can a spirituality of creation prevail. This presumes an awareness that the whole cosmic reality, including human beings, owes its existence to God, who gives human beings, animals and plants sustenance, as He does all living things.

Towards an Indigenous Spirituality of Creation. Retracing Steps to Mt Banahaw. An Inquiry into the Philippine's *New Jerusalem*¹⁶⁹

Andrew Gimenez Recepcion

The recent interest in creation spirituality and ecological thinking occasioned by the publication of *Laudato Si'* has continued to challenge humanity to give a close attention to the human agency either in the destruction of creation or the conservation and preservation of environment. The truth of the matter, however, is that peoples of diverse faiths, cultures and religions have contributed in the reflection on the value of creation to humanity and to faith communities. We can affirm without reservation the good of creation concerns all of humanity thus taking Pope Francis' challenge of inter generational justice seriously.

In the context of the Philippines, especially after typhoon Haiyan, there is a growing advocacy for responsibility in the care of the environment *vis-a-vis* the effects of ecological backlashes, that can come from irresponsible and greedy use of natural resources and the insensitivity or lack of ecological conscience and greater public awareness on the value of sustainable development without the destruction of the environment. Against this backdrop, however, it is necessary to look into the cultural mindset of Filipinos that goes outside the urban centers. It is quite surprising to discover how majority of Filipinos do have a conjunctive mentality that sees humans not in opposition to creation but in harmony with nature. The existing ecological ethos affirms the inter-relatedness of creation.

In this study, I go back to a personal experience of a "pilgrimage" to the mystical mountain of the Philippines on Mount Banahaw. It is my intention not to dwell on the general concepts connected to a

¹⁶⁹ The New Dictionary of Religions speaks of New Jerusalem or Holy Villages and it says that "there are also many in the Philippines". The most famous one is Mt Banahaw. Cf. Hinnells, John R., *A New Dictionary of Religions*, Oxford 1995, 349.

spirituality of creation. The case study presented below captures a picture of Filipinos' connectedness to nature.

This inquiry has its mold the author's personal experience during his trip to the "mystical" mountain of the Philippines. Together with a group of theology students and two professors, the author spent two days on the mountain going through the rituals prescribed for those who would like to climb the mountain.

The first part of this work will appear more like a pilgrim's diary though some materials gathered from some pertinent sources will support the experience. The second part will try to present some horizons that can help the author view more closely the experience and through which come to some tentative conclusions.

Part 1: Mapping the Experience

A. *Knowing The Place*

Mt. Banahaw (Western part of a Quezon Province)¹⁷⁰ "is located on the borders of the provinces of Quezon, Laguna, and Batangas."¹⁷¹ Banahaw is a 7,382 ft. (2177 meter, highest peak) extinct volcano connected to a mountain range called *Sierra Madre* and many Filipinos consider it as a mystical mountain. Some clubs that bring its name even consider it as a "Holy place in the Philippines".

Countless religious groups have settled in towns along the foothills of the mountain. The mountain is usually a pilgrimage site for many Filipinos during *semana santa* or the yearly celebration of the holy week. People from all walks of life climb its slopes to meditate in its caves and rock formations, called *puwestos* (literally, posts, or holy sites). The town that is frequently visited by pilgrims, to which our group also settled for two days, is the town of Dolores, Quezon. Two *barangays* (villages) of the town are sites of many religious sects and cults. Many religious groups believe that Christ spent His calvary in *barangay Kinabuhayan* (literally, the place of resurrection).

¹⁷⁰ Cf. "The Philippine Province of Quezon", in: <http://www.philippine.org/01prov/quezon.html>.

¹⁷¹ The province of Quezon is considered as the country's sixth largest province, and it abounds with numerous potential and tourist attractions. It is bounded on the north by Aurora province, on the east by Polillo and Lamon Bay, Bulacan, Rizal, Laguna and Batangas on the west and Tayabas on the south. The land area of the province is 11, 946.2 sq. km. Mt. Banahaw belongs to the province of Quezon.

Thousands of pilgrims (the number may reach 30,000) come to this area to fulfill religious vows or be healed of their sickness. Another mystical site is called *Ina ng Awa* (literally, the Mother of Mercy) is located in *barangay Sta. Lucia* near *Kinabuhayan*. It is in *Kinabuhayan* that many groups have identified certain caves and rock formations as their altars or *puwestos*.

There is no accurate historical account as to when and how the extinct mountain became mystical. There are some legends narrating the story behind the mystical mountain. It is believed that a *Santong Boses* (Divine Voice) "revealed to a hermit named Hermano Pule that Mt. Banahaw is the New Jerusalem." It is this Divine voice that indicated the exact or precise locations of the different *puwestos* (places).

The mystical mountain has the following sites that are popularly known to many pilgrims who trek the mountain. On the top of the mountain, one can find the *Santo Kalbaryo* (Divine Calvary) where Jesus Christ lived His passion and death and in this site one can also visit the *Kinabuhayan* (Place of Resurrection). At the foot of the mountain, one can find the *Santong Husgado Cave* (Divine Judge), this cave is known for testing the purity of spirits. Those who enter this cave with clean spirits can easily pass through the cave but those who have unclean or naughty spirits "will get pinned by the rocks inside the cave, preventing them from continuing, thus, they will have to turn back." Still at the foot of the mountain are caves called the *Kweba ng Diyos Ama* (Cave of God the Father), where every pilgrim should enter and write his or her name on the wall to be recognized by the spirits and be safe from any harm; and *Balon ni Jacob* (Jacob's well), where those who enter need to pass through a sort of small tunnel that exactly fits a single body and at the end of the tunnel one finds a well or a small pool where a member of one of the religious groups is waiting to assist you plunge into the water believed to be the well of Jacob with healing properties. Then one can go farther descending through slippery steps down a creek called *pinaggapusan* (a place of captivity), where they believe Christ was to have been tied. In this site one is asked to step on the "footprint" of Jesus embedded on a rock. It is also required that one has to take a sort of a "shower" from the *buhok ni Maria* (hair of Mary) before proceeding any further to the hilltop. Accomplishing these rituals will obtain not only the curing

power of the sites but also the protection from any accident as one treks the mountain. Some religious groups take the following names: *Tres Personas Solo Dios* in *Kinabuhayan* (Three Persons in One God), and *Ciudad Mystica de Dios* (Mystical City of God).

B. *Anatomy of a Pilgrimage*

Our trip to Mt. Banahaw was more than an excursion for it was intended to “conquer” the mountain and for us to discover what enthalls people in visiting the mountain. Our specific goal was to understand the syncretistic elements that characterize some of the religious groups found at the foot of the mountain. We were encouraged not only to observe but also to “experience” the spirit of mysticism that pervades the mountain. After the necessary preparation, we embarked for Mt. Banahaw with our knapsacks, sleeping bags and provisions needed for the two-day trip.

We rented three *jeepneys* (popular Filipino public transport) and proceeded to the town of Dolores passing through Laguna. When we were close to the foot of the mountain, our *jeepneys* suddenly stopped due to some mechanical problems. Then one of us, a native of the place, commented that the “spirits” of the place have started to play with us. After some minutes, we continued our trip uphill and it was almost dusk when we reached the village of *Sta. Lucia* at the foot of the mountain.

The head of the village welcomed us and some villagers ushered us into the lodging place. There were no beds available. There was only a big space where we could place our sleeping bags and mattresses. Toilets were available and there was no problem with water since the mountain has plenty of watersheds. After supper, we were invited to participate in a sort of a “Mass” at the *ciudad mistica de Dios (Rosa Mistica)*. We entered the chapel and since there were no chairs, we remained standing while some opted to sit on the pavement of the chapel. The chapel was dimly lit and the altar was filled with candles. The group’s or sect’s doctrines were written on the chapel’s walls. The sect considers Mary as part of the Trinity and it was interesting to note that the Holy Spirit was considered both as *spirito* (spirit) and *diwa* (mind). After some moments, the bell rang and a priestess entered accompanied by a young girl who served as her assistant. The priestess and her assistant were wearing a long white

gown with headdresses and they looked like queens. They proceeded with their ritual done in silence and the entire rite that lasted for fifteen minutes was actually a parody of the Tridentine Mass. Our guide informed us later that there was a monastery beside the chapel for the priestesses and their assistants. The priestesses cannot go out of their monastery and when they decide to marry they cease to become priestesses. It was 9:00 o’clock in the evening and we needed to rest for the following day’s long trek.

A heavy rain welcomed us the next morning. The terrain was muddy and the trek was challenging since the way up to the next station was slippery. We still decided to proceed though we were cautioned that it would be dangerous to go until the mountaintop. The next station was *pinaggapusan*. This site is famous for the “footprint” of Jesus embedded on a rock and the “hair of Mary”. It took us some time before we reached the creek down below due to heavy rain. The water of the creek comes from one of the falls of the mountain. I have the impression that the “footprint” of Jesus embedded on a rock was actually man-made (created) contrary to the belief of the religious groups that it miraculously appeared there. Upon closer look the rock was not a real mountain rock but it was made of cement. The guide urged us to take a shower from the “hair of Mary” because it can miraculously heal physical ailments. I got close to this site and I found out that the “hair” was actually made of *fine roots* of a tree and these roots become like tributaries for the water that cascades from up the mountain down the creek. Some of us took a plunge on the running waters of the creek to take away the mud from our shoes and clothes.

Going back to the top from the creek was exciting for we needed to keep our balance on the slippery path. I encountered some members of the religious groups along the way and they were doing some gestures or chants that purposely intended to catch our attention. Gestures were done with contracted muscles of arms and body giving the impression of a person in trance. Chants were a mixture of “Latin prayers” that were unintelligible or that simply sounded ridiculous. There were also priestesses of other groups with white veils going to one of the rock formation or *anting-anting* (amulets) advertised as protection from danger or misfortune. A woman showed one of the caves commenting that if one would succeed to enter it, one could go to the United States “passing” through the cave. Such comments

even reinforced a growing conviction that there everything seems to be a make believe.

Our next station after *pinaggapusan* was *Kinabuhayan* (Place of Resurrection) where pilgrims go for three important caves like *Santong Husgado* (Divine judge), *Kweba ng Diyos Ama* (Cave of God the Father) and *Balon ni Jacob* (Jacob's well). Some *shamans* were at the entrance of the *Kinabuhayan* site and were available for any consultation. At this point our guide left us for a reason that we did not know. We were informed by one of the *shamans* that we needed to be "enrolled" first at the *kweba ng Diyos Ama* and it meant that we needed to enter the cave and write our names with a piece of stone on the walls of the cave. This enrollment would ensure that the spirits of the site counts us as legitimate visitors or pilgrims. I entered curious to know what was inside. There was nothing extraordinary inside except for some candles left by pilgrims. It was damp and cold inside the cave. A frame of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was also placed in one of the corners of the cave. Two persons were mumbling some words facing the wall of the cave.

The next cave was called the *Santong Husgado* (Divine Judge). The cave is known for testing the purity of one's spirit. I wanted to enter the cave and to test the veracity of its fame for truth. The cave was obviously meant for people with small stature. I could not enter it since I could hardly pass through the small opening of the cave. The truth was that only small people could enter the cave! Many of us in the group did not try the *Santong Husgado* and instead proceeded immediately to *Balon ni Jacob*. The cave was like a funnel upside down. The entrance to the cave was enough for one person but its interior opens up even wider and ends up in a spot where there is a small pool of water. A *shaman* waited at the end of the cave near the pool in order to assist pilgrims to take a dip in the water. People believed that the pool is Jacob's well and it had healing powers. The journey down the cave was such a thrilling experience (like riding a roller coaster) that after it one could feel making a *breakthrough*, a release of all tensions and anxieties! Overcoming one's fear during the descent and conquering one's tiredness during the ascent was an engaging physical exercise and was truly healthy!

The heavy rain downpour prevented us from going to the *Santong Kalbaryo* (Holy Calvary) located at the mountaintop. What was truly

impressive on the mountain was the pristine beauty of nature, the *natural sanctuary* albeit human pretensions. The silence of nature in harmony with the creatural sounds of the environment gave a lasting impression of the mysticism of Mt. Banahaw.

Part 2: Horizons for an Evaluation

It is difficult to locate the horizon for the experience in order to attempt an evaluation. The author sees that the way he perceives the experience is considerably colored by a dualistic-logical perception. Nevertheless, through confrontation with some literatures on the reality of the Filipino worldview and the physiognomy of sects, cults and new religious movements, he attempts to indicate some points for an evaluation towards an indigenous spirituality of creation.

A. General Appraisal

The existence of Mt. Banahaw as a Philippine version of a New Jerusalem can be seen positively and negatively. The positive aspect is a confirmation of the Filipino worldview that is essentially conjunctive more than being disjunctive. This conjunctive worldview seeks for the interconnectedness of the self, other and nature. In Filipino psyche, nature is the door that allows one to experience the transcendent. In this sense Mt. Banahaw and the groups that live by the foot of the mountain is in fact a sampling of this search for interconnectedness. The negative aspect is rather the syncretistic elements found in the different groups that "sell" their relevance to the pilgrims of the place. In other words, without the syncretism these groups will obviously end up without any identity at all. What disturbs anybody who has better grasp of the Christian faith is the mixture of many elements from the Catholic practices with animistic and shamanistic rites. This is not surprising, however, because in the transpersonal worldview of the majority of the Filipinos, experiencing the divine cannot be confined to the walls of a Cathedral and shrines of stones. In fact, nature is the "cathedral of the divine" that allows possible interpretations of religious experience and warrants creativity beyond the control of the hierarchy. Indeed, before Christianity was introduced to the Philippines more than five hears ago, the Filipinos already lived a certain way of life that was very much conditioned by nature and by the cycles of life in nature. Also, the indigenous tribes in Mindoro Oriental and Mindanao have always remained faithful to the rhythm of life up until now.

The sects or groups found on Mt. Banahaw also serve as a challenge *vis-à-vis* the better known Philippine sects like *Confradía de San Jose*, *Rizalista*, *Iglesia ni Cristo*, *Philippine Benevolent Missionary Association*, *Santa Iglesia* (Mercado 1982: table 2).¹⁷² The freedom and less structured system of these new groups become a point of comparison with the more rigid and often exclusivistic communities of the above sects. Mt. Banahaw can even be a place for a do-it-yourself religious experience without any reference to any established ritual or norm of the well-established sects that tend to gravitate on charismatic leaders. Mt. Banahaw seems to offer an alternative to the structured and well-organized religious groups including the Catholic Church.

B. Sects or New Religious Movements (NRM)?

The physiognomy of the groups found in Mt. Banahaw eludes a classification from the definitions given by the Catholic Church.¹⁷³ If these groups are referred to as *sects* in the sense of “small groups that broke away from a major religious group, generally Christian, and that hold deviating beliefs or practices”,¹⁷⁴ then it would not be very precise to call them sects since many of them still believe that they remain baptized Catholics and that those who belong in a loose way believe that they are in no way deviant from the Catholic belief and practices. Pilgrims that go to the mountain during *holy week*, simply explain that going to Mt. Banahaw is no different from participating in the regular holy week services in a Catholic parish. Some would even reason out that climbing the mountain has more sacrificial dimension than entering a church “watching” the holy week ceremonies. This seems to indicate that “rites” are not confined to a definite place for first of all it is something personal. However, despite the claims of orthodoxy of some groups in Mt. Banahaw, it may be postulated that in *praxis* these groups are somewhat deviant from the Catholic

¹⁷² For the sects’ profile, cf. Mercado, Leonardo N., *Christ in the Philippines*, Tacloban City 1982, Table 2.

¹⁷³ The discussion of Prof. Giuseppe Ferrari on this critical question is quite founded. Cf. Ferrari, Giuseppe, *The new religious reality: a world phenomenon: Correspondence Course on Missionary Formation*, Pontifical Missionary Union, Roma 1999.

¹⁷⁴ Arinze, Francis Cardinal, “The Challenge of the Sects or New Religious Movements: A Pastoral Approach”, General Report, 5 April 1991”, in: *Sects and New Religious Movements: Anthology of texts from the Catholic Church 1986–1994*, United States’ Catholic Conference, 1995, 14.

Church. In the case of *Ciudad Mística de Dios*, the modification of some fundamental doctrines of the Catholic faith like on the doctrine of the Trinity, can also be taken as a deviation or even a heresy.

If these groups may also be called as *new religious movements* in the sense that “they present themselves as alternatives to the institutional official religions and the prevailing culture...they profess to offer a vision of the religious or sacred world, or means to reach other objectives such as transcendental knowledge, spiritual illumination or self-realization, or because they offer to members their answers to fundamental questions”¹⁷⁵, then it would be quite difficult to call them as such because they do not seem to consider themselves as alternatives to institutional religions or the prevailing culture. In fact, one could substantiate this conjecture from the findings of some Filipino anthropologists who describe these phenomena as something cultural. As alternative to the institutional official religion (there is no official religion in the Philippines though the Roman Catholic is the dominant religion), these groups never claimed such a position definitively. Though it can be concluded that their continuous existence and practices are tantamount to setting themselves up as an alternative to the institutional religion like the Catholic Church. The so-called “folk Catholicism” which consists of tolerated practices beyond the control of the hierarchy”¹⁷⁶ would probably explain the difficulty in labeling officially these groups as NRM.

From the above discussion, it seems that these groups can be classified with reservation as NRM. It is safer to classify, though, that more than being NRM these groups are *new conflictual or conflicting tendencies*¹⁷⁷ between faith and culture in the Philippine religious setting. The cultural *substratum* has not yet been fully integrated with faith despite more than 400 years of Christianity. Information and formation particularly among Catholic faithful are still wanting.

The phenomenon of Mt. Banahaw from the Filipino cultural horizon is understood in a different optic. Mercado points out that for a Filipino “the sacred and the profane co-exist although separately

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁷⁶ Mercado, Leonardo N., *Elements of Filipino Philosophy*, Manila 1976, chapter 11.

¹⁷⁷ New classification proposed by Professor Michael Fuss in a course on “La sfida degli orientamenti conflittuali”, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome, Italy.

distinguished.”¹⁷⁸ In other words, Filipinos in general do not compartmentalize their world. This attitude is even more true with one’s relation to the other world. “The holistic Filipino way of relating himself to the Other World is so integrated that it is inseparable from life. The Other World is an integral part of experience.”¹⁷⁹ This is a clarificatory point in explaining the attraction of Mt. Banahaw. For many Filipinos, especially the rural folks, the experience of God or the other world is not so much of a cult or that of fulfilling a Sunday obligation by going to Church. The underlying psyche is that one’s existence can only be meaningful in reference to one’s religious experience. One achieves the same level of fulfillment whether one goes to Church on Sunday or makes a pilgrimage to Mt. Banahaw.

The nagging question is on the possibility of harmonizing Christian faith in God in the person of Jesus with the seeming nature of worship of people who come to Mt. Banahaw. There seems to be an unwarranted syncretism of elements of Catholic faith with natural elements. An attempted explanation is that “God’s existence is a fact for the Filipino. There is no need of proving his existence (as is a preoccupation in Western philosophy). Perhaps his way of reasoning (psychological, knowledge by connaturality) intuitively God’s existence through the Filipino’s reading of nature and harmony with nature. Closeness to nature occasions the experiencing of God’s existence.”¹⁸⁰ This explains why the religious groups on the mountain as well as pilgrims who visit the mountain occasionally identify phases in the Life of Jesus Christ and biblical places with caves, stones, roots and water. “The Filipino’s way of thinking or outlook sees the divine transparency in nature and in holy persons. If he considers certain places or objects as sacred, the object is not the thing itself but because it symbolizes a possible encounter with the divine.”¹⁸¹ Of course there are some exaggerations in the practices of some religious groups in Mt. Banahaw but prescinding from the negative aspects one can still identify this innate capacity to find harmony between nature and the divine.

¹⁷⁸ Mercado, Leonardo N., “The Sacred and the Profane”, in: Elements of Filipino Philosophy, Manila 1976, chapter 11.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Mercado, Leonardo N., “On God, The Spirits, and the Departed”, in: Elements of Filipino Philosophy, Manila 1976, chapter 12.

¹⁸¹ Mercado, Leonardo N., “The Sacred and the Profane”, op. cit., chapter 11.

The Filipino religiosity’s extrinsic stress is not so pronounced in the rural areas.¹⁸² The buildings or structures for worship are not of primary importance. “In fact the early Spanish colonizers were surprised to find that Filipinos has no special buildings or ‘temples’ for worship. There was no such need, for the whole of creation was their temple.”¹⁸³ The phenomenon of Mt. Banahaw can also be understood from this point of view. The *puwestos* in Mt. Banahaw and the different sites are windows where one can take a glimpse of this fact. It is obvious that many who frequent the mountain as pilgrims and most of the members of the religious groups in the mountain belong to the rural folks. This can elucidate and affirm this position.

C. Recent Problems and Challenges

It is one thing to see the reality of Mt. Banahaw ideally with the horizon above but it is another thing to follow recent events that confront the groups in Mt. Banahaw. The Philippine Daily Inquirer (May 26, 2000) in its opinion page commented: “As presidential war-mongering misses the roots of a shared Muslim and Christian History by a mile in Mindanao, Mt. Banahaw of indigenous spiritual reputation is ripening into a new trouble spot it may not be possible to ignore much longer.” The emerging problems are connected with *ciudad mistica de Dios*, the largest group. The head of this group and its members have started to create serious problems with government policies on environmental protection and on the land reform program that the government since 1987 has been pursuing to award ownership to tenant-farmers in the Philippines. The heart of the problem is succinctly pointed out by the article: “a growing number of politicians have been clambering up its trail for a photo ops with its vote-rich folk cults but unnoticed by most is that CARP¹⁸⁴ and Nipas Act of 1992¹⁸⁵ have gradually created conditions for a serious face-off between the law and wayward native mysticism.”¹⁸⁶

The tension is between the law and the belief of this group aptly tagged as cult by the press. In fact the *mistica* group has been a

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program.

¹⁸⁵ A government act forbidding the construction of permanent dwellings in a protected area like Mt. Banahaw that is rich in flora and fauna.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

shelter to criminals and the police authorities cannot arrest them once they hide in the group's compound.¹⁸⁷ As regards the environmental protection of Mt. Banahaw, the *mistica* group has violated the environmental act cited above. It has started to pollute the water supply of the town by its improper disposal of human waste up the mountain thereby posing serious health problems to the lowland residents who depend on the mountain's water supply. Furthermore, it has started to acquire illegally land areas on the mountain and has evicted forcefully at gunpoint some farmers who have been awarded land titles under the land reform program. The traditional irrigation of farmers on the mountain has been diverted to a project led by the *mistica* group.¹⁸⁸ The terror wrought by the group to the locals and to the media through death threats is a reason for alarm but at the same time a strong proof of the group's ulterior motives. The locals cannot simply accept the "apocalyptic" justification of the group by reasoning out "that Mistica's projects have all been in preparation for the approaching end times – when they intend to close the mountain by force of arms against the expected panic evacuation of lowlanders escaping rising floodwaters. Making room for Mistica's own members from all over would need all the land the sect could get of."¹⁸⁹ The expose made by the press has angered the group and its *Suprema* (the leader) Isabel Suarez has finally decided to announce that the Apocalypse had to begin last May 18, 2000 "and that sect members from elsewhere to sell all their possessions to repair to Sta. Lucia. They are now massing up there in the thousands, with powerful, thus far hidden, and far from mystical munitions."¹⁹⁰

Mt. Banahaw as the Philippine's *New Jerusalem* is turning out to be a place of conflict and violence as some of the religious groups that settle on the mountain slowly uncover their hidden agenda. The survival of the fittest may well become the law of the mountain and when it does become then it might just be the beginning of a greater problem! The only way out is pointed out by a priest through an appeal: "They (cult members) should never be allowed to tamper with

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid; Also cf. Mallari, Delfin T. Jr., "Farmers denounce powerful cult on Mt. Banahaw", in: Philippine Inquirer Interactive, <http://www.inquirer.net/issues/apr2000/apr05/news-12.htm>.

¹⁸⁹ Mayuga, Sylvia L., The apocalypse according to Ciudad Mistica.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

the natural conditions of the mountain, as well as the inherent peace of its original inhabitants. They should reciprocate the graciousness accorded to them by the people of Dolores with the same degree of self-respect when they were received more than 30 years ago.¹⁹¹

Retracing steps to Mt. Banahaw means accepting the challenge to look into the Filipino religious psyche and find ways to provide for the Catholic population, on the part of the Catholic Church, not only doctrinal inputs but also an inculturated formation program that takes seriously the Filipino worldview and provide a new way to understand a Filipino spirituality of creation.

One must also recognize that the emerging problems from the religious groups of Mt. Banahaw sound an alarm to the civil and ecclesiastical authorities that the crucial crossroads between faith(s) and culture(s) are not trivial matters. The complexity continues to pose as a big question mark for the future.

D. *Towards an Indigenous Spirituality of Creation*

It must be noted that a genuine spirituality of creation is not a product of a program that allows people to experience wholeness or interconnectedness. On the contrary, a spirituality of creation takes seriously nature as an essential component of one's religious experience.

The following elements can tentatively indicate fundamental areas of an indigenous spirituality of creation.

1. Nature is a life-source therefore it is a gift that has to be protected from destruction because nature reveals the power of the creator and reminds the creature to respect his or her role in the circle of life. Destruction of nature means destruction of human life. Everything is interconnected.
2. The power of nature has to be respected in order to preserve harmony. In other words, nature is the dwelling place of the spirits thus disturbing nature causes disharmony that unleashes the wrath of the "spirits" in the forms of calamities and natural disasters. It is important to note that the spirit is not God himself but the life

¹⁹¹ Enriquez, Fr. Raul, founding chair of the Kapatiran at Alyansang Alay sa Kaunlaran ng Bayan (Brotherhood and Alliance for Social Progress).

principles of nature. For Filipinos, respecting the spirits of nature means respecting the law of nature as ordained by the creator.

3. An indigenous spirituality of creation is a way of life that encompasses both the private and public spheres. It is enough to see tribal Filipinos' community life conditioned by seasons of planting and harvesting often celebrated through the rituals of music and dance. More than a cultural expression, these dances are life-forms of thanksgiving to the God of nature and an affirmation of the need to dance with the rhythm of life. It is the rhythm of life in and out of seasons that form a genuine ecological conscience in which waste is a violation of harmony. It is the rhythm of life that ensures sustainability for the next harvest and for the next generation. Nature is a partner in life's journey.
4. In the web of life, human life is not autonomous for it is only a small part of the whole of creation. The mystical mountain of Mount Banahaw in the Philippines serves as a critique to the exploitative attitude of humans over nature. Subduing the earth does not mean destroying the earth by depleting its resources beyond replacement. Humans are simply stewards of creation, that is, responsible administrators of the gift of nature by using only what is necessary and by avoiding any action that assumes the role of creator.

Conclusion

Laudato Si' starts with the song of creation of Saint Francis of Assisi. In the spirituality of creation among Filipinos, nature is celebrated through songs, music and dances. One of the songs of creation that is very popular among Filipinos captures the heart of an indigenous spirituality of nature:

MAGKAUGNAY ANG LAHAT (Everything is Interconnected)¹⁹²

Lupa, laot, langit ay magkaugnay
 (Earth, sea, sky are interconnected)
 Hayop, halaman, tao ay magkaugnay
 (Animals, plants, humans are interconnected)

Ang lahat ng bagay ay magkaugnay
 (Everything is interconnected)
 Magkaugnay ang lahat
 (All of creation is interconnected)
 Tayo ay nakasakay sa mundong naglalakbay
 (We are passengers on journeying earth)
 Sa gitna ng kalawakan
 (along the heavens)
 Umiikot sa bituin na nagbibigay-buhay
 (Orbiting around the stars that give life)
 Sa halaman, sa hayop at sa atin
 (to plants, animals and to us)
 Iisang pinagmulan
 (We come from one origin)
 Iisang hantungan ng ating lahi
 (There is only one destination for our race)
 Kamag-anak at katribo ang lahat ng narito
 (Family, tribe and all of us)
 Sa lupa, sa laot at sa langit
 (on the earth, seas and in the heavens)

We can celebrate creation as a way of life that takes nature not as an object of exploitation but as a partner in our life's journey. We are all interconnected. We dance with the rhythm of life. We share the same life-breath coming from one Creator, the author of life.

¹⁹² Song and Lyrics by Joey Ayala, a Filipino artist. Translation is supplied by the author.

Concepts of Creation

Fundamental Elements of a Christian Concept of Creation based on the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*

Ursula Nothelle-Wildfeuer

Creation, and especially its preservation, has been a much discussed topic for quite some time now – to be precise ever since the publication of *The Limits to Growth* in 1972.¹⁹³ The term 'creation', which is of Judaeo-Christian origin, is virtually unique in the way it has been removed from its theological framework and undergone a process of secularisation. This makes it particularly appropriate as a focal point for social discussion. On the one hand, the term has come to be used in antithesis to the problems and crises which plague our modern civilisation in its pursuit of economic and technological progress. On the other hand, it appears suitably qualified to heighten awareness of the original implications and connotations of the concept and to ensure they are given due consideration in the social discourse.

This was precisely Pope Francis' objective in issuing his first social encyclical *Laudato Si'* in May 2015 six months ahead of the UN Conference on Climate Change in Paris. The reflections that follow concentrate on the essence of the concept of creation which – based on and guided by this encyclical – can and must be incorporated in a theologically sound manner in the global debate on 'Care for our Common Home' (the subtitle of the encyclical).

After a brief look at how the papal text fits into the tradition of the Church's social teaching, I will first examine the theological and socio-ethical dimensions of the understanding of creation. I will then explore man's position within creation before concluding with a con-

¹⁹³ Cf. Meadows, Dennis et al., *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, Stuttgart 1972.

sideration of the implications for socio-ethical practice that rest on this understanding of creation.

The encyclical *Laudato Si'* and its position within Catholic social teaching

In choosing an Italian title for this social encyclical, which constitutes a marked departure from the Latin titles used for previous encyclicals, Pope Francis establishes an immediate connection with Francis of Assisi and his Canticle of the Sun (and in so doing gives a compelling explanation for the choice of his name). At the same time he expressly sees himself as continuing the tradition of the 'Church's social teaching'¹⁹⁴. However, he does not regard the latter as a monolithic structure. He sees it rather as a project in progress, saying that it 'is called to be enriched by taking up new challenges' (LS 63). These are typified by the 'earth herself, burdened and laid waste,' which 'groans in travail' (Rom 8:22) (LS 2). This encyclical marks the introduction of a new strand of thinking in the Church's social teaching.

It was in 1891 that Leo XIII founded the Church's social teaching in the strict sense when he issued his encyclical *Rerum novarum* on the Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour, in other words on the condition of the working classes in the 19th century. This encyclical was the first doctrinal promulgation devoted exclusively to such matters. A tradition was subsequently established in which an anniversary of *Rerum novarum* was taken as an occasion to re-examine the issues and to bring the teaching up to date. Benedict XVI later made it clear in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* of 2009 that it was Paul VI who introduced a second thematic strand of the debate on social teaching in publishing his development encyclical *Populorum Progressio* in 1967. He was followed by John Paul II with *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) and Benedict XVI with *Caritas in Veritate* (2009). The issue addressed in these encyclicals was a proper understanding of progress and development. Now Pope Francis has added a third strand to the debate – that of ecology – in his first social encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Ecology certainly has an important role to play in it, although to see the encyclical solely in the context of environmental and climate issues would do it an injustice. While it is certainly correct

¹⁹⁴ Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home, No. 15. Referred to hereinafter as LS, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encilica-laudato-si.html (06.07.2017).

to say that he addresses the development theme of the second strand, his emphasis on the subject of creation and associated environmental issues is so novel in its approach that it seems only right to talk of a third strand. Not that there are no issues worth revisiting in the tradition of social teaching. In fact Pope Francis mentions a few¹⁹⁵ at the beginning of the encyclical, but he then goes on very quickly (in contrast to many earlier encyclicals) to elaborate on the aspects he particularly wishes to emphasise.

On the Concept of Creation – Theological and Socio-ethical Dimensions

The concept of creation is one of the few originally genuine theological terms to have enjoyed a flourishing career outside and far beyond the religious context. Connotations have emerged in the process which require a look at theological hermeneutics before an investigation can be made of the aspect of autonomy, in particular.

On the Theological Hermeneutics of the Concept of Creation

In the legal, political and ecological discourse more than anywhere else the term creation tends to be used in a relatively undifferentiated manner 'as an ecologically or politically motivated metaphor for the environment, to the extent that it is seen as being vulnerable, under threat and deserving of protection'.¹⁹⁶ Despite all the different uses of the term in the various secular contexts, it can be asserted that 'creation' in the context of modern-day debates essentially means 'unspoilt nature'. It often also implies 'nature undisturbed by humans'. This leads in consequence to the following general distinction: 'Anthropogenic products wrought by culture and civilisation do not form a part of it [i.e. creation, author's note]. The Zugspitze Mountain can be seen as 'creation' but not the cable railway leading up to it.'¹⁹⁷

The intrinsic meaning of the theological concept of creation would be clearly missed, however, if we were to content ourselves with this ultimately romanticised view of nature. Pope Francis brings out the distinction by saying: 'In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word 'creation'

¹⁹⁵ Pope Francis refers to individual passages in OA (Paul VI), in RH and SRS (John Paul II) and in CA (Benedict XVI.).

¹⁹⁶ Schmidt, Konrad, "Schöpfung als Thema der Theologie", in: Schmidt, Konrad (ed.), *Schöpfung*, Tübingen 2012, 1–15, here 2.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

has a broader meaning than 'nature', for it has to do with God's loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance.' (LS 76) He highlights the difference in the hermeneutical approach in his encyclical. Whereas the reference and interpretation framework is decidedly scientific and analytical when we talk about nature, it is genuinely theological when we talk about creation: 'Creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion.' (LS 76) In theological terms – and in contrast to political or ecological terminology – it is not possible to talk about 'creation' without talking about the 'creator'¹⁹⁸, and the creator, in turn, cannot be mentioned without referring to Christ and the Trinity. Hence, addressing the issue of creation is genuine theology. The creation of the world is not approached from a historical or scientific perspective; concepts of creation entail etiological questions about the origins of and a 'meaningful reason'¹⁹⁹ for reality as we find it. More specifically, it can be said that the Old Testament creation theologies '[present] first and foremost the just and merciful God in the tradition of Israel', for they express the hope that the 'God who calls heaven and earth into being from nothing [can] also bring the dead back to life.'²⁰⁰ Two aspects come into play here: firstly, the emphasis on the 'original goodness of creation and thus of God the Creator'²⁰¹ and, secondly, the belief in the God who, because of this original goodness, remains loyal to His creation throughout history.

So, if the term 'creation' means more than just a reference to nature, it follows that creation 'according to fundamental Christian convictions [...] means everything that is not God'²⁰². In theological terms, then, the term 'creation' cannot, in principle, be separated from man and his actions, but must rather be distinguished from the divine.²⁰³ The demythologisation of creation is crucial to the Judaeo-

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹⁹⁹ Predel, Gregor, *Schöpfungslehre*, Paderborn 2015, 13.

²⁰⁰ Striet, Magnus, "Den Anfang denken: Bemerkungen zur Hermeneutik des creatio ex-nihilo Glaubens", in: *Zeitschrift für Theologie aus biblischer Perspektive*, No. 1 (2000), 2–13, here 3.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 4.

²⁰² Predel, Gregor, op. cit., 13.

²⁰³ Cf. Hieke, Thomas, "Alles nur Mythos? Impulse für heutiges Handeln aus biblischer Schöpfungsrede", in: Geiger, Gunter/van Saan-Klein, Beatrice (eds.), *Menschenrechte*

Christian definition of the concept. A mythological view of the world sees nature as a completely sacred realm in which different divine powers manifest themselves in a wide range of phenomena and developments. In stark contrast to this view, everything the Old Testament has to say about creation emphasises its non-divinity: it does not have a 'divine character' (LS 78), it did not come about 'from chaos or chance' (LS 77) nor is it in any dualistic sense 'the product of a godless power.' Rather it is God who called '[...] creation into being in complete freedom, without any coercion or necessity.'²⁰⁴ "Creation" encompasses time and space, 'heaven and earth', 'spirit' and 'matter', animate and inanimate beings, the 'visible and invisible world', its beginnings, its history and development and, finally, its everlasting completion.'²⁰⁵ Seen in this context, creation is 'in a universal sense the primary and fundamental revelation of God.'²⁰⁶

This understanding of creation ultimately determines the relationship between man and creation. God entrusted His creation to man not for him to treat it arbitrarily, but to nurture and preserve it. The fundamental idea underlying the demythologisation of creation 'emphasizes all the more our human responsibility for nature.' (LS 78) Despite all the fuzzy semantics in the ecological debates in which the concept of creation plays a role, these debates deserve credit for having heightened awareness of the ultimate unavailability of creation for man and of his responsibility for it.

Demythologisation of the World and the Right Autonomy of Earthly Affairs

The aforementioned demythologisation of the world gives rise to a fundamental tension. It means, on the one hand, that all created realities have been given their own distinctive identity by God the Creator and, on the other hand, that God 'is intimately present to each being, without impinging on the autonomy of His creature' (LS 80).²⁰⁷

weltweit – Schöpfung bewahren! Grundlagen einer ethischen Umweltpolitik, Leverkusen 2013, 13–31, here 17f.

²⁰⁴ Predel, Gregor, op. cit., 13.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 13f.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 14.

²⁰⁷ Cf. also Müller, Klaus, "Grenzen des traditionellen Gottesbilds: Wechsel zum Panentheismus?", in: *Herder Korrespondenz Spezial*, No. 2 (2011) 65, 33–38.

God's continued presence ensures the existence and development of these spheres of reality, which is precisely why the Pope refers to the *creatio continua*, the 'continuation of the work of creation' (LS 80 with a quotation from Thomas Aquinas).

This statement deriving from creation theology prepares the ground for a socio-ethical shift, which ultimately finds expression in the 'right autonomy of earthly affairs' (GS 36), an issue explored by the Second Vatican Council in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*. Francis likewise refers to this key statement. It expresses recognition of the fact that the various spheres of the world have their own laws and values, in short their own logic and ethics which – and this is expressly emphasised – are valued, heeded and respected.²⁰⁸ While this principle of the independence of the cultural areas has various precursors in the tradition of Catholic social teaching²⁰⁹, it is embedded and formulated here for the first time in a comprehensive theological concept of the understanding of the world and society.

The world's claim to autonomy, which had long been noted by the Church but regularly rejected as hostile to the faith²¹⁰, ultimately led to the formulation of this principle at the Second Vatican Council and to recognition of its inherent legitimacy. This statement is one of the Council's central precepts but, as has become all too clear from the current theological debate, it is one of the most difficult to understand and one of the hardest to implement. While it certainly cannot be claimed, in view of the historical development of the relationship between the Church and the world, that 'the Church [...] has given the world its freedom' – on the contrary, it must be stated that 'the world [...] has emancipated itself'²¹¹ – it is also true, on the other hand, that 'at the Council [...] the Church did not look resignedly upon the autonomy of the world', but 'voiced its realistic and unresentful approval of the new situation and, moreover, [...] gave a theological justification for it (or, to be more precise, a justification based on creation theology and soteriology, author's note).'²¹²

²⁰⁸ Cf. *ibid*; GS 41, 42.

²⁰⁹ Cf. for example QA 41–43.

²¹⁰ Cf. Hanssler, Bernhard, *Glaube und Kultur*, Cologne 1968, 24.

²¹¹ Spelt, Jorge, "Kirche und Weltverständnis", in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, No. 91 (1966) 5, 345–356, here 351.

²¹² Hanssler, Bernhard, *op. cit.*, 25.

What is the real meaning of this *iusta autonomia*? The term is translated into German as the 'rightful' or 'relative' autonomy of cultural affairs. 'Relative' can be misconstrued, however, because translating *iusta* in this way makes it appear that we are talking about a 'little' or limited autonomy, which would be curtailed in due time on the grounds of distrust. But that is precisely not what it means. On the contrary, we are talking here about a relational autonomy, an autonomy in relation to something else. The requisite permanent recognition of the world and, in particular, of independent human beings cannot take place without there being a relationship with the Creator; the autonomy at the centre of the debate here cannot be construed as meaning that 'created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator.'²¹³ Here Pope Francis criticises the 'Promethean vision of mastery over the world' (LS 116). This autonomy is, therefore, not synonymous with the absoluteness of the world and its detachment from the salvation in which it is ultimately embedded; that would be secularism, which goes hand in hand with an absoluteness of the world and with human self-apotheosis. On the contrary, it can be concluded that the seriousness of the approach taken to the world in its independence derives from a consistent creation theology which has been thought through to the end. It is attributable, in particular, to the indispensable connection between earthly affairs and the Creator, to 'the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order'²¹⁴. It is precisely the aforementioned demythologisation of the world which makes its shaping by man possible; at the same time this shaping is a duty imposed on man by the Creator. For human beings this connection with the Creator gives rise, on the one hand, to a completely new freedom in the way they deal with the world. On the other hand, this tension between autonomy and commitment constitutes the very essence of the Christian concept of creation. In the view of some observers, this meant entry at long last into modernity and the modern world.

²¹³ GS 36:3.

²¹⁴ GS 36:2.

Anthropology based on Creation Theology: on the Position of Man

Reflections on creation theology would fall short of the mark if they did not extend beyond the various realms of reality and failed to consider the position of man in this creation.

First of all, Pope Francis makes intensive and very effective use of ‘The Wisdom of Biblical Accounts’ (heading preceding LS 65). In earlier official Church and Magisterial texts the Book of Genesis and its account of creation were consistently used almost exclusively to substantiate the absolute dominion of man on the grounds that he is a creature fashioned in the image of God and endowed with dignity as a consequence. In *Laudato Si’*, however, this aspect is set in a much broader context, in line with the latest research findings, and thus given serious consideration in all its complexity. On the one hand, the special status of man as the creature ‘created out of love’ (LS 65) is underlined while, on the other, the teaching about ‘human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself.’ (LS 66)

In the light of the theological debates there is a need for closer analysis of man’s (absolute) supremacy. We are concerned here with *dominium terrae*, in other words the implications of the biblical assignment God gave man to subdue the earth (cf. Gen 1:28). The following reflections have been prompted by ecological and theological debates in which the ‘accusation has repeatedly been levelled against theology that the Old Testament, Judaeo-Christian belief in creation is to blame for the current environmental crisis. By separating God and the world, Creator and creation, and by depriving nature of its divinity and secularising it, this belief paved the way for modern natural science. Indeed, the *dominium terrae* tenet facilitated, legitimised and allegedly even encouraged man’s rule over nature and thus its exploitation and destruction.’²¹⁵

This accusation, that the biblical exhortation to subdue the earth opened the floodgates for man, in his urge for self-glorification, to exploit the earth in all sorts of ways, was first made in categorical

²¹⁵ Daecke, Sigurd Martin, “Unterscheiden zwischen der biblischen Botschaft und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte”, in: Halter, Hans/Lochbühler, Wilfried (eds.), *Ökologische Theologie und Ethik*, Graz 1999, 61–66, here 62.

fashion by the American, Lynn White, in 1967²¹⁶, taken up by Carl Amery in 1972²¹⁷ and again by Eugen Drewermann in 1981²¹⁸. It is this accusation that is behind the Pope’s remarks.

From an exegetic perspective four arguments can be advanced with regard to Gen 1, although I cannot deal with them in detail here. These arguments make it clear that the ‘ruling’ and ‘subduing’ associated with *dominium terrae* need not lead to the destruction of the environment and the exploitation of nature and thus to an ecological crisis. 1) The fact that certain terms can strike a negative chord in other contexts need not necessarily apply to the context we are examining here. 2) The assignment given to man to rule over nature and his fellow creatures, and his right to do so, are derived from his creation in the image of God. This characterisation of the ruler as God’s representative and governor and of his dominion as a task given to him by God rules out any destructive interpretation; indeed, exploitation would result in man losing his ‘kingly status’. 3) The exhortation to subdue and hold sway is an explicit blessing (‘God blessed them’) and hence is only for the good. 4) The so-called ‘expression of approval’ (‘God saw that it was good’) leaves room solely for a positive interpretation which rules out any degradation of nature as a result of man’s dominion.²¹⁹ These exegetic findings make it clear that the reproach levelled against the Judaeo-Christian belief derives from a misunderstanding of the biblical statement. The task given to man to subdue the earth is not about ‘absolute domination over other creatures’ (LS 67), but about mastery in the sense of ‘keeping’, which means ‘caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving’ (LS 67). This right to domination should not, therefore, be seen as arbitrary or despotic in nature; neither the other creatures nor the rest of creation are to be ruthlessly exploited for personal gain. On the contrary, the Bible employs a variety of images to stress the communion of all living things²²⁰; respect for the Creator

²¹⁶ Cf. White, Lynn, “The historical roots of our ecological crisis”, in: *Science*, No. 3767 (1967) 155, 1203–1207.

²¹⁷ Cf. Amery, Carl, *Das Ende der Vorsehung: Die gnadenlosen Folgen des Christentums*, Reinbek 2¹⁹⁸⁰.

²¹⁸ Cf. Drewermann, Eugen, *Der tödliche Fortschritt: Von der Zerstörung der Erde und des Menschen im Erbe des Christentums*, Regensburg 6¹⁹⁸¹.

²¹⁹ Cf. Daecke, Sigurd Martin, *op. cit.*, 63.

²²⁰ Cf. Anzenbacher, Arno, *Christliche Sozialethik: Einführung und Prinzipien*, Paderborn 1997, 194.

implies respect for all creation, the cultural mission entails trusteeship and care.

Nonetheless, Christians have also played a part in the exploitation and destruction of the earth. They share the blame for the ecological disaster laid at the Church's door, because they have betrayed their biblical foundations. Pope Francis says that 'we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures' and that 'we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.' (LS 67) The biblically founded, positively connoted secularisation, in the sense of the stewardship of nature promised by God to man, has been transformed, in the words of the Protestant theologian and biologist, Günter Altner, into the modern 'heresy of secularism'²²¹. In modern times man's special status has been steadily detached from any commitment to God, made absolute and turned into a despotic and exploitative dominion over nature, into autocratic arbitrariness. However, man's right and obligation to rule should be understood not in the sense of an absolute autonomy but rather of a relational autonomy. Günter Altner voices his criticism of Amery in no uncertain terms: 'The blame for the serious upsetting of the natural balance which has occurred around the world in the wake of events in the Christian occident cannot be attributed to the promises of salvation in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. [...] On the contrary, these promises were dropped [...] and so the biblically intended dominion of man over nature degenerated into technocratic exploitation'²²². Man's arrogant and ultimately deleterious claim to power is undoubtedly a danger – not just today, but now especially so. However, this debate has also made it clear that there is an acute awareness of the perilous situation we face. 'Man cannot avert this danger by renouncing all interventions in nature and dispensing with any attempt to mould civilisation.' It is not the fulfilment of the task to subdue and to give shape to the world, 'but rather its distortion into a distrustful rejection of God's leadership'²²³ which has triggered the crisis and discussion of it.

²²¹ Altner, Günter, "Unschuld der Bibel, Mitschuld des Christentums", in: Halter, Hans/Lochbühler, Winfried (eds.), *Ökologische Theologie und Ethik*, Graz 1999, 66–70, here 67.

²²² *Ibid.*, 69.

²²³ Splett, Jörg, "Macht euch die Erde untertan? Zur ethisch-religiösen Begrenzung technischen Zugriff", in: Buch, Alois/Splett, Jörg (eds.), *Wissenschaft, Technik, Humanität: Beiträge zu einer konkreten Ethik*, Frankfurt am Main 1982, 175–202, here 193f.

On the Conception of Ethics based on Creation Theology

Proceeding from the theological foundations set out above, I will now examine their relevance for the development of a theological ethics in respect of both a fundamental, conceptual orientation and a precise definition of an integrative ecological and ethical approach.

Anthroporelationality as Opposed to Anthropocentrism

The meta-ethical debate has been marked by a discussion as to whether it is legitimate to base the ethical approach, as has been the case in Christian ethics and Kantian ethics, on the human rights status and thus the dignity of man and the special status accorded to him as a consequence or whether this is not a presumptuous and unjustified form of anthropocentrism. For a long time there were four irreconcilably opposed approaches to providing justification²²⁴: 1) the anthropocentric approach, in which the central criterion is the dignity of man as the focal point of all thought and action; 2) the pathocentric approach: The ethical criterion here is the sentience of all living things. This approach has exerted an influence primarily on an animal ethics that wishes to grant animals autonomous rights which have nothing to do with man or that does not recognise any rights for man which go beyond those of animals; 3) the biocentric approach which, based largely on Albert Schweitzer, proceeds from the identical interests of all living things (including plants) and sees no basic priority for human interests; 4) the physiocentric approach, whose ethical criterion is based on the interests of the whole of nature and puts 'the rights of nature on a par with human rights'^{225, 226}.

As things have developed, a more differentiated position has emerged which responds positively to the shortcomings pinpointed in the approaches outlined above and links them together²²⁷. In the

²²⁴ Cf. Lochbühler, Winfried, *Christliche Umweltethik: Schöpfungstheologische Grundlagen, philosophisch-ethische Ansätze, ökologische Marktwirtschaft*, Frankfurt am Main 1996, 201–318; cf. also *Die deutschen Bischöfe/Kommission für gesellschaftliche und soziale Fragen, Handeln für die Zukunft der Schöpfung*, Bonn 1998, No. 86–90, http://www.dbk-shop.de/media/files_public/ipixohxlt/DBK_1219.pdf (6. March 2016).

²²⁵ Moltmann, Jürgen, *Ethik der Hoffnung*, Gütersloh 2010, 170.

²²⁶ *Die deutschen Bischöfe/Kommission für gesellschaftliche und soziale Fragen*, op. cit.

²²⁷ Cf. Lienkamp, Andreas, "Das Nachhaltigkeits-Leitbild in der umweltpolitischen und -ethischen Debatte: Steile Karriere", in: *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 54 (2000) 9, 464–469, here 467.

words of the social ethicist, Hans-Joachim Höhn, and a pastoral letter citing him, what is called for is not anthropocentricity but ‘anthroporelationality’²²⁸. An ethical approach of this kind ‘should thus have a dual dimension in that it must be pursued by the individual as the bearer of moral responsibility and, at the same time, directed at the well-being not just of man but of his fellow creatures, too. Man as the bearer of responsibility is at the centre, but he remains strictly bound to the fundamental orientation deriving from an attitude of responsibility which respects both the intrinsic value and the systemic ecological relationships of non-human creation.’²²⁹ That is exactly what propels Pope Francis’ wish to move ecology, as it has been perceived hitherto, in the direction of ‘human ecology’ (LS 148; 155). In doing so he uses the term in a broader context; in contrast to passages in earlier encyclicals in which the term was used, it is not limited here to the issue of sexual ethics based on natural law, but integrated into the larger picture.²³⁰

Hence man must practice ecology and ethics in a manner appropriate to the original intention of the Bible and in due consideration of his fellow creatures. This does not mean that ‘other creatures are completely subordinated to the good of human beings, as if they have no worth in themselves and can be treated as we wish’ (LS 69). Each creature has its own value which man must respect, since he himself is integrated into the whole construct of creation.

Co-createdness as the message of each creature in the harmony of creation (the heading preceding LS 84) is just one of the dimensions which must be taken into account in an approach resting on Christian ethics. In addition, the Christian understanding of man always implies priority of the human person as a matter of principle; man is ‘the subject and the goal of all social institutions’ (GS 25; 63) –

²²⁸ Höhn, Hans-Joachim, *Ökologische Sozialethik: Grundlagen und Perspektiven*, Paderborn 2001, 88.

²²⁹ Die deutschen Bischöfe/Kommission für gesellschaftliche und soziale Fragen, op. cit., No. 89.

²³⁰ Cf. Vogt, Markus, “Ökologische Gerechtigkeit und Humanökologie”, in: Gabriel, Ingeborg/Steinmair-Pösel, Petra (eds.), *Gerechtigkeit in einer endlichen Welt: Ökologie – Wirtschaft – Ethik*, Ostfildern 2014, 64–86, here 79; cf. also idem, “Ein neues Kapitel der katholischen Soziallehre: Ganzheitliche Ökologie – eine Frage radikal veränderter Lebensstile und Wirtschaftsformen”, in: Amos international, No. 9 (2015), 3–10, here 6, as well as Kruij, Gerhard, “Ein dramatischer Appell: Die neue Umwelt-Enzyklika des Papstes”, in: Herder Korrespondenz, No. 69 (2015) 7, 341–344, here 343.

he is at the heart of Christian social ethics. This can be explained as follows. Man and his position in society are of a qualitative novelty, of ‘a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology’ (LS 81). In the Pope’s view, this makes it necessary for man to be treated as a subject ‘who can never be reduced to the status of an object’ (LS 81). This again has to do with the fact that man is the only being that can act morally and assume responsibility in freedom. Hence he is the only being that can understand his fellow creatures as the subject of a moral obligation. This is why man has a special status in the structure of creation. On the other hand, this does not mean that animals and living things are objects that can be disposed of at will and without limitation. They undoubtedly have their own intrinsic value, but this cannot ultimately be separated from its relatedness to the specific modes of experience and the culturally communicated modes of perception of the human subject. It is appropriate, then to refer to a graded intrinsic value.

The Concept of ‘Integrated Ecology’

The creation theology concept, expounded with reference to some of the statements made in *Laudato Si’*, has significant consequences for the content of a Christian (social) ethics as formulated in the concept of an integrated ecology and ethics presented by Pope Francis as his own solution. This is apparent from the following passages:

‘Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.*’ (LS 49) The Pope’s focus, therefore, is on an integrated concept which regards the components related to nature as being inseparably bound up with the human and social dimension. Questions concerning ecological and social justice must of necessity be closely linked, because ‘we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.’ (LS 139) Even though it is not stated in as many words, it is possible to detect in these remarks on

the complexity of the 'integrated ecology' approach a reference to the triangle of sustainability with its ecological, economic and social dimensions.

A number of key features of the 'integrated ecology' model can be derived from three crucial criticisms voiced in the encyclical. Firstly, Pope Francis reiterates the criticism of the market that he made in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*: 'By itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion.' (LS 109) In Francis' view, the market is concerned solely with maximising profits. He feels that the market ignores the key questions (which are among the main planks of his integrated ecology concept) about 'more balanced levels of production, a better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations' (LS 109) and thus the matter of the human, social and ecological consequences. Here he sees the 'technocratic paradigm' (LS 109) at work which tends to 'dominate economic and political life' (LS 109). He correctly regards it as a problem that people still believe they can solve all the environmental problems with the help of economics and technology. Referring to *Caritatis in Veritate*, he criticises the persistent imbalance between 'a sort of "superdevelopment" of a wasteful and consumerist kind', on the one hand, and 'ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation', on the other. He pinpoints a blatant shortcoming in stating that the poorest of the poor have no regular access to basic resources – in the language of recent Christian social ethics this is a problem of social justice in the sense of participatory justice. It should be pointed out in this context that the Pope calls for an ethical criterion – that is what he means when he criticises the fact that there are no 'objective truths or sound principles' (LS 123). A criterion of this kind must be the indivisible and unassailable dignity of each and every individual in connection with an awareness of the value of each and every creature, which puts a stop to 'human trafficking, organized crime, the drug trade, commerce in blood diamonds and the fur of endangered species' (LS 123).

The second aspect is epistemological in nature. Pope Francis mentions the specialisation which belongs to technology and diversity and expresses criticism of the fact that in this concept of modernity it is 'difficult to see the larger picture' (LS 110). 'A science which would offer solutions to the great issues' (LS 110) would 'necessarily have to

take into account the data generated by other fields of knowledge, but this is a difficult habit to acquire today' (LS 110). Given a positive spin, this would mean there is a need for an ethical and/or religious horizon, a perspective of human freedom that is capable of broadening the field of vision. In the words of the Pope: 'There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm.' (LS 111) An ill-balanced technological – or, one might say, exclusively economic – solution to the problem would entail a one-sidedness that ignores all the inter-connectedness the Pope deems so crucial. He therefore adds (thereby establishing a connection with his next criticism): 'If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships.' (LS 119)

The third criticism concerns the understanding of man. In anthropological terms Francis advances a holistic view encompassing every dimension of human existence. With regard to the integrated ecology concept he has developed this means that 'Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God. Otherwise, it would be nothing more than romantic individualism dressed up in ecological garb, locking us into a stifling immanence' (LS 119).

Taking this into account, the objective of the integrated ecology concept is clearly to seek solutions to problems which focus on 'the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems' (LS 139). Francis cites various elements, such as environmental, economic and social ecology, cultural ecology and the ecology of everyday life, and goes into some detail on the relevance of these various fields. He draws attention, for instance, to the serious problem resulting from the fact that climate change has less of an impact in the northern hemisphere than it does in the southern hemisphere, where people are poor and thus become dual victims of the ecological debt of entire countries.²³¹ It can thus be stated that 'the ecological problems

²³¹ Cf. Gabriel, Ingeborg, "Die Enzyklika Laudato Si': Ein Meilenstein in der lehramtlichen Sozialverkündigung", in: IKaZ Communio, No. 44 (2015), 639–646, here 642; cf. also Vogt, Markus, "Ökologische Gerechtigkeit und Humanökologie", op. cit., 69f.

exacerbate the extremely inequitable global distribution of wealth and opportunities in life.²³² According to the Pope, therefore, the requisite 'ecological conversion' called for in the encyclical (LS 216) must take due account of the Christian ethics of property ownership, above all of its supreme principle whereby the goods of the earth are there for all, as well as of the 'option for the poor' and of a culture of humility and sobriety (see LS 223f.).

The integrated ecology concept also implies a more comprehensive, indeed a quite different understanding of progress and growth. By that Francis quite clearly does not mean simply a quantitative increase in technical or economic potential, since that leads to an imbalance in the ecosystems (see LS 35) which does not fit in with a 'development in human responsibility, values and conscience' (LS 105). Rather, he is concerned with growth that means an 'integral development and an improvement in the quality of life' (LS 46), a better distribution of wealth, concern for the environment and the rights of future generations (see LS 109). He clearly sees the 'freedom needed to limit and direct technology; we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral' (LS 112). The reference to a different type of growth makes it clear that what is implied here is not a simple, naïve hostility to progress, but rather an understanding of progress in which progress is not an end in itself but rather fosters creativity that has the capacity to enhance the quality of life and to ensure greater justice.

Summary

The observations made above show that the understanding of ecology apparent up to now in the mainstream of society is very narrow. Hence an encyclical with a strong emphasis on ecology is not exclusively about environmental ecology. It is clear that a genuinely theological, comprehensive and adequate concept of creation encompasses more than just non-human, unspoilt nature. On the contrary, the diverse areas of reality and the anthropology or, you might say, the three dimensions of the ecological, the economic and the social are inextricably intertwined and must be seen in the context of their mutual dependence. The encapsulation of any of the three dimensions will

inevitably lead to one-sidedness and inadequacy. It transpires that an ethical approach centred solely on man, which was customary for a long time, lacks sufficient differentiation. The same is true, moreover, of an approach based solely on the market and its laws – a criticism which is by no means new, but which Pope Francis has formulated once again in a very succinct manner. An approach focusing solely on the environment and nature in its entirety also falls short of the mark. The theological concept of creation encompasses a far more complex construct consisting of various dimensions.

An advance in both theological and Magisterial thinking is readily apparent here. At the very latest since the Second Vatican Council, or since the pontificate of Paul VI, it is evident that a holistic, integrated humanism can and, indeed, must make a decisive contribution to a comprehensive understanding of development. The challenges posed by the present have led to a realisation in recent times of the constitutive dimension of the ecological.

The development I have demonstrated brings out the intrinsically open-ended nature of this reflective process, in which ecological considerations are embedded. The ensuing complexity will require consistent reconsideration. It is for that very reason that the Church is not in a position to offer precisely formulated instructions for action. Its authentic task and intrinsic function is rather to keep a close watch on overall developments, shunning any narrow interpretations or one-sidedness, and – in the truest sense of the word – to integrate catholicity as a universal factor into the social debate and the new issues it is continually obliged to address.

²³² Gabriel, Ingeborg, op. cit., 643.

On Creation.

Reflections on a Holistic Eco-Theology

Rui Manuel

“The eye with which I see God
is the same eye with which God sees me”²³³.

The theme of Creation is one of the oldest humanity knows. Faced with the infinity of this planet, the primitive human must have asked several basic questions which are still difficult to answer absolutely and which are open to several possibilities. Questions like: “Where do I come from?”, “Where am I going?”, “Who am I?”, “Has this world existed forever?” “And, if not, how did it come about?”, “Did someone create it?” These are the eternal questions that people ask, as well as searching for food, reproducing, defending themselves from the thousands of dangers that assail them, living with others, creating art, participating in religious rites, sharing myths, and even having fun.

These essential questions occur in different cultures, and from time immemorial they have prompted different religious, philosophical, scientific and artistic answers. A human being is not only an animal looking to survive in tribes, clans and families, but also a “cultural animal”, an “animal of meaning”, formulating and seeking responses to individual and community concerns. Sometimes it is more creative to formulate questions than to find answers. Moreover, for each answer there are other questions in a never-ending cycle. The “circle of reason”.

In this sense, the question about whether “what exists” has been there forever or came into being, and if so how and why, or whether some other principle might have created it, is a fundamental question, and that is what we shall consider concisely in this article.

²³³ Quoted by the Zen–Master Amasamy, “Zen: Awakening to Your Original Face”, Chennai 2010, 138.

Creation in the Bible

One of the oldest answers is, as we know, the biblical one. Partly influenced by neighbouring traditions in its geographical and historical context, the thinking of the people of Israel was so bold as to suggest that this world was not always here but that there was a “moment” when it was created. Furthermore, it was created by a Supreme Being which, in its turn, had no other creator (otherwise, it would be a *regressus in infinitum* or a *regressus ad infinitum*), a Being that has existed forever, that is eternal. Obviously, arriving at this explanation was a long process.

In the history of human reflection there has also been the contrary response: that this world has existed for ever and is eternal. This is the *materialist* position. This position should not necessarily be equated with atheism (extremely rare in ancient times, in any case). Rather, it is possible to speak of two “eternal” principles: the divine and the worldly. Of course, whether these are formulated more clearly or not (and they will be in modern times), this is the position that would say that deciding the matter definitively is beyond human capacity. This is the position currently known as agnostic. It affirms that there are as many good reasons to think that the world is eternal as there are to think that it has been created. Therefore, it argues, it is best not to discuss such questions, for they are mere speculation, and it is better to get on with life, which offers more than enough practical problems to resolve as it is.

An age-old Theme of World Literature

There are many stories about Creation in world Literature. It is not, then, a rare theme. There are myths about the creation of the Universe (*Cosmogogenesis*) in Ancient Egypt, among the Babylonians, in Ancient Greece, in China, Japan, India and among the Mayan peoples. It would take a long time to cover all of this. In these myths, there are many imaginative factors, as the subject is an unverifiable one, but it seems to us (and we hazard this generalization with great epistemic modesty) that it is important to take into account that in all of them (or in almost all of them, because there are always exceptions in Anthropology):

- There is a desire to find an explanation for the world as it actually exists, and in this sense they rationalize existence.

For this reason, however imaginative and literary they may seem to us in the 21st century, myths were always a way of justifying things and providing a reason for why the world exists as it does.

- There is basically always an interest in explaining, above all, the origin of human beings (*Anthropogenesis*), and in finding Order in Chaos, or in not allowing Chaos to prevail over the Cosmos. Order (in several of them it is more about organizing pre-existing matter, seen as “amorphous” or “chaotic”) rather than a “*creatio ex nihilo*”.
- There is frequently an *ideological* desire or a will to justify a certain social order (for example, questions of gender, sexuality, different professions or “social classes”, ethnicities, norms and social roles, age attributes, etc.).
- Almost always, creation is due to the action of one or more gods, but as we said, in most cases matter was there forever, even if there is a special moment (“creation”) when it assumes a particular form, in other words, Chaos becomes Cosmos.
- Also, these originating myths claim to give meaning or an ethical response to existence. In other words, they try to find explanations for questions about the existence of evil in the world, of suffering, of existential frustration. These myths are a great work of creation by human beings themselves, partly to answer (or at least to try to answer) the great questions of human existence.
- Another important aspect is the dominant role that they attribute to human beings over other species and the justification for this (which was inevitable, given that these myths were written by and for human beings).
- It is also important to highlight the interesting fact that in some of the African myths God creates the World and human beings, but then withdraws, leaving humans to grow, mature and be themselves.
- Finally, one curious aspect is, for example, found among the Mayan peoples (according to the Quiché text *Popol Vuh* or *Popol Wuj*), where the various deities create humans in several stages by “trial and error”, until they achieve the result with which we are familiar. In any case, it is a text from the 16th century and was subject to the influence of Christianity.

Back to the Bible

However, let us return to the biblical position on Creation. Here we can highlight a number of questions (we are not exegetists, although we have taken into account various studies). What interests us most here is the *theological* aspect of the questions presented.

In the first place, an account of Creation appears in Genesis (or rather, two accounts) from the perspective of a creating God, but with different theologies. Obviously, in hermeneutic terms all biblical texts obey a context (a community) and a pretext (or socio-historical situation), according to the work of Professor Carlos Mesters, inasmuch as they are written from a present point-of-view that is subject to various interests. It would be a rather uncritical reading to think that the author or authors of the texts only wanted to tell a story about the Beginning. They speak for the historical present of the era in which the stories were told (see the two versions of the first two chapters of Genesis), one probably around the 5th century and the other around the 10th. There are clear “etiological” interests which are trying to “establish themselves” in an “original, mythical time” like that of the moment of Creation.

In this way, for example, the first of the stories (Gen 1:1-2, 4a) places more emphasis on an aspect of Man’s “dominion” over Creation, even though this dominion can be seen as a task similar to the divine one²³⁴, like ordering chaos, or in other words creating or co-creating a (harmonious) cosmos; while the other text that follows (Gen 2:4b ff.) highlights more the aspect of “care”, Man’s role as “gardener”, or rather “labourer”, he who works the land and reaps fruit from it (therefore always in harmony with it). In the models of the History of Religions, from a Taoist perspective, the first is more *yang*

²³⁴ In fact, the Hebrew term for “dominion”, in Gen 1:28, is the verb *rādāh*, which has a strong connotation of dominion, lordship, command, government. It seems to be applied to a “king”. In this sense, the text attributes to the whole of humankind this regal dominion over the rest of Nature. As such the term is not pejorative, but when the verb is qualified by adverbial complements it acquires a fairly negative aspect of harsh command, oppression, angry command, tyranny, dominance by force, with violence (but not in its primary sense). I owe this reflection to Fr. Francolino Gonçalves, a Dominican exegetist at the French Biblical and Archaeological School of Jerusalem, who kindly agreed to an interview. For grammatical background on the word *rādāh*, cf. Schökel, Luis Alonso, *Diccionario bíblico hebreo-español* (Editorial Trotta, Madrid 1999, 690). I would also recommend the whole article by Gonçalves, Francolino J., “Bíblia e Natureza: A versão sacerdotal da Criação (Gênesis 1,1–2,4a) no seu contexto bíblico e Próximo-Oriental”, in: *Cadernos ISTA*, No. 8 (1999), 7–40.

(masculinizing) and the second is more *yin* (feminine). Sometimes, the first text has been criticized as being too “dominating” about Man’s relation to Creation (and some ecological groups have even attacked Judæo-Christian thought for *legitimizing* the destruction of Nature with this *dominion*). But the Hebrew word used, *rādāh*, corresponds more to the dominion of a king organizing his kingdom (in a monarchical context it would not be seen as negative but positive). The second would seem closer to the current sensitivity in ecological attitudes and respect between species (interspeciesism).

One might wonder about the origin of this text, because it does not seem congruent with the overall message of the biblical texts in this regard. But there is no doubt some validity to this criticism, because it establishes a possible treatment of Man as “the king of creation”, hence with absolute rights over it. It is true that the idea of “name-giving” is an interesting “epistemology of power”, where naming, in a Semitic context, gives power over the named thing (from this comes the apophatic character of the name “Yahweh”: humans cannot name him because that would be *hybris*, pride, dominion over the Absolute Being). The exercise of Power would begin, then, with naming. In other words, to think is to dominate, is Power, because it is to reduce what is different, the other, the unknown, to the “circle of reason”: the similar, the identical, the known. In this way, Silence would be the attitude of “leaving be”, of “letting the other be itself”, on the level of Nature and God Himself.

Another aspect of the biblical Creation is, as has been pointed out before, that when He completed his creative act²³⁵, God saw that creation was good, that it “was very good” (Gen 1:31). The idea is that Creation and matter, more specifically, should not be seen as “bad” or “imperfect” as such. It can be *limited* (only God is Boundless and Absolute), but not necessarily *bad*. Despite this, Evil will enter Creation after the Original Innocence.

The duality of Good and Evil is the fruit of Knowledge, which is always cleaving, divisive, in the face of Original Nature, which can only be grasped intuitively. The “Tree of Good and Evil” is the tree that introduces dualism into the history of humanity. The “Tree of Life” is

²³⁵ It would be worth asking the interesting question whether Creation was complete or whether we are in a *Creatio Continua*, in which humans co-create with God, an idea we defend but which we have no space to develop here.

the tree at the origin of the integration of everything that is created, of the “original innocence” of creation as such, “beyond good and evil”, pre-historic time, if we can talk this way, in such paradoxical terms. But there are those who find in this formulation Israel’s opposition to Canaan societies, more advanced in the beginning, with the “serpent” as their symbol. Here would be, essentially, the critique of civilization (with Canaan as a prototype), a sedentary civilization, as against the “purity” of the traditions of the nomadic, un-settled people.

All this makes a certain amount of sense and it could be an interesting working hypothesis, with particular results for a holistic eco-spirituality, as we will eventually see. In any case, we are in the midst of a reflection of a really mythical nature, but there is no need to oppose it to rationality as such, since myth is logical thinking, “etiological” as well as explanatory.

In summary, in the biblical story, Creation as such is good. Matter is good and it is integrated in Evolution, which we can interpret in the Teilhardian sense. There is no opposition between Matter and Spirit, but rather both are two sides of the same coin (reality). The final phrase of Creation is: “God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen 1:31a). In a word, if “part” of Creation is “good” then the whole of it, considered holistically, is “very good”.

We now approach a central question in Jewish thought (and, by extension, Christian thought; Islam could be included in this, too, we believe): Creation is “made from nothingness”. A constant in “Abrahamic religions”. That is to say that God did not create from pre-existing matter, but rather “out of nothingness”. Other, non-Semitic viewpoints will not follow this logic.

However, the *Jerusalem Bible*, according to its reference notes, does not recommend this “metaphysical reading” of the text of Genesis. Rather, this “creation out of nothingness” was not established until the text of 2 Macc 7:28. It is in this book of the Maccabees, in a context of persecution and life or death, in the martyrdom of the seven brothers alongside their mother, starting with the martyrdom of the youngest brother, where this verse explicitly says: “I implore you, my child, look at the earth and sky and everything in them, and consider how God made them out of what did not exist.”

But what does “what did not exist” mean? We can accept that

biblical thought is not very metaphysical, in the substantialist sense of the word. The Genesis story probably refers more to a “demiurge” God, who gives order to shapeless, unorganized matter. This was something common in the Near East to stories about a God that fights against Chaos. Nevertheless, this does not in any way preclude a more *creationist* conception of the term. As we said, some myths of the Near East seem to be full of this notion of an *organizing God*. For a critical mindset such as our own the question would always remain: “So, who created this primitive unorganized matter?” And the believer’s answer to this would be: God, the Supreme Being, the Absolute. Christians will say: the Trinity was already at work there. It seems that the biblical thought of the First Testament did not get as far as this because its interests lay elsewhere.

So what about modern Science?

In modern Science, principally Physics, people sometimes speak of “creation”. Our Universe is understood to have been “created” by an initial Big Bang, by a mega-explosion, from which Matter and Energy (Matter would just be “condensed” energy), Space and Time appeared (united together in a Time-Space *continuum*). It would seem that, in principle, Science might agree with the Judæo-Christian approach of Creation and a Creator God. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. The term “Creation”, for most physicists, seems more like a *metaphor*, and does not contain metaphysical formulations as such.

The approach of a physical theory of the Concertina-Universe type, for example, would allow us to suppose that this Universe of ours could be one of thousands or millions of Universes that existed before this one. Or in parallel with many others. At least, it is theoretically possible that this is the case. The Universe expands, then it contracts. Later it expands again and so on successively. Also, when asked the question about what existed *before* the Big Bang, a physicist would reply that the question does not make sense. It would be the equivalent of asking what existed before Time. Simply absurd.

Ultimately, various physical theories indicate the possibility of a *multiverse*. This is the possibility of multiple Universes. Any quantum theory has a multiverse with quantum states. If we apply it to the Universe, it would mean that there must be an enormous number of parallel universes that are in decoherence with each other. The

so-called “string theory” introduces a multiverse thanks to the large number of solutions that it makes possible. In so-called “M-theory”, these universes can collide with others.²³⁶

However, Philosophy and Theology can ask these (and other) *radical* questions. Physics cannot speak of any Creator God. This transcends empirical verification. A materialist scientist (but not all scientists are materialists!) could go as far as answering that Matter, or rather Energy, existed forever, they were always there in different forms and at evolutive/involutive moments. The Universe “self-creates” and “self-destructs”, although not completely. It emerges from incipient forms of radiation and may likewise end up as mere radiation. Perhaps another Universe could emerge, too. Theoretically, either of these answers is possible: that of the materialist or that of the believer. Kant saw this very well. Both answers are coherent. In the end, it comes down to an intellectual choice.

Because, even if different Universes of increasingly complex evolution have existed, a philosopher might wonder about the origins of Universe-0, the primitive universe. At least, if we think *successively*.

For a believer, it is Faith that makes him decide. His Faith is not absurd. It has *rationality*. To have Faith is to swim in chiaroscuro. There is some evidence, but nothing absolute. It is not absurd, but there is no definite proof. Faith is an existential decision... and a social one, as we will see. Meanwhile, Science can continue demonstrating increasingly well the *how* of Creation.

A Debate about Creation

Creationism versus Emanantism. Here we have an old polemic.

Creationism proclaims the creation of the world (Universe) by God from nothing (“creatio ex nihilo”). Matter/energy would have begun

²³⁶ For information on all these points, cf. Kaku, Michio, *Parallel Worlds: A Journey Through Creation, Higher Dimensions, and the Future of the Cosmos*, New York 2004). The phenomenon of decoherence is when different quantum waves are no longer in phase with one another. In other words, quantum decoherence is the accepted term used in quantum mechanics to explain how an interlaced quantum state can transform into a classic quantum (non-interlaced) state. This means that as a physical system, under certain specific conditions, it can stop exhibiting quantum effects (losing quantum coherence) and can start to exhibit typical classic behaviour, without the counterintuitive effects of quantum physics. Quantum interlacing is a phenomenon that is very important in establishing the possibility of Holism.

to exist with this divine creation in the same way as time. “Before this” there would only have been the eternity of God. Therefore, this formulation has “all things”, as well as the “human soul” depending on the free action of this Creator God. Not through Necessity but for Love, by dint of his own free will. This is the position that can be deduced from the Judaic, Christian and Muslim formulation from a macro-ecumenical standpoint.

In his recent Encyclical Letter, his second, Pope Francis insists on this notion of God’s loving creation. The Universe did not appear as a result of an arbitrary omnipotence, a demonstration of force or a desire for divine self-affirmation. Creation belongs to the order of Love. Each creature, including the infinitely small, is an object of the tenderness of the Father, who attributes to each creature a place in the world (we would say a place in the *Divine Cosmic Orchestra*). Even the most ephemeral forms of life are the object of divine love, in those few seconds of life.²³⁷

Beyond the existential reflections of Pope Francis, however, the ontological problem of creationism (at least in its classical formulation) is that the relation between God and the world is merely a relation of *efficient cause*, *extrinsicist* on the part of God. There is, therefore, an abyss between God and the world. A strongly marked dualism.

The *emanantist* position can have several formulations. That of Plotinus (and Proclus) is that the whole of the world (or Universe), including here the human soul, comes by *emanation* or flow from the divine totality or the primordial One, with mediacy or immediacy. There is no reference here to Creation from nothing. Rather, there is a model of continuity between God and the world, which are in reality not that different. That is to say that the extrinsicist dualism of certain classical creationist interpretations is overcome, but there is a risk of making the world a mere apparition of God, or a mere prolongation of Him, and even a risk of pantheism (although not necessarily). Here the risk would be of an identifying monism, a strong immanentism where the differentiation between God and the world may not be precisely clear.

Why not try a *synthesis*? Perhaps the two extremes in these formulations could be avoided? In any case, it is clear that the issue lies

²³⁷ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, On Care for our Common Home (18.June 2015), para 77.

in the *explanation*, not necessarily in the fact of the world's absolute dependency on God.

What would this synthesis actually mean?

An explanation which seems good to us (or possibly better than earlier ones for today's needs) is an explanation with an *aesthetic* orientation. God is the Supreme Artist who creates a Total Art Work, the Universe. The Work carries the stamp of the Artist. The Artist is contained in his Art, it is His Expression but also, at the same time, much more than that. He is in it (immanence) and at the same time He transcends it (transcendence). The Work, which is Beautiful, manifests the Artist Himself, Beauty-in-Itself. It expresses Him. In such a way that through the Work we can recognize its Author, the great Artist.

Of course, we are still dealing in metaphors. The paradigm of the Aesthetic seems better to me than the previous two explanations and could form the basis for deeper, more far-reaching development. The aesthetic paradigm to explain Creation allows us to conjugate the differentiating aspect of God-Universe at the same time as his immanent presence in the Cosmos, His acting from within, although the Absolute is never exhaustively explained in the mere immanence of the world.

There is also a theological development of a new type, so well presented a few years ago, with respect to the theology of the Body of God. We owe it to the American theologian, Sallie McFague, who was inspired by oriental philosophies. In essence, she affirms the following: the World (Universe) is the Body of God.

Indeed, Sallie McFague²³⁸ has spent several decades calling our attention to the need to reconstruct our theological language (which implies our relationship with God) through new proposals for *metaphors*. So she proposes a new *metaphorical theology* in talking about God because many metaphors have become obsolete over time (especially those that correspond to a *monarchical theology*, which always express a verticalist relationship). With respect to the relationship between God and the World, she proposes that we speak of the *world as the body of God*.²³⁹ The metaphor is theologically daring, but is charged with eco-theological meaning as well.

²³⁸ McFague, Sallie, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age*, London 1987.

²³⁹ She writes about this from page 60 to 80.

In this way she suggests that no metaphor is fully adequate to reality, but talking about God as the body of God avoids the distance of the monarchic metaphors and gives us a metaphor of great proximity. It is not the same as talking of God as *King* of the world, to say that the world is his *own body*. The former is a metaphor that springs from the *transcendent* aspect of God, while the latter is His *immanent* aspect. For her, this metaphor goes beyond a *pantheist* model, inasmuch as God is not reduced to the world, although the world may be his body.

It would be more appropriate to understand this expression in a pan-in-theist way, that is to say, as the Presence of God *in* Everything, but without being exhausted by dint of this (in the same way that we do not "exhaust" our own bodies either). What is important in this metaphor is that we realize that the world does not exist outside or apart from God. Indeed, she recognizes: "...in the metaphor of the universe as the self-expression of God – God's incarnation – notions of vulnerability, shared responsibility, and risk are inevitable. This is a markedly different understanding of the God-World relationship than in the monarch-realm metaphor, for it emphasizes God's willingness to suffer for and with the world, even to the point of personal risk."²⁴⁰

This formulation, which is very reminiscent of oriental philosophy, principally the Indian *Advaita Vedanta*, is a formulation that can be lived fully from the perspective of a Holistic Spirituality. Or rather, in our opinion, it is essentially a holistic formulation, which goes beyond the dualist God-Cosmos relationship.²⁴¹

Without doubt, for a Holistic Eco-Spirituality an action "from the Body of God" is much stronger than a mere action of solidarity "with Nature" (dualism). In the first we are each the *Body of God* itself. In the second we are epistemically situated in an arrogant paternalist/maternalist way opposite Nature, outside it. In the first, we are integrated, included. In the second we are outside, opposite, or even in opposition to it (the epistemic-ontological subject-object dualism). In the first there is a holistic-inclusive model. In the second, there is the old Cartesian-Newtonian, mechanistic and dualistic paradigm.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁴¹ Curiously, Pico Della Mirandola had already spoken of the world as the *corpus mysticum* of God, just as the Church is that of Christ. (cf. Jung, Carl, *Synchronicity*, London 2006, chapter 3).

However, there is another interesting point made by our theologian, related to our theme of Creation. She reflects on a comment by Huston Smith, who, comparing the oriental attitude with the occidental, writes in turn: “When Mount Everest was scaled the phrase commonly used in the West to describe the feat was ‘the conquest of Everest’. An Oriental whose writings have been deeply influenced by Taoism remarked, ‘We would put the matter differently. We would speak of “the befriending of Everest”’.”²⁴²

We could say many things about this. The first model, the Western one, shows the presence of a “culture of ego”, of egocentricity, of the “I” (“I dominate”), in the model of Power. The second, the Eastern one, shows a culture of reverence, of mutual respect, of brother-sisterhood between human beings and the mountain, as equals in cosmic solidarity. In what Leonardo Boff came to call at a certain point “cosmic democracy”.

A New Paradigm: Holism Towards a Holistic Eco-Spirituality

We have been investigating this new paradigm, or new way of thinking and behaving, for years. It is especially important for questions of Ecology and Spirituality, the two domains being closely united. In this way, Holistic Spirituality is an Eco-Spirituality as such.

Holism is an epistemic attitude characterized by focussing one’s gaze primarily on the *totality*, or the whole (before the parts). Therefore, it is quite the opposite of the atomistic or empiricist viewpoint, which is concerned above all with parts. But Holism does not contradict these positions. Rather, it incorporates the more “partialist” views, although from a perspective of totality. But be careful: the holistic totality does not destroy singularities or partialities, it integrates them. It is not a totality that erases differences, but one that presupposes and incorporates them.

The term “holism” is a neologism, proposed for the first time by Jan Christiaan Smuts, a South African philosopher, in 1926, in a book actually entitled *Holism and Evolution*, for which Albert Einstein himself had great regard. The word “holism” is recent, but the holistic standpoint is very ancient in the history of Humanity. We would

even say that it was the primordial standpoint for many millennia of Humanity’s existence, until recent times. Now it is flourishing once more.

In a doctoral dissertation in the field of Philosophy that we defended some years ago (UCA, El Salvador, 2005), we summarized holistic orientation in a series of theses, in a kind of “holistic decalogue”. Here, in a nutshell, are the main tenets:

- (1) Reality is a *flowing, dynamic Whole, in permanent “activity”* (“Heraclitean principle”). Nevertheless, there *is also “repose” and “tranquility”* in another “sphere” of Reality (“Parmenidean principle”).
- (2) Reality is a *unitary totality*. All is One. The “parts” are always parts of a Whole. The Whole is more than the sum of its parts. “The Whole is *in* the parts”.
- (3) *All is in relation with all, in absolute interconnectedness or interrelatedness* (“ecological paradigm”: “Gaia Hypothesis” – Lovelock). Nothing happens on the margins of that total interrelatedness.
- (4) The Macro occurs *in* the micro (“hologrammatic or holographic paradigm”). The only difference is dimensionality. The Macro-micro, one and the same. “As above, so below” (“hermetic principle”).
- (5) The Whole is *structured*: being unitary, it integrates differences, which are not eliminated but subsumed. *It is a “differentiated” Whole* (Multiplicity and Diversity are integrated in the Whole). Reality is a *multidiverse totality*.
- (6) *Particular identities or individualities* are not substantive but *provisional, flexible, interchangeable* (“physical ‘dance of Shiva’ paradigm”: F. Capra). They are changing and mutant identities. In the world of phenomena “nothing is, everything flows” (“Heraclitean principle”).
- (7) *There is no subject-object dualism*: the observer is what/who is observed and vice versa (“quantum paradigm”). The end of epistemic-ontological dualism. “Reality observes itself.”
- (8) The Whole lends itself to an epistemic-ontological approach that is *phenomenal and noumenal*. “Phenomenally” it is difference, multiplicity, spaciousness, temporality; “noumenally” it is “one”. *The holistic vision consists in “seeing”*

²⁴² Quoted in McFague, Sallie, op. cit., 9.

the two aspects as interlinked and conjugal ("Aristotelian principle", but interpreted holistically). The noumenal in the phenomenal, simultaneously. And vice versa.

- (9) Using the Kantian model, but in another epistemic-ontological context, we can say that the human mind ("Verstand" in Kant) can only perceive phenomena (discursively). A comprehensive grasp of the Whole with its differences, the "noumenon" with its "phenomena", requires an *intuitive, transcendental act* (a kind of "intuitive Reason", using, paradoxically, the terminology of Kant but in another sense.
- (10) This intuitive act or *native intuition* of Reality is beyond (or behind) discursive thought. It is a *native, pure experience*. It is paradoxical, unthinkable (in logical categories, which function on the basis of oppositions), uncommunicable, inexpressible in its selfness. It can be grasped in a *simultaneous, spontaneous, ruptural way*, once and for all (there are several schools: some more "rupturist" and others more "gradualist"). In any case, *the holistic experience is a synoptic vision of Reality*. It is *apophatic*, but experienceable (an "*absolute experience*"), in principle, by and for every human being.

Since we do not have space here to develop these theses, we are now simply going to draw a few important conclusions for an Eco-Spirituality with a holistic orientation. We will see this in the following section.

Holistic Implications of Eco-Spirituality

In the first place, it is practically redundant to speak of "Holistic Spirituality" and "Eco-Spirituality". The latter is the same as the former, but highlights its aspect of a close relationship with Nature. In fact, the first thing that we have to realize is that humanity *is* this same Nature. This helps epistemically to overcome that "perverse" dualism which sets us up in antithesis to Nature as a whole. Hence, there is not the human subject *and* Nature, but the human being *who is* Nature. It is a *continuum of meaning*.

If human beings possess, on Planet Earth, a greater and particular gift for rationality (and the Planet as such, as a whole, possesses an *immanent rationality*), something which in any case could be questioned due to their inability to organize themselves peacefully

as a species and in harmony with the other species, nevertheless, this human rationality can be put in an *interrelation* with the rest of the Planet's species. A healthy, holistic eco-spirituality is one which implies *knowing how to live and let live* in planetary (and cosmic) solidarity. Spirituality is living in a harmonious, sensible, creative way, a way that creates Planetary Community.

The principles of active non-violence, which occur in various human histories, are fundamental to living a life of planetary community that is as harmonious, just, free and loving as possible, where what is important is that "every man and woman benefits" but no man or woman at the cost of another. If, at times, it can seem impossible or almost impossible to live in this plenitude, at least we can draw as close to it as possible in an asymptotic way.

Science-and-technology cannot prey on the Planet. This is irrationality, not rationality. Rationality itself has its limits (see the 9th and 10th theses in the "Holistic Decalogue"). We have to find a balance between Art, Science, Philosophy and Religion in harmony, respecting the space of each but linking wisely, where Spirituality represents the "heart" of a new Synthesis of Life. Today we are invited to come together for a permanent, creative debate between Science and Technology.

Theology is called upon to find its own spaces of rationality (and its mystic transcendence) within a holistic spirit of debate and dialogue with other theologies and other Religions, as well as agnostic and atheist positions. Theology and (historic) Religion cannot be a space for Power but rather for its democratization, principally among the men and women who are the most oppressed by the dominant irrational systems. It must be, on the contrary, a space of service and the creation of more life and life in abundance, as the Master and Prophet of Galilee himself sought.

For a good while, the Christian churches should exercise *humility* and learn to dialogue with other formal and informal knowledge systems, especially with the great spiritual traditions of Humanity. This "knowing how to listen" can later give rise to "knowing how to talk", always with the attitude of service and for the creation of relationships of justice and solidarity at all levels. The fraternal and collaborative relationships between different Christian churches will be the best testimony that we can offer Humanity in our time.

Holistically, the ecological attitude has to be lived out in Daily Life. Tomorrow is only an abstraction. The Present, the intersection of pasts and foreseeable futures, is where our action is constructed. To think that the future will be better, without doing anything from the here and now, is a grave error, with terrible consequences. Hence, the “epistemic-praxic” revolution that we need is for today, for our daily life. Paradoxically, only thus will there be hope for the future.

We also need a new *political* paradigm. A paradigm that will be truly democratic, participatory, in which every one of us can take part, decide about and exercise. For this to happen we must definitively discard so-called “representative democracy”, which only represents itself, that is to say, only the interests of the professional politicians and the parties or only defends the interests of big Capital. We need to create a New Participatory Democracy, in which each one of us exercises Power through self-governance, as directly as possible, from within our daily life. This new form of Politics would be ecopolitics, because without the Planet “we are lost”.

The Church should also set the example of a simple, ecologically sustainable life. Learn to live simply, even frugally, because the opposite is a great scandal for our brothers and sisters currently living in poverty in the world. Indeed, this great idolatry of financial capital, where some grow richer and richer, with fabulous incomes, while other men and women are just trying to survive by the day, and where emigrants risk their lives in search of better living conditions, it is all a scandal before God and before Life.

In this sense, the Christian churches (as well as all other religions) should be the principal flag-wavers for the rights of the poor and oppressed, as was Jesus of Nazareth, who because of this, as we know, was martyred by the political, economic and religious powers of His time, powers that joined forces to confront Him. Only *from* the ranks of the most oppressed and marginalized, among whom there are principally many women, children, young and old people, and what was once called the “Third World”, and the Four Worlds of our “First World” societies, will it be possible to start changing the perverse systems that currently control this world.

Finally, as the book title asks, “Why not be a mystic?”²⁴³ Remembering Karl Rahner, who coined that oft-repeated phrase that

²⁴³ Tuoti, Frank X., *Why Not Be A Mystic? An irresistible invitation to experience the presence of God – here and now*, New York 1995.

the 21st century will be mystical or it simply will not be, it seems that the issue really is to take seriously being mystical in our here and now.²⁴⁴ To transcend in a practical way our ego and our attachments, to inter-relate with all species and the rest of humanity, giving priority to the most underprivileged and the oppressed, championing the constant creation of Life, and the other holistic commitments, seems to us a better alternative than this rut in which humans have entrapped themselves by ignorance. It is more about Being than Doing, something really difficult for us Westerners with our Faustian civilization, where “Doing” reigns supreme (according to Goethe’s principle, in *Faust*: “In the Beginning was the Deed”).

But in this we must be existentially consistent. We can be co-creators with God of a New World (*creatio continua*). Can we really live as “revolutionary mystics”, a new model of mystics, in our era, on this Planet?

Perhaps in this way, in a kind of zen Buddhist *ko’an* (riddle, enigma), we will be able to experience – with Meister Eckhart – how “the eye with which God sees us is the same eye with which we see God”.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Rahner, Karl, *Frömmigkeit früher und heute*, in: idem, *Schriften zur Theologie*, VII, Einsiedeln 1971, 22.

The Concept of Creation in the African World View: Is *Laudato Si'* a Gift to Africa?

Anne Beatrice Fayé

Let me begin by saying that there is no such thing as a “spontaneous concept”. People only formulate specific concepts with respect to their own existence, which is itself necessarily influenced by the physical, social and cultural environment. Hence, in the African world view, life is perceived as something which embraces and includes ancestors, the living and those yet to be born, the whole of creation and all beings: those that speak and those that are mute, those that think and those lacking thought. The visible and invisible universe is regarded as a living-space for human beings, but also as a space of communion where past generations invisibly flank present generations, themselves the mothers of future generations.²⁴⁵

This great openness of heart and mind in the African tradition manifests itself in daily life. African man sees himself as a multi-dimensional being. He maintains relationships with his fellow human beings, with his ancestors, with God and with other cosmic forces. He is surrounded by both a natural and a social environment. Creation incorporates the life of cultivated plants and plants that grow wild, human activities and everything associated with them, i.e. trees and plants.

I refer here to *Laudato Si'*, the recent encyclical by Pope Francis, and will give three reasons why I regard it as a gift to Africa. But before I do so, I will look at how the concept of creation in Africa enables human beings to renew their relations with their surroundings – environmental, economic, social and spiritual. This article is an attempt to

²⁴⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI., Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. on the Church in Africa, No. 69, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html (06.07.2017).

provide an answer, for which I will use three lines of argument. Firstly, we will pause for a moment to re-acquaint ourselves with our roots and to examine the meaning of creation in Africa and *Laudato Si'*. Secondly, we will establish where human beings stand in these two contexts. These two initial analyses will show that the significance of creation goes far beyond that which surrounds the human race. First and foremost, it constitutes an abundance and a cultural heritage “in its animate, dynamic and participative sense, which cannot be excluded when examining the relationship between man and his environment.” If this is the case, what message can be derived from it for the modern era?

Our Common Home: Abundance and Cultural Heritage in Africa

Africans describe the world as being alive. They see “space” as having three dimensions, to which they add a fourth, which comprises the sacred space. The latter is crucial in the sense that it controls the entire cosmos and is regarded as the dimension of the initiated. The meaning of creation is inscribed in this logic of society, tradition, the collective and the sacred.

At the Beginning of Creation in Africa: a Single, Sacred Entity

African myths and traditions teach us that the world emerged either as the result of the bursting or blossoming of a single entity, which for some is a seed and for others an egg. “At the beginning, we conceive of the world as being infinitely small, extremely compressed and tight, the first seed or egg, the hatching of which frees a giant: our world in a perpetual state of genesis.”²⁴⁶ Everything emerges from a single, unique entity. It transpires that the primordial seed or original egg contains all realities in embryonic form and full potentiality. Since the world is in a perpetual state of emergence, we can say that it has not been “born”, but that its birth has been going on since the beginning of time.

The divine principle comprises the essence of all things. It is at the origin of all things and gives life to all things. It is in all things. It fills the entire universe and makes all beings and all things resonate and

²⁴⁶ Biya, Ndebi, *L'être comme génération: Essai critique d'une ontologie d'inspiration africaine*, Strasbourg 1995, 50.

live each day. As human beings we are not just beneficiaries, but also the guardians of our fellow creatures. This is why animals and plants are used throughout totemism as metaphorical symbols of everything that exists. When a connection is established with our ancestors in a totemic or legendary sense, harmony is created between the forms of existence in the plant and animal worlds.

The earth is also divine and as such is endowed with an intrinsic value, which is life. It is peopled with gods, genies, ancestors and occult powers whose benevolence must be sought and granted, since the latter are capable of punishing wrongdoing. Hence this recommendation from the great Senegalese poet, Birago Diop:

*Listen to Things
More often than Beings,
Hear the voice of fire,
Hear the voice of water.
Listen in the wind,
To the sighs of the bush;
This is the ancestors breathing.*

*Those who are dead are not ever gone;
They are in the darkness that grows lighter
And in the darkness that grows darker.
The dead are not down in the earth;
They are in the trembling of the trees
In the groaning of the woods,
In the water that runs,
In the water that sleeps,
They are in the hut, they are in the crowd:
The dead are not dead.”²⁴⁷*

There is no profane concept of nature. Deceased ancestors remain part of the community of the living, since they are bound to each other by the need for mutual assistance. This way of looking at creation enables us to discover in each thing a lesson which God wishes to teach us, since “for the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ Diop, Birago, *Le souffle des ancêtres (du recueil leurres et lueurs, 1960, éd. Présence Africaine)*.

²⁴⁸ Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common

Integral Ecology in *Laudato Si'*: Man in all his Dimensions

As I said earlier, *Laudato Si'* is a gift for Africa; there are three reasons for this. The first is that it is a joy to read this encyclical. It helps us to rediscover our roots, our interconnectedness and our interdependence. It is at once holistic and well-defined, inclusive, specific and prophetic. It represents a further contribution to the tradition of social teaching within the Church. The Pope refers to our “common home” (*oikos* in Greek) in order to reach out to “the entire human family”. It is no accident that the encyclical was signed at Whitsun and submitted to the Vatican by a member of the Orthodox Church, a scientist, an African cardinal²⁴⁹ and a woman from Asia. Moreover, climate change is an overarching phenomenon which does not distinguish between faith, nationality, gender or ideology and affects all of humanity “...your Father in heaven causes His sun to rise on the bad as well as the good, and sends down rain to fall on the upright and the wicked alike.”²⁵⁰

The second reason is that the Pope views this common home from the perspective of the peoples of the South, on whose behalf he speaks. “The cry of the earth is also the cry of the poor”. Our common home has been weakened as a result of environmental damage. In Africa, in particular, this damage is partly responsible for the impoverishment of a growing number of people. Poverty itself has become a factor influencing ecological damage, as desperate people exploit the fundamental resources on which they depend for their survival. The third reason, finally, is the Pope’s invitation to us to question our way of living and to promote life.

Laudato Si' refers to an integral ecology which includes man as a whole, in all his dimensions, and all of nature in its broad diversity. It follows that everything is linked and, as human beings, we are all united as brothers and sisters en route on a wonderful pilgrimage, intertwined by the love which God bestows on each one of his creatures and which also links us with tender affection to our brother the sun, to our sister the moon, to our sister the river, and to our mother the

Home, No. 85, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (06.07.2017).

²⁴⁹ Kodwo Appiah Turkson, Cardinal Peter, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

²⁵⁰ Cf. Mt 5:45.

earth. “Since through the grandeur and beauty of the creatures we may, by analogy, contemplate their Author.”²⁵¹ “The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, His boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.”²⁵² And, “ever since the creation of the world, the invisible existence of God and His everlasting power have been clearly seen by the mind’s understanding of created things.”²⁵³ In other words, “the divine and the human meet in even the smallest details of a seamless garment of God’s creation, right down to the most infinitesimal speck of dust which constitutes our planet.”²⁵⁴

The Pope reminds us that we cannot analyse the world solely by isolating one of its aspects, as “the book of nature is one and indivisible” and includes the environment, life, sexuality, family and social relations, and so forth. “When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it.”²⁵⁵

The environmental crisis cannot be reduced to a mere technical dimension. It is not just about technical solutions; according to the Pope it is also about a deep “conversion”. Neither is it a dogma, a collection of imposed truths: it weaves and wends its way through a host of relational contexts. It is plural, diverse. Its challenges, magnitude and complexity ensure that it is disrupting and calling into question current beliefs concerning man’s place in the context of creation. As a result, our common home must be saved through dialogue and collaboration between all human beings, both believers and non-believers.

We are in need of a new universal solidarity, as professed by the bishops in South Africa. Indeed, “everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of

²⁵¹ Wisdom 13:5.

²⁵² *Laudato Si'*, No. 84.

²⁵³ Rm 1:20.

²⁵⁴ Cf. address at the First Halki Summit: “Global Responsibility and Ecological Sustainability: Closing Remarks”, Istanbul (20.June 2012).

²⁵⁵ Cf. *Laudato Si'*, No. 139.

God's creation."²⁵⁶ We can all work together as God's instruments to safeguard creation in accordance with our respective culture, experience, endeavours and capacities. "The history of our friendship with God is always linked to particular places which take on an intensely personal meaning; we all remember places, and revisiting those memories does us much good. Anyone who has grown up in the hills or used to sit by the spring to drink, or played outdoors in the neighbourhood square; going back to these places is a chance to recover something of their true selves."²⁵⁷ The Pope draws our attention to the interdependence of all people and all things in and through God. We are all connected by an invisible bond and together we form a kind of universal family. Man is called upon to respect creation and its internal workings, because "in wisdom, Yahweh laid the earth's foundations."²⁵⁸

Respect for Nature: the Role of the Tree in the African Tradition

In Africa, people believe they are closely related to the cosmos. No one doubts the kinship between man and plants. The tree, for instance, plays a very important role in Africa.²⁵⁹ Among its many meanings it is an expression of the relationship between a society and its environment. It appears as the outstanding representative of the plant world and is frequently treated on a par with human beings. The tree, whose genus is not specified, represents in itself all trees but also, in the context of famine, all plants in "the bushland". Its shade, leaves and bark all graphically evoke the multiple uses of trees in Africa. It is deemed a great and marvelous being, endowed with the faculty of speech, and "encountered" by animals. It is the nourishing tree which contains inexhaustible resources, provided people are wise enough to use them in moderation. It is therefore sacred; you cannot fell a tree without summoning the ancestors and asking their pardon. Nature as a whole is divine and sacred.

We also have the sacred woods or forest. In general, this is a place where ceremonies, religious rites or initiations are conducted, a

²⁵⁶ Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, Pastoral Statement on the Environmental Crisis (5 September 1999).

²⁵⁷ *Laudato Si'*, No. 84.

²⁵⁸ Pr 3:19.

²⁵⁹ Calame-Griaule, Geneviève (ed.), 1969–1970–1971: *Le thème de l'arbre dans les contes africains*, Paris, 16, 20, 42–43.

place of memory or of the founder of a community. It is also a symbolic place. If you pay a visit to Mar Lodj, a village in Senegal inhabited by the Serer people, you can see that the sacred woods consists quite simply of three intertwining trees. They represent the bond between Catholics, Muslims and Animists. The populations protecting these sacred forests regard them as a place inhabited by gods or spirits. They must, therefore, be respected.

Fortunately, we are now witnessing an increasing awareness of the need to protect and safeguard these cultural and natural spaces. As a result, respect for sacred sites was incorporated in the ethical principles established during the Nagoya Global Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010 and set out in the ensuing protocol.²⁶⁰ Since then the sacred woods has been considered as sanctuaries harbouring a wide biodiversity of plants and animals. This applies, for example, to the sacred forest of the Yoruba people of Osun-Oshogbo in Nigeria which has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Located within a primary forest, it is of natural as well as cultural interest. It is a symbol of identity, a manifestation of the traditional practice of declaring and honouring sacred woods, and it bears witness to the Yoruba cosmogony as seen in works of art. It is within this global vision of mankind, seen as part of the vital flow of life which surpasses it, that creation is conceived. If that is the case, the message transmitted to us by these symbols is that we must conserve this living space by preserving creation.

What is the Message for our Times in the Light of these troubling Scenarios?

Admittedly, the major challenge we face is not to preserve nature in a mythical form but to use its resources without destroying its regenerative capacities. We need to take responsibility for our common home, as the circumspection we show in caring for our environment influences the quality of our relations with others. A fundamental connectivity exists between the living, those who have gone before us, those who have yet to be born and the earth on which we live. This "mysterious network of relations between things"²⁶¹ is a

²⁶⁰ Cf. official site of the Nagoya conference, <https://www.cbd.int/cop10/> (06.07.2017).

²⁶¹ *Laudato Si'*, No. 20.

call for a conversation that includes each and every one of us, given that environmental damage is related closely to poverty and human mobility.

Few would deny that it is the poor who are the most vulnerable, who enjoy the least protection and who have the most to lose in the event of droughts, flooding and storms, which will only increase in frequency if we are unable to rein in global warming. This is readily apparent from the consequences of climate change in some parts of Africa. The snow capping the continent's landmark peak Mount Kilimanjaro, for instance, is already disappearing and so it no longer produces the currents of water needed all the year round by the villages at the foot of the mountain. As these problems worsen, so does the risk of an increase in the waves of migrants both inside and outside Africa. This will lead to social instability and conflicts that will be even more dramatic than the current refugee crisis.

The rise in the number of migrants fleeing a life of misery exacerbated by environmental damage is tragic. Not recognised as refugees under international conventions, they are cast adrift and forced to bear the burden of their lives without any legal protection. Regrettably, there can be no overlooking the general indifference to such tragedies which has emerged recently in various parts of the world. And what if we turn our attention once more to Africa?

Here we can see a close link between the earth, trees, water and life. The entire biosphere (whether it is used by mankind or not) is deemed to be a virtually divine entity. Simultaneously outside mankind and superior to it, the biosphere might even be regarded as its true creative principle. If it is necessary to protect our environment, thereby conserving it for future generations, this is ultimately because life affirms life. It is already in and around us, in the plant and animal kingdom. This African vision of creation reveals:

- a much greater awareness of the links between ourselves and our ecosystem as a location and source of fertility, unity and cohesion;
- a society in which peace not only exists between human beings, but between all forms of life;
- the balance which at once constitutes the strength, the purity and the simplicity of our African culture;

- the fight against all forms of hegemony, domination, power and intoxication (both physical and moral);
- respect for nature and, above all, harmony with it so that peace and happiness can reign.

By Way of a Conclusion

The contribution which the concept of creation in Africa can make to ecology covers two areas. In practical terms, it can help us to assess the repercussions of human activities on the ecosystems. Indeed, the well-being and development of human and non-human life on earth are values in their own right. Moreover, the richness and diversity of forms of life contribute to the realisation of these values. A fragmented vision of creation prevents the development of harmony within our living environment. It is interesting to observe how we frequently disconnect subject from object and cause from effect. We act, for instance, as if we have a free hand when it comes to plundering nature's resources, without experiencing any reaction from the planet. We behave as though our actions have no consequences whatsoever. This fragmented vision of reality spawns an attitude of irresponsibility.

From a theoretical point of view, the meaning of creation in Africa enables us to analyse the extent to which the relationship between man and his environment is aligned to the "normal" functions of nature. This approach can help us to redefine our relationship with the earth and reverse the dominant paradigms which currently confront us. In other words, instead of acting as a parasite and treating nature in a one-sided, inequitable fashion, man must create a symbiosis with the earth and accept an exchange-based relationship which entails returning what has been borrowed. "So return to nature! That means adding to the exclusive social contract a natural contract based on symbiosis and reciprocity, within the context of which our relationship with all things renounces control and possession, leaving others to look upon them with admiration The right to mastery and ownership is reduced to parasitism. By contrast, the right to symbiosis is defined by reciprocity: what nature gives to man must be returned by man in equal measure to nature, which is itself now a bearer of rights."²⁶²

²⁶² Serres, Michel, *Le contrat naturel*, Flammarion 1990, 67.

Man must maintain, or rather protect, safeguard, preserve, care for and watch over nature. This implies a reciprocal, responsible relationship between human beings and nature. Each community can harvest the bounty of the earth that it needs to survive, but is also has the duty to safeguard it and to guarantee the continuity of its fertility for future generations, because in the long term “to the Lord of the earth”²⁶³ belongs “the earth and all it contains.”²⁶⁴

Towards Ecological Healing: A Philippine Experience

Mary John Mananzan, OSB

When one talks about healing a person, it is good to recall how this person was when he/she was healthy, what went wrong and how one goes about the healing process. So I begin with describing the original state of Philippine flora and fauna before the colonial period.

Philippine Biodiversity, Endemism and Natural Endowments

The Philippines is made up of 7,100 islands between Asia and the Pacific. Because of its complex geological history and long periods of isolation from the rest of the world it has high levels of biological diversity and endemism. The HARIBON FOUNDATION,²⁶⁵ a local ecological organization gives numerous examples of this:

1. *Of the 105 species of AMPHIBIANS, 82M are in the Philippines*
2. *Of the more than 254 species of REPTILES-208 are endemic to the Philippines.*
3. *About 195 species of BIRDS are found only in the Philippines*
4. *Of the 179 species of LAND MAMMALS, 111 endemic to the Philippines*
5. *69.8% OF 20,940 species of INSECTS are endemic to Philippines.*

²⁶⁵ The name Haribon was coined from Haring Ibon or the Philippine Eagle. It was so named because the existence of the king of birds is a perfect barometer of the state of our forests. Haribon is the Philippines pioneer environmental organization. Haribon practically gave birth to the Philippine environmental movement. Founded in 1972, the organization, and the individuals it trained and nurtured were instrumental in the formation of other environmental organizations in the country. (All the ecological data and statistics given here are from Haribon Foundation: A.C. Alcala Philippine Biodiversity: Ecological Roles, Uses and Conservation Status-Power Point slides first published on 4.December 2011.)

²⁶³ Ps 24:1.

²⁶⁴ Dt 10:14.

6. 34 TREE species in mangroves occur only in the Philippines
7. About 4,000 species of FISH in the Indo-Pacific region 2,177 recorded species are found only in the Philippines
8. Of the estimated 15,000 species of FLOWERS, 50% are endemics
 - a. Philippines
 - b. Of the nine species of GIANT CLAMS worldwide, seven species of Giant Clams occur in Philippine waters

Some notable flora and fauna species found only in the Philippines are:

1. King cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*) – largest terrestrial venomous snake
2. Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) – world's 2nd largest eagle
3. Reticulated python (*Python reticulatus*) – Largest / longest snake
4. Rafflesia– world's largest flower
5. Phil. Iron Wood, *Magkuno* (*Xanthostemon verdugonianus*) – hardest wood
6. Mouse deer (*Tragulus napu*) – one of the smallest deer in the world
7. Slow loris (*Nycticebus coucang*) & Tarsier (*Tarsius syrichta*) – smallest primitive primates
8. Largest Bats in the world: Golden-crowned Flying Fox (*Acerodon jubatus*) & Large Flying Fox (*Pteropus vampyrus*)
9. Whale Shark (*Rhincodon typus*) – world's largest fish
10. Giant Manta Ray (*Manta birostris*) – world's largest ray
11. Saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*) – world's largest living reptile
12. Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*) – largest of all sea turtles
13. Dugong (*Dugong dugon*) – only herbivorous marine mammal in the Philippines.

In fact, the Philippines has several centers of diversity and endemism. Lawrence Heaney and Jack Regalado, from the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, have described the Philippines

as Galapagos times ten.²⁶⁶ Thus, the Philippines is considered as one of the 17 megadiversity countries, which between themselves contain 70 to 80 percent of global biodiversity.

The coastal resource consists of 18,000 kilometers coastlines of the country and has a total area of 26.6 million hectares of territorial waters which provide 90 percent of the fish catch. It is one of the longest coastlines in the world.

The country is rich in gold, copper, chromite, silver, nickel, cobalt and other minerals. Coal and limestone are also abundant. According to advertisements placed in The Financial Times in 1989: "The Philippines is more densely mineralised than Australia, the tonnages are larger and the terrain is largely unexplored. The country is estimated to be second only to South Africa in its average gold reserves per square kilometre."²⁶⁷

In 1521 when Magellan "discovered" the Philippines for Europe, the whole archipelago had 100% forest cover.

According to the Center for Environmental Concerns in the Philippines "The country possesses natural resources that have the potential to meet the basic needs of the people and to support a far more prosperous and equitable society".²⁶⁸

Ecological Crisis in the Philippines

Unfortunately, today the Philippines' remaining biodiversity and the ecosystems that support it are under tremendous threats. One can find in the Philippines the 7 manifestations of ecological crisis according to Calvin de Witt which are:

1. **alteration of planetary circulations and exchange (climate change) – exchanges of energy between sun and Earth are being altered with consequences for global warming and increased transmission of damaging ultraviolet radiation;**

²⁶⁶ Cf. Heany, Lawrence/Regalado, Jack, The Vanishing Treasures of the Philippine Forest, Chicago 1988.

²⁶⁷ Cf. "The Environmental Crisis in the Philippines," <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/philippines/environmental-crisis-philippines> (12.07.2017).

²⁶⁸ "Confronting the Ecological Crisis in the Philippines": A publication of the Center for Environmental Concerns Philippines, 2012, <http://nafconusa.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/State-of-the-philippine-environmentweb041312.odf> (12.08.2016).

2. **land degradation** – cropland and food production capacity is being degraded by erosion, desertification, and salinization;
3. **water quality degradation** – both surfaced waters and groundwater are being polluted by agricultural chemicals and landfill leachates;
4. **deforestation and habitat destruction**
5. **species extinction and biotic alterations**
6. **wastes and global toxification** –
7. **human and cultural degradation** – long standing human cultures that have lived sustainably for centuries are rapidly degraded and extinguished by non-sustainable development²⁶⁹

Climate Change

Although the cause of climate change is global, conditions in the Philippines such as gas emissions from factories, vehicles, garbage, pollution, etc. have also contributed to it. The manifestations of climate change in the Philippines according to Rose Perez are: increase in mean temperature, rising of night temperature, shifting pathways of intense typhoons, decrease of rainy days.²⁷⁰ But nobody will question that the greatest and most destructive consequence of climate change in the Philippines are the super typhoons that are increasing in frequency and intensity which have cost thousands of lives, enormous destruction of homes and property and dislocation of communities.

Land Degradation

Large areas of the Philippines' cropland, grassland, woodland and forest are seriously degraded. Water and wind erosion are the major problems but salinity and alkalinity are also widespread; water tables have been over-exploited; soil fertility has been reduced; and where mangrove forest has been cleared for aquaculture or urban expansion, coastal erosion has been a common result. Finally, urban

²⁶⁹ Cf. deWitt, Calvin B., "The Religious Foundations of Ecology", in: Scherff, Judith (ed.), *The Mother Earth Handbook*, New York 1991, 253f.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Perez, Rosa T., "Climate Change in the Philippines" talk presented in the Symposium on the Economics of Climate in Southeast Asia, in Manila, 17 November 2009, 7th slide of Power Point Presentation.

expansion has become a major form of land degradation, removing large areas of the best agricultural land from production.

A study of the Global Assessment of Land Degradation and Improvement showed that the total degraded lands in the Philippines is estimated at 132,275 square kilometers affecting about 33,064,629 Filipinos²⁷¹.

The primary causes of land degradation are Intensive logging over decades and unsustainable agricultural practices in the sloping uplands. And the grave impact of land degradation are loss of soil fertility and consequent decline in agricultural productivity and loss of water and decline in water quality.

Water Quality Degradation

Because of soil degradation, there has also been, as stated above, a decline in water quality. This is exacerbated by the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agricultural activities. This is a serious problem and will become more serious in the future.

Deforestation

Multinational corporations have denuded our forests and have caused massive habitat destruction in the Philippines. We have only a remaining 8% of our total forest cover and this is even endangered by the fact that licenses for mining and logging are still being issued by the government.

Species Destruction and Biotic Alteration

Logging, mining, deforestation and habitat destruction have caused species extinction in the Philippines and a continuing increase of endangered species. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources admitted that more than half of the native fauna in the country face the threat of extinction. Of the 1,137 bird, mammal and amphibian species endemic to the country 592 are considered "threatened or endangered" along with 227 endemic species of flowering plants.²⁷²

²⁷¹ Cf. Tejada, Silvino Q./Carating, Rodelio B./Manguera, Juliet/Samalca, Irvin, Bureau of Soils and Water Management (a slide show presentation).

²⁷² Cf. de Tacio, Henrylito, "Philippine Ecosystems on the Verge of Destruction", in: Gaia Discovery, 2 May 2009.

Waste and Global Toxification

Waste management is one of the unsolved problems of the Philippines. In October 2, 2001, the Philippine Daily Inquirer editorial wrote: "Forget about anthrax. Forget about bioterrorism. We are not going to die from these things. The people of Metro Manila are facing much more lethal, much more immediate threats to their health and well-being. These threats come from the mountains of garbage that dot almost every other block of the metropolis"²⁷³ The pollution in urban areas make the environment seriously toxic.

Human Cultural Degradation

Environmentally unfriendly projects of the government like dams have inundated thousands of years culture of the indigenous people. The national economic policy promoting mining has dislocated tribal groups and the accompanying militarization has caused local evacuation and the closing of indigenous schools which threaten the cultural legacy of the different cultural minorities.

This shows that all the Manifestations of Ecological Crisis are present in the Philippines

Towards Ecological Healing

It is safe to say that the majority of Filipinos do not look for solution of the country's environmental problems to the government. In spite of its token laws on the protection of the environment, it has not seriously implemented these laws. In fact it has also issued national economic policies that have allowed extractive multinational corporations to do the most harm to the environment. It is the department that is supposed to protect the environment but it is, to say the least, ineffective and in fact corruption has made its officials complicit in the continuous environmental plunder of these corporations.

The ecological movement in the Philippines relies mostly on NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations), POs (Peoples' Organizations) and religious and civic organizations. Ruth Lusterio Rico described the environmental movement in the Philippines as being composed

²⁷³ Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2 October 2001.

of "highly diverse groups each lobbying for particular environmental concerns that are related to the themes within their declared statements of goals, missions or objectives."²⁷⁴

Awareness Awakening

The first step towards healing is the AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM and of its ENORMITY. It is a positive sign that the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, who have great influence on the people have this awareness as shown in their statement:

One does not need to be an expert to see what is happening and to be profoundly troubled by it. Within a few short years, brown eroded hills have replaced luxuriant forests in many parts of the country. The picture which is emerging in every province of the country is clear and bleak. The attack on the natural world which benefits very few Filipinos is rapidly whittling away at the very base of our living world and endangering its fruitfulness for future generations. (A pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, 1999)

Ecological Principles

The various methods and strategies of the ecological advocacy are based on the following basic ecological principles:

1. Life is an interconnected web, not a hierarchy. This is in direct contrast to the patriarchal view of life which sees the world in terms of hierarchy, and therefore, oppressive because those who are in the higher levels have the power to oppress those below them. This principle also puts the human being not above nature but as a part of nature. It shows that whatever happens to any part of nature affects all the rest.
2. All parts of the ecosystem have their own innate value. This flows from the first principle. No part of the ecosystem should be regarded merely as a means to an end. Human beings have no right to devastate nature for their survival.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Rico, Ruth L., "The Environmental Movement and Philippine Politics", in: Encarnacion Tadem, Theresa S./Morada, Noel M. (eds.), Philippine Politics and Governance: Challenges to Democratization and Development, Quezon City 2006.

3. There is no free lunch. Human beings cannot keep on extracting the natural resources of the earth without putting something back. Resources are not inexhaustible and there will come a time when the earth can no longer sustain human life on earth because the devastation of the earth would have taken its toll.
4. Nature knows best. There is in nature a built-in healing system. Bio-diversity also keeps the ecological balance that keeps all the elements in healthy growth and development. Human intrusion into nature has been the cause of the ecological crisis. In the present globalization trends, specifically in biogenetic engineering, human beings are again interfering with nature to an ethically questionable extent. For example, genetically-treated seeds are deprived of their reproductive capabilities so that farmers will have to buy more and more seed instead of getting these seeds from the plant. The combination of the DNAs of plants and animals may also result in uncontrollable mutations, which may be harmful. Recently, foods are also being tampered with in the form of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) which are harmful to health.
5. Healthy systems maintain diversity. Both in nature and society, diversity is healthy. Monoculture in agriculture demands continuous use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which eventually harm the earth. That is why bio-diversity must be maintained so as to promote a healthy eco-system. Likewise, globalization imposes a one-dimensional culture on society to give everybody the same taste in junk food and junk culture for the sake of profit. This has also to be resisted.
6. Unity in diversity. Diversity is not for diversity's sake but each element in the system contributes to the health of the whole system. This is as true in the human community as it is in nature.

Ecological Strategies, Projects and Actions

The various organizations have their own strategies, projects and actions. I cannot go into all of these. What I can do is to summarize and classify these varied actions focusing on the ecological advocacy of the Church in the Philippines.

1. Action of the Hierarchy. On July 4, 2015, Cardinal Luis Tagle of Manila, together with more than 1,000 priests, religious and lay leaders, launched a campaign in the archdiocese to collect 1 million signatures on a global petition to be delivered to world leaders gathering in Paris in December. The petition is part of a campaign began in March by the Global Catholic Climate Movement. In its petition, the Global Catholic Climate Movement has called for negotiators at the United Nations climate talks in Paris to take steps “to drastically cut carbon emissions to keep the global temperature rise below the dangerous 1.5°C threshold” – a more ambitious mark than the U.N.’s 2 degrees Celsius target – “and to aid the world’s poorest in coping with climate change impacts.” In addition, the archipelago’s bishops have pledged to lead conversations and actions around issues raised in the encyclical and likely to arise at the Paris climate talks. The campaign also asks people to seek ways to reduce their carbon footprint, fast from meat on Fridays, and pray for an ecological conversion of heart. At its biannual plenary session, the CBCP heard a presentation on the campaign, signed the petition and also considered *establishing a climate change desk*.²⁷⁵

2. Action of Religious Communities. I belong to the Missionary Benedictine Sisters. What we do is more or less what other religious communities of women do for the environment. First of all, our General Chapter of 2012 made environmental protection the focus of our apostolate for the next 6 years. Our Peace, Justice, and Integrity of Creation Desk personnel then went to all our 21 houses to give ecological consciousness seminars to our sisters and their lay partners in schools, hospitals and pastoral apostolates. Most of our houses have acquired a farm where we do organic bio-diverse farming and where our students undertake tree-planting activities. Our schools have adopted the “reduce, recycle and reuse” principles and have adopted zero waste management. The construction of our buildings follows the green construction principles which provide for water-collecting system and solar energy frames. Our Sisters are active in their support of environmental struggles especially against logging and mining. They are in solidarity with the indigenous people in their struggle to defend their ancestral lands. Lately, our Sisters

²⁷⁵ Cf. Rowe, Brian, “Philippine Church takes lead on Francis’ environmental encyclical”, in: National Catholic Reporter, 25.July 2015.

supported the “Manilakbayan,” a walk of thousand kilometers which the Lumads (indigenous people of Mindanao) undertook to protest against the killing of their leaders and the closing of their schools by the military who are protecting the multinational mining industries. We featured them in TV talk shows, press conferences and provided their camps with food and water during their three-week stay in Manila. We took part in the recent massive environmental campaign on the occasion of the Global Climate summit in Paris on November 29, 2015.

3. Action of NGOs. There are several environmental NGOs in the Philippines but I will zero in on the HARIBON FOUNDATION, the organization that is at the forefront of environmental and wildlife protection and conservation in the Philippines.

Founded in 1972, the organization is known as Haribon for short, the name referring to the endangered *Philippine Eagle* and the organization has its roots as a birdwatching society. The name has been retained despite the broadening of the mission, because the critical status of the Philippine Eagle symbolizes the environmental state of the country.

Its vision is expressed in the following:²⁷⁶

- We envision the country’s ecosystems to be conserved and managed in a socially and scientifically sound manner.
- We envision communities that are environmentally aware and responsible stewards of the environment.
- We envision a Philippine society that ensures equitable access to the benefits of its resources while promoting a quality of life that values the renewability, carrying capacity and the integrity of creation.
- In the pursuit of its vision, namely, the conservation through community-based resource management, Haribon adopts an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach that is participatory and scientifically sound. Its programs include science and research, community-based resource management, environmental defense and membership development.

Examples of its effective and well appreciated projects are Mt Isarog National Park Conservation Project, Marine Conservation Project for San Salvador Island, Zambales, Community-based Coastal Resource Management in Bolinao, Pangasinan, Community-based Coastal Resource Management in Anilao, Batangas, and the Community-based Coastal Resource Management in Anilao, Batangas .

Development of a Creation-Centered Spirituality

Ecological advocacy is not just the undertaking of environmentally friendly projects and activities. It is actually a lifestyle, a way of living. It is in fact going on a spiritual journey. Therefore, we have adopted the following principles of a Creation-centered spirituality.²⁷⁷

1. We experience that the Divine is in all things and all things are in the Divine.
2. God is as much Mother as Father, as much Child as Parent, as much God is mystery as the God in history, as much beyond all words and images as in all forms and beings. We are liberated from the need to cling to God in one form or one literal name.
3. In our lives, it is through the work of spiritual practice that we find our deep and true selves. Through the arts of meditation and silence we cultivate a clarity of mind and move beyond fear into compassion and community.
4. Our inner work can be understood as a four-fold journey involving: – suffering, letting go (via negativa) birthing, creativity, passion (via creativa) – justice, healing, celebration (via transformativa). We weave through these paths like a spiral danced, not a ladder climbed.
5. Every one of us is a mystic. We can enter the mystical as much through beauty (via positiva) as through contemplation and suffering (via negativa). We are born full of wonder and can recover it at any age.
6. Every one of us is an artist. Whatever the expression of our creativity, it is our prayer and praise (via creativa).

²⁷⁶ Cf. Haribon Foundation, www.haribon.org.ph.

²⁷⁷ As formulated by the Creation Spirituality Communities: Email: CSCCommunities@gmail.com, 228 South Mathilda St. Pittsburgh, PA 15224.

7. Every one of us is a prophet Our prophetic work is to interfere with all forms of injustice and that which interrupts authentic life (*via transformativa*).
8. Diversity is the nature of the Universe. We rejoice in and courageously honor the rich diversity within the Cosmos and expressed traditions.
9. The basic work of God is compassion and we, who are all original blessings and sons and daughters of the Divine, are called to compassion. We acknowledge our shared interdependence; we rejoice at one another's joys and grieve at one another's sorrows and labor to heal the causes of those sorrows.
10. There are many wells of faith and knowledge drawing from one underground river of Divine Wisdom. The practice of honoring, learning and celebrating the wisdom collected from these wells is Deep Ecumenism.
11. We respect and embrace the wisdom and oneness that arise from the diverse wells of all the sacred traditions of the world.
12. Ecological justice is essential for the sustainability of life on Earth. Ecology is the local expression of cosmology and so we commit to live in light of this value: to pass on the beauty and health of Creation to future generations.

The theological discourse of a creation-centered spirituality points out the difference between a patriarchal, sin-and-redemption-centered spirituality and an eco-feminist, creation-centered spirituality regarding the image of God, of the human being, the understanding of faith, salvation, holiness and spiritual journey. In the main, patriarchal theology is hierarchical, has a predominantly male image of God, makes original sin as starting point, has an underdeveloped theology of Creation and the Holy Spirit, is Good Friday-oriented and looks at holiness as a striving for perfection. Eco-feminist creation-centered theology starts with God's creative spirit-*Dabar* – includes a woman face of God, has a well-developed theology of the Holy Spirit, emphasizes Christ not only in His historical reality but in His cosmic and prophetic significance and regards spirituality as a total surrender to God who loves unconditionally.

With regard to the spiritual journey, Creation-centered spirituality points to four pathways: the *via positiva* which is a celebration and

gratitude for the gifts of life and creation, *via negativa* which enjoins one to dare the dark and to surrender and accept what one cannot change in one's life, *via creativa* which emphasizes the powers of creativity and birthing and *via transformativa* which calls for commitment, responsibility, compassion. One ponders on questions like: What am I most grateful for in my life? What "darkness" have I faced in the recent past? What have I "given birth to" in the past year? What concrete changes do I want to happen in my life, in my family and in my workplace?²⁷⁸

As one can see, reflecting and acting on these questions constitute a rich and nurturing spirituality.

Conclusions

We live at a time when we can consider ourselves fortunate or unfortunate depending on our perspective.

We are unfortunate because we live at a time when our environment has been so devastated it is a question in the next few decades whether the resources of the earth can still nurture the human species.

We are fortunate to live at a time when the consciousness of humanity has been sufficiently awakened to the enormity of our environmental crisis that a global movement for the protection of the earth has been launched.

We belong to a generation that is challenged to commit ourselves to a fundamental change for if we do not do our part at this time, the deterioration of our earth may already become irreversible.

So it is a challenge and a unique opportunity to be part of a global effort to save our earth – to restore the integrity of God's Creation.

²⁷⁸ Cf. Fox, Matthew, *Original Blessing: A Primer on Creation Spirituality*, Bear and Company, Inc., 1983.

Responses of the Church

Sustainability in Solidarity and Justice, the Responses of the Churches in Germany

Mattias Kiefer and Markus Vogt

The manifold environmental challenges of the past thirty years have met with responses from Germany's churches on three levels: theological/doctrinal, ethical/political and concrete/practical. Activities on each of these levels have proceeded in clearly distinct phases, without overlaps. In what follows we will look at the three levels with a focus on the German Catholic Church, to which we will also briefly add the ecumenist perspective.

“Sustainable development” as a guiding Principle for Theological Reflection and Official Preaching and Teaching

In response to the 1987 Brundtland Report and the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, “sustainable development” increasingly became a guiding principle from the mid-1990s onwards. The official position of Catholicism in Germany has also been influenced and the Church has witnessed three milestones in this area: (1) a Joint Statement by the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany and the German Bishops' Conference: *For a Future Founded on Solidarity and Justice*, published in 1997; (2) a document written by Commission VI of the German Bishops' Conference: *Action for the Future of Creation*, published in 1998; and (3) a joint experts' paper by Commissions VI and X of the German Bishops' Conference: *Climate Change – A Focal Point of Global, Intergenerational and Ecological Justice*, published in 2006.

By including the issue of sustainability in its social teachings, the German Catholic Church subsequently became a pacemaker in global Catholicism. What made this so unusual is that German Christian social teachings – with a few exceptions – were thus

ahead of the theological and academic debate. This focus on the sustainability principle also showed that, right from the beginning, the German Catholic Church has always seen a close connection between environmental and development issues and that it started to debate ecological challenges under theoretical principles of justice at an early stage. In their biblical theology, the German Bishops based their view on the understanding that the command to look after and care for our world (Gen 2:15) should take unequivocal priority over the command to rule the earth (Gen 1:28) – a reading which has recently been confirmed at the highest level of the Magisterium in Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’*.²⁷⁹ Another specifically German feature was – and still is – the strong group of Catholic associations propagating “social Catholicism”. These have been steadily increasing in numbers since the 1980s, particularly on specific occasions, such as Catholic and Protestant Church congresses, where the focus has been partly on environmental and development issues. Responding to the wider debate in Germany as a whole, the Churches engaged with environmental awareness at a relatively early stage and then helped to influence it in turn.

For a Future Founded on Solidarity and Justice

Published in 1997, this Joint Paper or Social Paper was the outcome of a four-year process of consultation with over 10,000 participants in numerous debates. It is considered to be the culmination of the German Churches’ public comments on social and economic issues. Moreover, from the very beginning it helped to ensure that the sustainability principle was debated and given a specific ecumenical profile. The Joint Paper was the first publication to describe sustainability as a “fundamental focus” of Christian ethics. The relevant, much-quoted passage reads as follows: “Christian social ethics must do more to raise awareness of the interconnectedness of social, economic and ecological problems than it has in the past. It must combine the basic idea of preserving the integrity of creation with that of shaping the world, thereby situating all social processes within the all-embracing network of nature. Only in this way can humanity be

²⁷⁹ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’* on Care for Our Common Home, http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf (12.07.2017).

accountable to subsequent generations. This is what the key concept of sustainable development is about.”²⁸⁰

Action for the Future of Creation

The document *Action for the Future of Creation* is the most detailed commentary on environmental issues published to date by the German Catholic Church. It is a direct response to the Joint Paper and was drawn up in parallel with it after a discussion which also lasted four years. Based on the same conceptual foundation, *Action for the Future of Creation* establishes in-depth connections between sustainability and Christian creation theology and ethics as well as with principles of parish ministry, education, politics and infrastructural issues.²⁸¹ “Sustainability” is interpreted from a Christian perspective, combined with spiritual stimuli and supported by a social principle of Christian ethics. While it also presents political appeals, the document is intended primarily to help make the Church itself “sustainable”. The “Church Agenda for Sustainable Development” that is developed here does not merely seek to encourage specific activities; it also develops new principles of orientation and future prospects that are rooted in the Christian faith. The aim is to foster greater integration between active commitment to the environment, liturgical practice and evangelisation through concern for God’s creation.

Climate Change – A Focal Point of Global, Intergenerational and Ecological Justice

In 2006, the German Bishops published a comprehensive study on climate change based on *Action for the Future of Creation*. In the wake of the highly influential Stern Review *On the Economics of Climate Change*, it became one of the first studies to provide systematic access to the issue outside a purely academic sphere, and so the document was also in considerable demand outside Church

²⁸⁰ Evangelical Church in Germany and German Bishops’ Conference (eds.), *For a Future Founded on Solidarity and Justice: A Word from the German Protestant Church and the German Bishops’ Conference on the Economic and Social Situation in Germany*, Hanover/Bonn 1997, No. 125, cf. also No. 122–125 and 224–232. http://oikoumene.net/eng/home/eng.basis/eng.basis.ha_bonn/eng.basis.ha_bonn.5.2/print.html (12.07.2017).

²⁸¹ German Bishops’ Conference – Commission for Society and Social Affairs (eds.), *Handeln für die Zukunft der Schöpfung (Action for the Future of Creation)*, Bonn 1998, specifically on sustainability: No. 106–150.

circles. It owed its significance essentially to two things: firstly, it created a close systematic link between the sustainability principle and theoretical considerations of justice, and, secondly, it described our responsibility for creation as a mandate that cuts across all spheres of church life. At the same time, the document gave sustainability a firm place in the work of the parish and the Church's activities and thus the domains in which the Church has defined itself since its very beginning: "Three factors are essential for the sincere, earnest and resolute realisation and implementation of the Church's responsibility for the climate: (a) a pastoral integration of responsibility for creation into the Church's identity, into the Church's welfare and social work, into evangelisation and into liturgical practice; responsibility for creation is a genuine part of the Church's pastoral mission [...]; (b) decisive support and advocacy for changes to the political frameworks and to economic and social action to the benefit of climate protection [...]; (c) the encouragement, promotion and implementation of practical initiatives for climate-friendly action and a reduction in the use of fossil energies."²⁸²

Duty towards Creation: the Church as a Political Activist

As mentioned above, the Joint Paper on the Economic and Social Situation, 1997 was a milestone in the Church's social teachings. Moreover, as it was published in the run-up to Germany's general elections in 1998, it also indirectly exerted a wider political influence. In subsequent years, other important policy papers on specific issues were issued, but their impact was more noticeable within the Church itself and met with virtually no response outside certain groups of professionals.²⁸³ This situation changed, however, after the nuclear accident at the Fukushima power plant in Japan in March 2011 – an event which prompted the German government to set up an Ethics

²⁸² The German Bishops, Commission for Society and Social Affairs & Commission for International Church Affairs (eds.), *Climate Change: A Focal Point of Global, Intergenerational and Ecological Justice: Export Report on the Challenge of Global Climate Change, with a Foreword by the President of the German Bishops' Conference*, second updated edition, Bonn 2007, No. 29, http://www.lienkamp-berlin.de/resources/DBK_Klimawandel_2_Aufl_2007_engl.pdf (12.07.2017).

²⁸³ E.g.: German Bishops' Conference and the Evangelical Church in Germany (eds.), *Neuorientierung für eine nachhaltige Landwirtschaft (Reorientation towards Sustainable Agriculture)*, a contribution to the discussion on the situation in agriculture, including a paper by the Chairman of the German Bishops' Conference and the Chairman of the Evangelical Church in Germany, Bonn/Hanover 2003.

Commission on Safe Energy. In its final report, the commission recommended that, as part of the country's general energy turnaround, Germany should end its peaceful use of nuclear power within a period of ten years. Three of the 17 Commission members were leading German Church representatives: Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Chairman of the German Bishops' Conference, Alois Glück, President of the Central Committee of German Catholics, and Ulrich Fischer, Bishop of the Evangelical Regional Church in Baden. Whenever there was a debate on Germany's nuclear phase-out in connection with the country's environmental and energy policies, Church positions were now more visible than ever before.²⁸⁴

In later years Church representatives were repeatedly in demand as dialogue partners for politicians and civil society on questions concerning Germany's energy turnaround and climate protection. They included Catholic Bishops, the Central Committee of German Catholics, the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany and church aid organisations such as *Misereor and Brot für die Welt* (Bread for the World). This recent increase in attention at the political level was undoubtedly boosted by the publication of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in New York and the holding of the World Climate Summit in Paris (COP 21) – all of them in the second half of 2015.

An eminently important role in the visibility of the Church as a political activist was played by the Catholic associations and their umbrella organisation, the Central Committee of German Catholics. If it had not been for their decades of diligent work on specific issues, their concentration on certain focal areas, their awareness campaigns, their regular debates and the adoption of common positions as individual associations and joint statements at AGMs, the groundwork would never have been laid. All this work has continued to feed the

²⁸⁴ Cf. German Bishops' Conference (eds.), *Der Schöpfung verpflichtet: Anregungen für einen nachhaltigen Umgang mit Energie (Duty towards Creation – Encouraging a Sustainable Use of Energy)*, expert paper on the ethical foundation of a sustainable energy supply (Arbeitshilfe 245), Bonn 2011; cf. German Bishops' Conference – Commission for Society and Social Affairs (eds.), *Empfehlungen zur Energiewende: Ein Diskussionsbeitrag (Recommendations on the Energy Turnaround – A Contribution to the Debate)*, Bonn 2013. The relatively rapid formation of a consensus was partly the outcome of an expert paper entitled *Duty towards Creation*, which had been written prior to the Fukushima incident and discussed with representatives of the German Ministry of the Environment, although it was not published until May 2011.

social and political relevance of the Church to the present day. The work of the associations has occasionally been denigrated as a petty Catholic club mentality. Those who disparage this activity overlook the strong commitment of these volunteers, representing a high level of civic engagement at its very best and, indeed, the high degree of professionalism and expertise that has characterised these debates. The work of Church youth organisations, in particular, continues to function as a “school of democracy” where, for the first time, many young people develop an interest in social and welfare issues and political action. Instead of discrediting the associations, there is every reason to rejoice that they form such an effective antidote against populism and political apathy, against hostility to science and against the selfish attitudes that arise from the simplification of complex issues.

Practical Faith in Creation: the Acid Test in daily Church Life

Our view of the Church would be incomplete and distorted if we were to limit ourselves to documents published by the Magisterium or official statements and position papers. Practical initiatives in Church institutions, dioceses and local churches are often more expressive and indeed just as significant, not least because of their authenticity and creditworthiness. Once sustainability is accepted as a guiding principle, it needs to be expressed consistently in all areas of church life, although this, of course, requires a long process of reorientation. However, there are many examples of a clear trend that has been noticeable for several years now. Let us, therefore, be more specific and look at the Church’s environmental work. To fully map the sustainability principle and its implementation in daily church practice, however, would also entail a closer look at the Church’s social and welfare work, the work of the Church’s financial managers on issues of finance and asset management and the work of the Church’s One World project managers, to mention just a few.

The coordination of the Church’s environmental work at the parish level is usually handled by diocesan environmental commissioners. These commissioners have existed in German dioceses since 1986, and the decision to appoint them was taken shortly before (!) the nuclear accident at Chernobyl – first in the Bavarian (arch) dioceses and, in subsequent years, in most other parts of

Germany. This process has not yet been concluded; 20 out of 27 German (arch) dioceses now have environmental commissioners or at least contact persons on environmental issues. There are, however, major differences regarding the position of a commissioner within the administrative structure of a diocese, the focal areas of the commissioners’ work and the resources they are given. The latter can range from teams of volunteers to entire specialist units or departments within an ordinariate, complete with several full-time employees. At the national level they form the Working Group of German Catholic Diocesan Environmental Commissioners²⁸⁵, who frequently network with their counterparts on the Protestant side, the Working Group of Environmental Commissioners of the Member Churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany.²⁸⁶ Their activities comprise awareness campaigns and educational work, creating theological and ethical foundations within ordinariates or vicariates-general, providing liturgical and pastoral resources on the issue and improving the environmental (and social) impact of the Church’s own practice in her administrative, social, educational and economic work. Quite often it also means supporting and coordinating environmental volunteers within a diocese, providing resources for the diocesan management, committees and associations and networking with governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations.

Raising Awareness, Political Education, Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

The Church funds numerous educational establishments, including nursery, primary and secondary schools, universities, and youth, adult and senior citizens’ education centres. In recent years the issues of sustainability and responsibility for creation have increasingly come to be recognised as major issues in the profiles of formal educational church institutions. In the informal educational sector it has often been church institutions that have sustained the provision of political education, including ESD, even in cases where it was unprofitable.

²⁸⁵ Cf. www.kath-umweltbeauftragte.de (22.09.2016).

²⁸⁶ Cf. www.ekd.de/agu/ (22.09.2016).

Liturgical/Pastoral Events

At the Ecumenical Church Congress in Munich in 2010, Germany's Christian Churches decided to celebrate an Ecumenical Creation Time annually from 1 September to 4 October, the project to be funded by the Working Group of German Christian Churches.²⁸⁷ In 2015 Pope Francis established 1 September as a regular World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation within the universal Catholic Church. It is often the diocesan environmental commissioners who conduct suitable events and who create and provide material for the Creation Time and indeed for other occasions throughout the church year (e.g. harvest festivals). Many dioceses celebrate a Day of Creation, which is usually a mixture of educational and liturgical events. Considerable attention was attracted by an Ecumenical Night of Prayer for the Climate in Bavaria in 2015 in the run-up to COP 21. Over the past few years there has been growing interest in the spiritual grounding and interpretation of a personal, practical commitment to creation – a trend that is clearly in line with Pope Francis' ideas in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, under the heading of "ecological spirituality".

Personal Practice

For a number of years now several German dioceses have begun to gradually renounce former approaches that were primarily parish-based and usually localised. Instead, the idea now is to ensure that environmental aspects are structurally grounded within administrative activities, i.e. integrated into the structural organisation and workflow management of Church institutions. This concerns not only processes and routines, but also standards. This trend has been magnified by a growing sense of awareness among decision-makers as well as by external circumstances, e.g. the significant rise in energy prices in 2007/2008 and the Climate Protection Initiative of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment. Another contributory factor was the need to adapt the Church's own facility infrastructure to demographic developments and to the resulting changes in pastoral requirements. Since then there have been more and more campaigns in Catholic dioceses (and also in Protestant regional churches), including a so-called energy offensive and the introduction of energy and envi-

²⁸⁷ Cf. www.oekumene-ack.de/themen/glaubenspraxis/oekumenischer-tag-der-schoepfung/ (22.09.2016).

ronmental management systems. The decisive factor continues to be an ecumenical initiative entitled Church Environmental Management in which over 1,000 Church institutions are currently running comprehensive environmental and sustainability management systems modelled on the European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).²⁸⁸

What all of them have in common is a systematic, empirically-based procedure to minimise the environmental (and sometimes also financial) impact of church activities. The relevant fields of action are energy, construction, building maintenance, procurement, mobility, the use of church land, including accessible routes connecting public areas, as well as the conservation of species and nature within Church-owned buildings and on Church-owned land. These are often organisational development projects and change management processes with all the positive and negative experiences that are also to be found outside the Church. This very promising approach entails the systematic recording of the effects of personal activities, reflecting upon and then taking practical steps to improve them.

Ecumenical Collaboration: together in and for the One Creation

This article does not provide the scope to do full justice to the responsible care for creation that is taken within the Evangelical Church in Germany. Its work in this field started quite early, in the late 1960s, with the appointment of Kurt Oeser as its Environmental Commissioner, when resistance was put up against a new runway at Frankfurt Airport.

There have long been several marked differences in the environmental work carried out by the Protestant and Catholic Churches in Germany, but only a few can be mentioned here. Protestant environmental work started about twenty years earlier: its focus has been more on political and civil society issues and it has a stronger scientific foundation. One reason for this is the support provided by several Protestant academies which assumed an environmental profile at an early stage (Loccum, Bad Boll, Tutzing and later on

²⁸⁸ Cf. <http://www.kirum.org/> (22.09.2016). The EMAS regulation was adapted to the needs of church institutions (with several simplifications in form and with the addition of theological and spiritual aspects). Numerically, this currently makes Germany's churches the biggest active environmental managers among the country's non-profit organisations.

the Institute for Church and Society in Schwerte). In addition, the Environmental Commissioner for the Evangelical Church in Germany is a clearly defined and visible dialogue partner at the governmental policy level and one who, for socio-ethical and theological reasons, is less prone to compromise. For many years Catholic environmental work, by contrast, had greater support at the parish level and in the work of Catholic associations, e.g. through youth organisations and later also through women's and regional associations which sought to raise awareness on a wider scale. The joint paper of the Evangelical Church in Germany and the German Bishops' Conference entitled *Responsibility for Creation* (1985) is an eloquent testimony to the ecumenical ties created through the Churches' environmental work.

Quite often the Evangelical Church in Germany has published statements on environmental issues much earlier than the Catholic Church has:

- Advisory Council of the Environmental Commissioner of the Evangelical Church in Germany (1995): *Endangered Climate – Our Responsibility for God's Creation*, Hanover. This subject was not taken up by Commission VI of the German Bishops' Conference until 2006.
- Division for Development and the Environment of the Evangelical Church in Germany (2000): *Food Security and Sustainable Development*, Hanover. The resulting paper on food security subsequently became a subject of ecumenical dialogue between the Churches, particularly in a joint paper on sustainable agriculture (2003).

The two Churches remain in close contact and frequently work together, particularly at the professional level of their respective environmental commissioners and also at the level of local parishes. Both major German denominations base their environmental work on creation theology and environmental ethics and have perspectives that are largely compatible, if not identical. Moreover, both encounter similar resistance to any changes in their own practice. Today the most important difference in the environmental work of the two Churches concerns the degree of public visibility and the scope of their political action. As the Evangelical Church has a different ecclesiological conception of itself, its environmental work proceeds far more independently from its senior management, particularly from

the ordained clergy, than would be possible within Catholicism. The specific strengths of Catholic environmental work are its grounding within local parishes and associations and also the connection with Catholic social doctrine and the structures through which it is conveyed at the Church's national and international levels (Catholic offices, educational work, aid organisations, religious orders and the Papal Council for Justice and Peace).

The fact that the different denominations have different profiles and strengths and that man's responsibility for creation has been perceived at different levels of reflection and activity in the denominations and in different countries represents a good opportunity for mutual enrichment. However, this opportunity can only be seized if we are prepared to learn from one another and to continually address the radical claim of the Gospel – in theological, practical, spiritual and ecumenical terms. As regards our relationship with nature, the Gospel demands a far-reaching transformation of our entire culture. The Churches, too, must pool their resources in caring for the one "common home" – our one and only world.

Creation Spirituality.

Answers from the Church in Africa

Moses Asaah Awinongya

Creation Spirituality is Contextual

Satellite images of the African continent today reveal a landscape marked by increasing desertification. Major differences are visible in comparison with images from thirty years ago: the brown surface area is broader than it was two decades earlier; many once green areas can no longer be discerned, some rivers have run dry and many animal species have disappeared entirely. All this is happening on a continent in which the subsistence of the majority depends on the yield produced from arable land, in which most individuals have close ties with nature, and in which the Church draws its strength and momentum from the young generation. More and more people are benefiting from education, and societies are becoming increasingly secularised. This frequently results in tension between various world views, particularly as regards their approach to creation.

Pope Francis' enlivening thoughts in his Encyclical *Laudato Si'* make it clear that the improper treatment of creation is having a devastating effect on all living things. He issues an impassioned plea to all of us to go out of ourselves towards the other²⁸⁹ and calls for the development of an environmental education which facilitates "making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning."²⁹⁰

The situation facing Africa as a continent and Pope Francis' call for a form of environmental education which prepares people for an

²⁸⁹ Pope Francis, Encyclical *Laudato Si'* on Care for our Common Home, 24 May 2015, referred to below as LS; here No. 202, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (31.07.2017).

²⁹⁰ LS 210.

ethics rooted in the mystery of creation could also be understood as an appeal for creation spirituality in keeping with the times. This naturally requires an accentuation appropriate to the specific context, for a theology or spirituality cannot be formed in a vacuum; it requires a certain space. What we are talking about here, then, is contextual creation spirituality with a focus on Africa in which due heed is paid to the way in which people live and think. Let me say straightaway that there is no single 'African creation spirituality'. The continent is blessed with many autonomous and independent cultures. Although there are certain constant factors to be found in the various cultures, the best way of exploring the reality of *creation spirituality* in Africa is to take a specific example as a starting point, and so we have selected Ghana.

References to creation presuppose that, on the one hand, a creator exists and, on the other, that a created being exists which is endowed with the power to grow. The relationship maintained by the created being with both his creator and his fellow creatures is what we mean here by creation spirituality. Two theological elements are present in this concept: the relationship with transcendence (vertical relationship) and an inherent togetherness (horizontal relationship).

Like the Church itself, Christians are shaped by their environment or society and vice versa. Creation spirituality in the Church in Ghana is influenced by the predispositions of the Church's individual members. This has consequences for the life of the Church.

The Figurative Function of the Earth as Mother or Wife of God

Life in Ghana is pervaded by religion and religiosity. It is seldom the case that two people bid each other farewell without mentioning the name of God at least twice or without one person blessing the other in some way. In traditional society it is even claimed that religion is danced rather than conceptualised.²⁹¹ Ghanaians or Africans are even portrayed as *homo religiosus* and *homo radicaliter religiosus*²⁹² (pathologically religious). Mabilia Justin-Robert Kenzo and other theologians refute this view, considering such statements to be a relic

²⁹¹ Cf. Assimeng, Max, *Religion and Social Change in West Africa: An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion*, Accra 1989, 13.

²⁹² Cf. Pobe, John S., *Religion and Politics in Ghana: A Case Study of the Acheampong Era 1972–1978*, Accra 1992, 1.

of Western rule in Africa and part of the "Colonial Library".²⁹³ In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* John Paul II says that Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world.

When reference is made to a God of creation, it is assumed that a specific relationship exists between Himself and His creation. In the languages of the 'Gur' linguistic group, the name 'God' bears the prefix *Na*, which refers to God as king (*Naba*, *Naa*) or God as creator. Examples include *Nayine* used by the Frafra people (Northern Ghana and Southern Burkina Faso) and *Nawuni* used by the Dagbomba people in Northern Ghana. In the country's remaining languages, God (e.g. *Onyame* or *Mau* or *Mawu*) is recognised as the highest being and creator.

The Krobo people call God *Mau*, by which they mean the creator of the universe. The earth is described as the wife (*yo*) of God. However, she is not treated as God's equal, but has merely received the power from God that is needed to bear fruit for living beings. This is a metaphor or functional image, namely that of a wife and not of a marriage between God and the earth. According to Krobo cosmology, after creating the world God conferred fertility blessings on the earth, entrusting it with the task, or with the power, of fertility in order to make life possible. Like a good Krobo housewife, the earth should strive to maintain the well-being of its entire family using the resources received from God. It also brings forth life, just as a woman bears children, and offers a home to its family members, just as a woman does.

In Twi (the language of the Akan people in Southern Ghana), the earth has a female name: *Asase Yaa* (used by the Asante people) or *Asase Efua* (used by the Fante people²⁹⁴). In Twi, *Asase* is a general term for a plot of land / soil. *Yaa* is the name of a girl or woman born on a Thursday, while *Efua* is the name of a girl or woman born on a Friday. In the creation mythology of the Akan people, *Asase Yaa* is the wife of *Onya-me*²⁹⁵, the highest being, which is both omnipresent and

²⁹³ Kenzo, Mabilia Justin-Robert, "Religion, Hybridity and the Construction of Reality in Postcolonial Africa", in: *Exchange*, No. 33 (2004) 3, 244f. He uses the term "Colonial Library". In his opinion, religion is a cultural construct; he also calls it a "hybrid product".

²⁹⁴ Fante is one of the Twi dialects and is spoken in the south-west of the country.

²⁹⁵ *Onyame* refers to the being in which one finds or receives supreme fulfilment. This name is used by Christians as a term to describe God; it is also applied in the liturgy and everyday lives of adherents of all religions in the Akan cultural region.

omnipotent. The names *Yaa* and *Efua* are of particular significance, as they indicate which day is taken as a day of rest within the respective cultural group. While the Fante people take Friday as the day of rest, the remainder of the Akan tribes lay down their farming implements and leave their *Asase* to rest on Thursdays. On these days, no work may be done in the fields or by the rivers. Mother Earth (*Asase Yaa*) and the ancestors need to rest. On this day the ancestors visit the fields. This attitude to creation benefits both the earth and those who live on it. They regain their energy and demonstrate their dignity as human beings. On this day the entire family is at home and people finally have time for the things daily work usually prevents. In the context of Christian spirituality this taking time to rest could be interpreted as lending “dignity to human creative power”²⁹⁶. Work without rest would deprive people of their human dignity.

The metaphor of the earth as mother or wife is to be found not just in Ghana and in traditional African religion. The psalmist compares the earth to a mother’s womb (Ps 139:15). In the Book of Job (Job 1:21) reference is made to the return of human life to the mother’s womb (the earth). Psalm 139 expresses the notion of God as a craftsman. He forms the child in the mother’s womb. “Although the God of Israel does not literally give birth to man himself, he certainly plays a role in his coming into being in the maternal body and in the process of birth.”²⁹⁷ The resulting image is that of God as creator and originator of life. Both the Judaeo-Christian tradition and the traditional African religions practised in Ghana endow the earth with a female function. The difference between the two traditions consists in the fact that, in traditional African religion, the earth is made divine or declared sacred. Moreover, Ghanaian cosmology (God as man and the earth as woman) reflects the Ghanaians’ world view with its polarity of the sexes. However, this concept is not “originally Ghanaian”. Othmar Keel and Silvia Schroer believe that the postulated creation of man and woman in the likeness of God in Gen 1:26f. contains a subtle “[...] implication that the creating divinity embodies the polarity of the sexes.”²⁹⁸ A different perspective is presented in an argument

²⁹⁶ Keel, Othmar/Schroer, Silvia, *Schöpfung: Biblische Theologien im Kontext altorientalischer Religionen*, Freiburg/Switzerland/Göttingen, 2002, 34.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

between “wood and reed” handed down from the Sumerian period. Here the God of Heaven mates with the earth, which then gives birth to the plants. This concept could be compared with the burgeoning of the vegetation²⁹⁹ in Gen 1:11f. The image is similar to the bearing of plants by Mother Earth.

The Call for Answers from the Church

The combination of biblical images with Ghanaian cosmologies is intended to arouse Christians’ desire to nurture a creation spirituality which has the power to help people take better care of the living environment inhabited by all creatures and to encourage them to praise their creator. In the Ghanaian cosmologies or creation myths man is responsible for other living things. While all other living beings look after their own, man is the only creature who also maintains a relationship with the creator. As a result, he not only practises a spirituality of togetherness, but also a spirituality of mutual concern. This is linked to solidarity with all other creatures. He acts this way because, as a child, he himself was needy and dependent on the help of others. The spirituality of togetherness comprises two elements: God and one’s fellow beings. The aim is to live a life reconciled with God and to continue to shape creation together with Him. This is the vertical dimension of creation spirituality.

However, man is a created being who lives here on earth together with other creatures; beneficial cooperation is essential for them all. This cooperation flows quite naturally into a mutual concern, in the knowledge that all creatures here on earth enjoy the same “guest status”. Life on earth is an acceptance of the divine invitation to share in its essence. Jesus says that He is life. In the Christian faith, however, he is also God. Hence it is only logical that participation in life also signifies, to a certain extent, a partaking of God’s essence. God Himself issues this invitation. In Ghana, a baby is initially viewed as a guest. This idea was originally bound up with the high infant mortality rate. At the social level this means that the baby is like a guest who “has eyes, but cannot yet see everything”. It takes time to develop an accurate awareness of one’s surroundings and to grasp the subtleties of a culture. This takes place over time.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

When individuals have become adults, they are no longer considered to be guests but are regarded as fellow citizens. They must now exemplify the cultural tradition by their actions. The same principle applies to a guest. The profound spirituality underlying this is the awareness that each individual here on earth bears a responsibility which he assumes over time. The task of adults is to prepare children properly for life. A guest either returns to the place he came from or he remains. If he decides to remain, he also bears a responsibility for the next generation. The outcome is a positive contribution to the preservation of a healthy living environment for all. For the earth is not only a human habitat, but also home to plants and animals.

In traditional society, a man who fells trees unnecessarily without any specific purpose is regarded as an enemy of life. Trees exist not just for the present generation but for future generations, too. If the earth is termed “mother”, but experiences destruction at the hands of man, this equates to an act of self-destruction and a violation of the mother. For the Church the question arises of whether it is fulfilling its mission and invitation as a community, which is to help shape creation or to assume responsibility for it.

Creation spirituality in Ghana is closely bound up with the concept of solidarity. The principle of extended families in society made sure that, as far as possible, no member of the family had to live in poverty. This principle was reinforced by the system of reciprocal help with work in the field or in building a house. In this respect the Frafra people use the term *kaariba* and the Akan people the word *nobua*. In a system of this kind those who cannot cope with work in the field on their own ask for help. A time is arranged and the work is done together. The person asking for assistance is responsible for providing the helpers with food and drink. This system expresses mutual concern in the form of reciprocal assistance. The Church in Ghana might be viewed as a similar type of extended family. Solidarity and mutual concern could be manifested in a way which ensures that the fundamental needs of all dioceses and parishes are met.

It is commendable that many dioceses and parishes in Ghana have partner dioceses or parishes in Europe and North America. This is a clear indication that the Church in Ghana forms the universal Church together with other churches in the world. Solidarity is expressed by the term partnership (as opposed to sponsorship

or mentoring). Within the Church, however, it is expected that the dioceses and parishes in the country should provide each other with support. This step would give *solidarity* tangible expression within the country. To date, however, partnerships have only been established with churches in Europe and North America. Partnerships with dioceses and parishes in Ghana itself would express the idea that sharing is an inherently Christian concept and a logical practical consequence of creation spirituality. There is no creation spirituality in which sharing is not incorporated. One option would be to form a cash pool, to which all parishes or dioceses and religious orders could contribute a certain sum or percentage. Taking due heed of the principle of sustainability, the fund could be run in such a way that all pastoral employees and missionaries could be given a basic monthly salary. If that were to prove insufficient, it would still be possible to ask the sisters and brothers in the churches in Europe and North America for support.

As regards the issue of togetherness and mutual understanding referred to above, the ethical and political question arises of the way in which worldly goods, in particular property, should be handled. A plot of land is a gift from God, and the family is responsible for taking care of it in order to ensure that it is preserved for future generations. At no point in the tradition does it belong to a specific generation. All generations have the opportunity to use all its resources, but are subsequently obliged to hand it down without breaking the use chain. This is the reason why, in many families, the plot of land is still sometimes lent to non-family members for their use. For the land belongs to the living, the dead (the ancestors) and those not yet born. This corresponds with the idea of finally ceasing to classify nature “into categories of possession and ownership [in thought and deed]. It is rather the home of all living creatures and, according to Christian understanding, is also inhabited simultaneously by the triune God.”³⁰⁰ God sets everything in motion and gives life to all. This presupposes a deeper understanding of the language of nature in order to consolidate the mutual relationship between all living creatures.

Jesus knew his surroundings well – particularly the processes taking place within nature, the coexistence of man and beast and

³⁰⁰ Keel, Othmar/Schroer, Silvia, op. cit., 33.

the impact of man on his environment – and He also used natural phenomena to proclaim His message. After all, nature is endowed with a language which people can understand. All living beings interrelate with one another. While the life-giving role of a woman or mother is transferred to the earth, it is also possible to relate man's treatment of the earth, or of creation, to human togetherness in a figurative sense. The exorbitant depletion of the earth's resources demonstrates the greed and craving for possession in society. The Church's response to this is the promotion of a life of abundance measured not in quantitative terms but in a qualitative sense. The exploitation of natural resources is an indication that people are destroying their habitat. However: does a man exploit his mother? In the past all the foodstuffs that were needed used to be grown in Ghana. The lack of fertile land now makes this almost impossible. Its barrenness is man-made and many products have to be imported as a result. If the earth, the mother, is no longer able to produce sufficient amounts to feed her children, meaning that everything has to be obtained from other sources, this is tantamount to an insult to the mother: is she no longer fertile? This would correspond to the image of a mother whose children no longer wish to be nurtured by her but by a different mother. The situation reflects negatively on human beings and, in this case, on Christians. After all, 64 per cent of the Ghanaian population are Christians.

These aspects of Ghanaian society can be encountered in most other African countries, too. Contextual creation spirituality based on everyday experience consequently leads us to view God as the source and principle of life and to praise Him accordingly. He deserves the glory. Viewing the earth as a mother brings hope. God has blessed her with a vitality which facilitates the generation of further life without God Himself having to create everything anew. The power of God is visible and tangible within creation. He no longer needs to actually reveal Himself.

In addition, creation spirituality as a response by the Church in Ghana raises the question of the status of women in society. Is God's relationship to the earth within traditional society being communicated incorrectly in the context of everyday life and in the life of the Church? Or does this relationship gain in significance as a collaboration of all living beings with God which is designed to preserve

and continue creation? When considering creation spirituality, it is impossible to ignore the question of a clear representation of the concept of man.

For the Church in Ghana and Africa, there is no better time than now to fulfil her mission as the salt of the earth and the light of the world. "The time has come to give creation back its soul and its dignity, to liberate it from the humiliation it has suffered by being regarded as the entirely godless counterpart of the creator, the mere product of an excessively superior, transcendental God and as the object of human science and exploitation".³⁰¹ A disregard for this mission will result in spiritual "self-crucifixion". Since the Church is prophetic in character, it must not remain blind to its own problems. The development of contextual creation spirituality in Africa will give the continent fresh momentum.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

Sumak Kawsay, a Model to the World from the Periphery

Fernán Gustavo Carreras

At the end of the 20th century, with the collapse of the communist system, history seemed to come to an end, if history means the advance of Western civilization. Indeed, the facts seemed to prove that the capitalist world had been right. The United States was the only global leader to remain, and prevailing neo-liberalism was interpreted by its theoreticians as the only system possible. Internal contradictions were presented as secondary deficiencies which would be ironed out as the system evolved fully. However, neo-liberal optimism was shaken by a series of events which showed up deep cracks. Among them were outbreaks of social unrest wherever politico-economic recipes were applied in orthodox form. A paradigmatic case was Argentina, with the social and institutional crisis of 2001. Angry social mobilization brought down the government of De La Rúa, with a succession of five presidents in the course of a week. The widespread outrage – expressed in the slogan “Away with them all!”, directed at the political and industrial class – was perceived as blasting apart the neo-liberal model. The same phenomenon occurred in other Latin American countries. Wherever neo-liberalism had failed, populist governments were installed and labelled the “new Latin American left”.

2007 brought the “financial bubble”. Originating in the United States and spreading across Europe, it highlighted the profound crisis in the capitalist system. At the same time, new players emerged, such as the BRIC economies, raising the prospect of a new, multi-polar world order.

The crisis of capitalism is expressed in two problems which seem to be inherent to the system and unresolvable within it. They are poverty and the destruction of the planet. A need has been iden-

tified for alternative models that can steer humanity towards a fairer common future.

From the periphery – and within that from the most exploited sectors, such as the indigenous people – ideas and momentum have started to emerge that seem to offer benefits for the world. One of these is *sumak kawsay*.

We see this as a vision under construction, not confined to the universe of indigenous peoples in our America. However, it is among them that this vision has arisen, along with other great momentum for renewal. It is a wisdom that affects every order of life in a transformative way. Here we shall set out the philosophy that underlies it, highlighting its most significant features and its first political impacts.

A Philosophy of the Indigenous Peoples?³⁰²

The conquest and colonization of America placed us in the role of dominated societies, breaking our relationship with our own world and its traditions. During the colonial period, some missionaries defended the rights of the indigenous peoples, astonished by the richness of their cosmic view, and even asserted the existence of a veritable indigenous³⁰³ philosophy. During the process of independence, a need was recognized for intellectual emancipation and a national philosophy, as Alberdi outlined in 1837 (Address to the Literary Salon, and Preliminary Fragment for the Study of Law). Not until the 20th century was the issue debated systematically. The ground was laid for later discussion by two books: *¿Existe una filosofía en nuestra América?* (Is There Philosophy in Our America?) by the Peruvian Salazar Bondy in 1968, and *La Filosofía Americana como Filosofía sin más* ([Latin] American Philosophy as Philosophy Straight) by the Mexican Leopoldo Zea in 1969. However, neither of these philosophers acknowledges the possibility of an indigenous philosophy, despite the important precedent of Miguel León Portilla. It was a tenet of philosophical common sense to assume that such a philosophy was impossible. Nevertheless, the question had been

³⁰² We note with satisfaction that the joint work Dussel, Enrique/Mendieta, Eduardo/Bohórquez, Carmen (eds.), *El Pensamiento filosófico latinoamericano del Caribe y "Latino"* (1300–2000), 2009, opens with a chapter entitled "The Philosophy of Certain Native Peoples".

³⁰³ We refer here to Fray Bernardino of Sahagún, who compiled a vast collection of indigenous traditions with a view to preserving the wisdom of these peoples for the future.

re-opened in an intelligent and innovative manner. Among those who support the existence of a philosophy among the indigenous peoples we can identify two perspectives, which we briefly mention here.

In 1956, Miguel León Portilla published a book entitled *La Filosofía Náhuatl estudiada en sus fuentes* (Nahuatl Philosophy Studied at Source). The title sparked a wide polemic, which is still not over, around the question of the existence and the possibility of an indigenous philosophy. This thinker adopts the Western concept of philosophy. To those who deny the possibility of an indigenous philosophy, the Mexican defends his hypothesis by arguing that within the Nahuatl culture we find Philosophers, the Tlamatinime or "those who know something". In addition, he centres the work on showing that universal philosophical themes were formulated and discussed in those societies. To demonstrate this he delves into written Nahuatl sources to analyse theological, anthropological and educational issues, including lines of thinking that guided the way of life in those communities. He concludes by asserting that he has demonstrated how philosophy among the Nahuatl operated on at least the same level as among the pre-Socratic Greeks.

For his part, Josef Esterman, in an article on Quechua philosophy,³⁰⁴ claims that "in referring to indigenous philosophies in general or Andean philosophies in particular, the academic philosophy community tends to qualify this kind of philosophy as thought, ethnophilosophy, world view, or simply wisdom... However, from an intercultural perspective, it is philosophical thought that is distinct from the dominant Western tradition."³⁰⁵ Unlike Leon Portilla, this author does not apply specific criteria, such as the existence of individuals performing the function of philosophers, written texts, logical reasoning, rigorous language, a methodology or systematization of problems, all of which are normative reflections of Western philosophy. Only philosophy which evolves within the Western tradition will fulfil these conditions. From Esterman's intercultural perspective, it is important to answer the questions: "What constitutes philosophy?", "Is there an

³⁰⁴ Josef Esterman published a book on Andean philosophy called *Filosofía Andina: Estudio intercultural de la sabiduría andina*, Ecuador 1998.

³⁰⁵ Esterman, Josef, "La Filosofía Quechua", in: Dussel, Enrique/Mendieta, Eudardo/Bohórquez, Carmen (eds.), op. cit., 36.

Andean philosophy?”, “What are the sources of this philosophy?” and “Who are the philosophizing subjects?”

For intercultural philosophy, Western philosophy is one of multiple philosophical expressions which occur historically and geographically, but it is in no way the only one. In this sense, what is philosophy cannot be defined monoculturally, but rather through an intercultural dialogue or “poli-logue”. If what constitutes philosophy is determined within the parameters of a single culture, the expressions of other cultures cannot be embraced by such a definition. This aspiration derives from a monocultural model that sees its own culture as a supra-superculture. “This is the absolutization of the Western way of thinking in a way that reflects *philosophia perennis*, meaning philosophical content above (supra) any cultural determination.”³⁰⁶

Intercultural philosophy insists that any philosophical expression has a particular cultural connotation. This argument allows the recognition of “philosophies” developed in other countries. We can state that every philosophy presupposes an “underlying myth” that is unquestioned, a certain lived experience of reality that cannot be conceptualized other than by dint of philosophical effort. In this sense, “Andean philosophy is a set of concepts, models, ideas and categories lived by the Andean *runa*; in other words: the concrete, collective experience of Andeans within their universe. Philosophical concepts are, in this experience, practo-logical and implicit. Secondary to and derived from this, Andean philosophy is the systematic and methodical reflection of this collective experience. It explains and conceptualizes this popular Andean wisdom (as a universal symbol) which implicitly and pre-conceptually is always present in the tasks and world view of the Andean *runa*.”³⁰⁷

Following this line of reasoning, Esterman explains that we can distinguish four levels in the construction of an Andean philosophy: 1) Crude reality, an objective and pre-experiential supposition. In the Andean setting, this level indicates geography, topography, climate, cosmology and biology close to the *runa*’s experience. 2) Lived experience of this reality for the *runa*. “The *runa* experiences its sur-

³⁰⁶ Esterman, Josef, *Filosofía Andina*, op. cit., 34.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

roundings via a cultural codification that obeys physical and social needs and introduces a certain assessment of a world which is ideally non-axiomatic. This primordial experience as significant (hermeneutic) interpretation is what we can call a world view. A certain ordering of the *Kosmos* as a real otherness by means of anthropological (and even anthropomorphic) parameters but not necessarily in the conceptual, logical, rational sense.”³⁰⁸ 3) The conceptual and systematic interpretation of this lived experience. This is the level of philosophical reflection. It is a secondary term, which follows and is based on the primordial interpretation performed by the *runa* by means of lived experience. Consequently, Andean philosophy might be defined as “an explicit world view” or a rational interpretation of lived experience of the world. Andean philosophy, specifically, is the *runa*’s systematic (conceptual and rational) interpretation of lived experience of the world as part of the cosmos around it. 4) Reflection on and historical interpretation of this indigenous philosophy. This is the level where philosophy becomes the history of philosophy. In the case of Andean philosophy, this level barely applies. The most interesting, then, are levels two and three, the lived experience (but already interpretive) of “transcendent” reality from the *runa*’s point of view, and first-order philosophical reflection on this experience (which is a second-order interpretation). “The source and the principal point of hermeneutic reference for Andean philosophy is, indeed, this lived experience of the Andean people and its implicit (although not conceptual) interpretation of the *Kosmos* in its multiple forms.”

As far as the philosophical subject is concerned, while in the Western tradition philosophizing is a task done by specific, identifiable people, in the Andean tradition not only are there no philosophical texts, there are also no individuals who are identified as philosophers.³⁰⁹ The Andean subject is, in general, collective and, in particular, defined by a community, and the same is valid for philosophy. The real philosophical subject is the anonymous, collective *runa*, the Andean with their unconscious collective experiential legacy: the great collectivity of human beings, related in time and space by

³⁰⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁰⁹ Esterman devotes a paragraph to distinguishing his views explicitly from those of León Portilla.

common experience and interpretation. The professional philosopher is merely a spokesperson or a midwife of this voiceless people, the interpreter and systematizer of the para-philosophical experience of the *runa*. There is a hermeneutic loop between these two levels: the philosopher interprets and translates the materialized reflection in these multiple manifestations by means of systematic conceptualization, and the *runa* interprets this philosophy, distilled into ordered concepts, against the hermeneutic horizon of lived experience. In this sense, the author adds in a footnote, Andean philosophy can never be a purely academic subject. How the interpreting philosopher cohabits with and relates to the Andean people is of vital importance. This was doubtless his own experience as an intercultural philosopher.³¹⁰ In his view, an intercultural philosophy assumes a lived interculturality, meaning a sufficient period of cohabitation and person-to-person dialogue with the members of the other culture.

Pachasophy

As members of the community of North-West Argentina, we are particularly interested in the wisdom developed within the Andean tradition, which has exerted such an influence on our indigenous populations. To refer to this philosophy, Esterman uses the term Pachasofía (Pachasophy). It is an intercultural concept that is intended to explain Andean rationality constructed around the term *Pacha*. This term contains a multiplicity of meanings and has no translatable equivalent in our language. Philosophically it means “the universe ordered in space-time categories”. But this universe is not only physical and astronomical; it includes the world of nature to which human beings belong. It might be possible to establish an equivalence with the term “being”, for in this sense *Pacha* is what is: reality. It includes what is visible and invisible, material and immaterial, earthly and heavenly, sacred and profane. It includes both temporality and specificity. It includes *hanaq Pacha* (the space above), *kay Pacha* (the region of here and now), and *uray Pacha* (the space below). These are not distinct worlds but rather spaces in the same reality and interrelated. For this reason, Esterman proposes to translate *Pacha* by “interrelationality of all”.

³¹⁰ In the prologue to his book, Esterman claims that the work was the fruit of eight years living with the Andean *runa*.

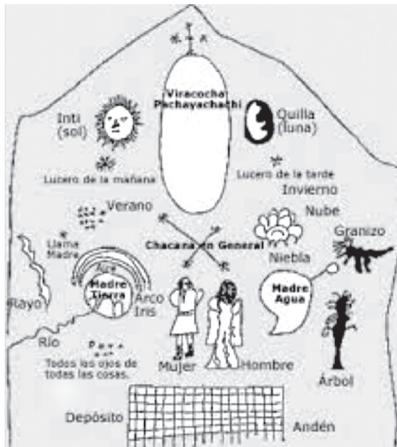
In this sense, *pacha-sophy* is “Andean philosophical knowledge concerning the ordered universe and based on certain guiding principles”.³¹¹ These principles are:

- The principle of **relatedness**. The fundamental category is not entity as entity, as in Western philosophy, but relationship. For Western philosophy, primacy lies in substance, meaning that the entities existed first and accidentally they became related. For the Andean *runa*, the universe is first and foremost a system of relationships, all dependent on one another. There are no self-sufficient entities, but rather each entity is configured within a system of relationships. This means that there are no entities that are devoid of relationships (a negative formulation); on the contrary, each entity, event or state of consciousness is immersed in multiple interrelationships with other entities, states of consciousness, events, possibilities. Reality is like a set of interrelated beings and events. This would be the unconscious axiom of Andean philosophy, from which other principles derive:
- The principle of **correspondence**. This principle affirms that a relationship of correspondence exists between the macrocosmos and the microcosmos, between the great and the small. “The cosmic order of celestial bodies, the seasons, the cycle of water, the climatic phenomena and even the divine have their correspondence (meaning that they encounter a co-relative response) in human beings and their economic, social and cultural relationships.
- The principle of **complementarity**. Each entity and event has as its counterpart a complement as a necessary condition for being whole and capable of existence. Complementarity at a cosmic level is like a polar arrangement between left and right, which in turn can be conceived of in terms of gender. The left side corresponds to the feminine and the right to the masculine. Heaven, earth, sun and moon, day and night are not exclusive counterpoints, but rather necessary complements for the affirmation of a superior, whole entity.

³¹¹ Esterman, Josef, *Filosofía quechua*, op. cit., 38.

- The principle of **reciprocity**. The principles of complementarity and correspondence express themselves at a pragmatic and ethical level as a principle of reciprocity. “To each act, a reciprocal act corresponds as a complementary contribution.”³¹² This principle rules all interrelations: human – human, human – nature, human – divine. It is a cosmic obligation, which reflects a universal order, of which humans form part. Basically, this means justice in the exchange of goods.

The Universe as a House



These principles are visualized in the drawing (1613) by Joan Santa Cruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua on the main altar at Qorikancha.³¹³ The universe is graphically represented in the shape of a house, indicating the Andean conviction that we all belong to the same family, under the same roof. Outside the house nothing exists and inside it everything is related along the spatial axes: above – below; left – right. In the upper part (*hanaq Pacha*) of the vertical axis, we see a shape in the form of an egg with the inscription *Wiracocha Pachayachachi*, which means God Maker of the Universe. We note that God is part of the universe and does not transcend it. The egg

³¹² Ibid., 39.

³¹³ The original manuscript is in a volume with catalogue No. 3169 in the National Library in Madrid: De las Relaciones de Antigüedades deste Reyno del Pirú. This contains the cosmogonic drawing. There are at least seven editions.

shape refers to the origin. Finally, it should be mentioned that this is a Christianized interpretation by Pachacuti Yamqui of the deity *Wiracocha*, which does not in itself refer to the creation. Literally, it means the one that allows us to know *Pacha*. Underneath (*kay Pacha*) we see a human couple: on the right is the man and on the left a woman. Similarly, the *Inti* or sun appears on the right and the *Killa* or moon on the left, corresponding to the man and the woman respectively. We can see that there is a relationship of correspondence between the elements above and below, and of complementarity between the elements on the right and the left of the vertical axis. In the intermediate spaces are a multiplicity of beings which are seen as *chakanas* or phenomena of transition. We can make out phenomena of transition in a horizontal direction (complementarity) and in a vertical direction (correspondence). At the intersection of the two axes there is a very special *chakana* which has the function to interrelate everything. In the drawing this *chakana* appears as a constellation of four stars which form a cross. In the stars we can read the inscription *Kuka mama* (mother coca). This indicates the interrelational importance of the coca leaf as a bridge between two extremes: above, below; left, right. The principal corresponding *chakanas* between *hanaq Pacha* and *kay Pacha* are multiple meteorological phenomena such as rain, sunrays, thunder claps, mountain tops, especially snowy ridges (*apus*), and some intermediate animals: the condor, the vicuna, the alpaca, the fox and the deer. Between these phenomena of transition, between *kay Pacha* (the world of here and now) and *uray Pacha* (the lower world or infra world), we have, in the first place, *Pachamama*, but also springs, caves, stones and a few animals of transition, among which are snakes, toads and the puma.

This representation of the universe as a house, with its elements ordered in an organic and interrelated way, constitutes a wisdom that Esterman is able to describe as *EcoSofía (EcoSophy)*, emphasizing that, basically, *EcoSofía* and *Pachasofía* are synonyms. The term *EcoSophy* highlights the interrelations that the *runa* maintains with its immediate natural surroundings at the level of *kay Pacha*. *EcoSophy* implies that there is only one house and that it should provide shelter to all men and women. There is no room here for a rationality of earning and accumulating money. The house must be looked after to maintain the necessary balance for life. The person inside is no consumer-producer but first and foremost a “carer”. The only force that produces

is *Pachamama*, and humans are only the transformers and facilitators of this production, obeying the basic principles of Pachasophy.

Good Living – Living Well

This ancestral wisdom is not only being studied, but also accepted again by indigenous peoples in the Andean region of our America. There are indigenous communities where this world view is intact as living testimony to the ancestral past. In others, social and cultural practices persist which refer back to those roots. Within this context, what turns out to be really novel is the emergence of indigenous movements which resolutely hoist this philosophy as a life wisdom offering an alternative to the capitalist model which has globalized and imposed itself as the only one possible. In this way, indigenous peoples have started to think of themselves as political subjects again with the right to live in accordance with their traditions. Many indigenous organizations have begun systematizing their reflections under the heading of Good Living or Living Well.

Let us highlight two paradigmatic experiences: that of Bolivia and that of Ecuador, which have taken on this philosophy at a political level, incorporating it into their respective Constitutions. We shall examine this through the work of two thinkers: the Bolivian Fernando Huanacuni Mamani and the Ecuadorian Alberto Acosta.

Both of them, seeking to clarify the concept of “Good Living” founded on the world views of the indigenous peoples, feel the need to distinguish this expression from that of “a better life”, which is only similar in appearance, given that it expresses an aspiration typical of capitalist societies.

Among the indigenous peoples, there has never been a concept of “development”, understood as a linear process from a something less to a something more. There is no vision of “underdevelopment” to be overcome. Nor a state of “development” to be achieved. Neither is there a concept of “poverty” associated with a lack of material goods, or of “wealth” linked to their abundance. These concepts are the domain of Western capitalist societies with their vision of an upwardly linear, individualistic life and hierarchical life structures which are competitive and yet impose homogeneity. In the concept and lifestyle associated with “a better life”, money and material assets are the

supreme value. “The better life feeds consumerism, competition and a permanent state of dissatisfaction, unequal societies, the destruction of many species and the deterioration of life as a whole.”³¹⁴ This prompts us to characterize the condition of the globalized world as all-round “bad development”. A condition that includes the so-called developed countries. “The contemporary world system functions by ‘bad development’... It is easy to see why. It is a system based on efficiency which seeks to maximize results, reduce costs and achieve the endless accumulation of capital... In other words, the global system is badly developed by dint of its own logic, and it is this logic that we must examine.”³¹⁵

The limits of this concept are increasingly striking and worrying. Natural resources cannot be treated as a condition for economic growth. Acosta reminds us that in far-off ancient times, nature was seen as a threat and a danger to human life, and that it was imperative to control it. That gave rise to the idea that humans were above nature, and that they should dominate, manipulate and take advantage of it like an object. That is why nature is considered as an economic resource and an inexhaustible source of riches. It was this same idea of domination that was used to justify the conquest of Latin America, requiring genocide among indigenous populations and the exploitation on a massive scale of their natural resources in order to accumulate wealth for the crown. Later, when independence was achieved, Latin American countries continued to exploit and export our natural resources. This vision of domination over nature is still alive today, inevitably, like DNA that cannot be overcome. “Nature is seen as a ‘natural asset’, to be tamed, exploited and, of course, commercialized. There is still a naïve belief that extractivism will become a route towards development.”³¹⁶

In this sense, good living comes across as a new way of seeing the world and of overcoming the current system. This is because it supports a human-nature relationship of interdependence, a rela-

³¹⁴ Huanacuni Mamani, Fernando, “Vivir Bien/Buen Vivir”, in: idem, *Conjunto de Visiones sobre la Postmodernidad*, Bolivia 2012, 25.

³¹⁵ Tortosa, José Maria, quoted by Alberto Acosta in: *El Buen Vivir en el camino del Post desarrollo: Una lectura desde la constitución de Monte Cristi*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Policy Paper 9, October 2010, 9.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 18.

tionship that is broken in the Western paradigm. The latter is a model for living that is individualist, whereas living well takes a community model as its premise. This vision begins by correcting anthropocentrism, claiming that we are not above but part of the *Pacha*. There, all life is important and worthy of respect.

The Andean world view has a community logic that is different from the Western individual logic. In the Andean world view there are two forces, two energies: one energy comes from the sky and the other energy comes from the earth. *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) is telluric energy, and *Pachakama* or *Pachata* (Father Cosmos) is cosmic energy: everything there was generated by the meeting of *Pachamama* and *Pachakama*. We are children of Mother Earth and Father Cosmos. We have our origin in the interaction of two forces, one female and one male; everything which exists comes from there and is interrelated.

The Western world view is individual and unintegrated because it assumes that humans are somewhat isolated from nature. This approach defines the human impact on many species which are part of the same fabric, the fabric of life.

Whereas the Andean world view is “community-based”. That word “community” itself needs to be clarified, given that in the West it basically refers to social relations, while in the Andean world view, and that of other indigenous peoples, the mountains, rivers, trees form part of the community. *Ayllu* is made up of what is visible: people, animals, plants, rivers, mountains, everything that we can see and hear. But community also embraces the invisible: our ancestors, spirits and everything beyond what we see and know. “So *Ayllu* translates and can be understood as the unity and structure of life.”³¹⁷

It is a decommercialized view of nature, which places the ethical imperative on preserving the balance of life.

This philosophy was incorporated in the Montecristi Constitution by making nature a “subject of rights”.³¹⁸ This means that instead of being treated as an object, it now has its own rights, as part of a

³¹⁷ Huanacuni Mamani, op. cit., 65.

³¹⁸ Many articles in Ecuador’s Constitution develop this concept, including Articles 14, 74, 250 and 258. In Bolivia’s Constitution we refer to Article 9, I. 6.

process which defined a broader range of subjects. Just as in the past with the evolution of human rights, this is unthinkable for those who are trapped in the dominant paradigm.

It is about a process of liberating nature and it entails profound changes. Among these changes is the transition from anthropocentrism to biocentrism, or also “socio-biocentrism”. This implies a differentiation between “human rights” and “rights of nature”.

In human rights, the focus is the human person. In individual rights, the individual obtains the recognition of rights that come before those of the state itself. In civil rights, the state recognizes those rights for citizens as part of an individualistic and individualizing status of citizenship. In economic, cultural and environmental rights, citizens are endowed with the right to enjoy fair social conditions and a healthy environment. This generates three aspects of the concept of justice: justice as impartiality (we are all equal before the law), redistributive justice or social justice, and environmental justice, which addresses society’s right to a healthy environment.

In the rights of nature the focus is on nature including human beings. Nature has its own value independently from the uses to which it is put by humans. These rights do not promote the idea of nature as untouchable (no fishing, for example). It is life systems that are promoted. “Attention is focused on ecosystems, on collectives and not individuals. You can eat meat, fish and grain, for example, as long as you assure me that systems carry on functioning with their native species.”³¹⁹ In this case, justice seeks to ensure the survival of species and ecosystems as sets, as networks of life. These rights feature as environmental rights in the Constitution of Ecuador and as rights of nature in the Constitution of Bolivia.

Important decisions derive from nature’s rights. For example, in the Ecuadorean Constitution water has the status of a fundamental right and a national strategic asset for public use, as the inalienable and imprescriptible domain of the state, closing the doors to its possible privatization. Another point in the Constitution concerns “food sovereignty”. This covers the protection of land and the appropriate use of water in favour of the thousands of small farmer-producers.

³¹⁹ Huanacuni Mamani, op. cit., 20.

What is at stake in all this is “good living”, the basis of a plurinational state closely aligned with the rights of nature.

Another Constitutional advance relates to transforming the economic perspective. In the context of “Good Living – Living Well” the basic economic value is solidarity. While the capitalist economy is individualistic and competitive and drives financial speculation, the Ecuadorean Constitution defines a social economy of solidarity³²⁰, by which “we aspire to build relations of production, exchange and cooperation that foster sufficiency (rather than efficiency) and quality, sustained by solidarity. We can speak of systemic productivity and competition, which is to say measurable in terms of advances in collectivity and in individualities grouped in often arbitrary ways.”³²¹

From State of Emergency to Political Architecting

In the framework of a world in constant transformation, and from a Latin American perspective, our aim has been to set out the processes which have taken place in the academic field and in the social struggles of indigenous peoples. In academia, drawing on the paradigm of intercultural philosophy, work was begun to recognize, recover and investigate ancestral wisdom which had been forgotten, negated by hegemonic Western rationality – the same rationality which declared in our embryonic Constitution: “the savage has been conquered: in America, he no longer has dominion nor lordship. We, Europeans by race and by civilization, are the masters of America.”³²² Nevertheless, within this dominant discursive universe, there were lucid observers who were able to recognize the continued existence of wisdom in the life of our peasant societies, and among the indigenous peoples who still live and organize themselves in accordance with their ancestral roots.

These are the peoples who, after years of humiliation and resistance, in the midst of a world system in crisis, with cracks appearing everywhere, are rising up and proposing a change of direction, a modification of our ways of life. They are fighting for

³²⁰ Cf. Constitution of Ecuador, Article 283, Article 290/2, Article 319.

³²¹ Huanacuni Mamani, *op. cit.*, 23.

³²² Bautista Alberdi, Juan, *Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Organización Política de la Republica Argentina*, Buenos Aires 1996, 85.

another possible world. They invite us to re-establish the harmony and balance of life. The universe is our common house, and within it the whole of life, not only that of humans, deserves respect and consideration. Esterman formulated the categorical imperative of “Good Living – Living Well”: “Always act according to the maxim whereby human life in dignity (satisfaction of basic needs; social, political and cultural self-determination; respect and equal opportunities) can be guaranteed for all human beings in the present and in the future, while at the same time ensuring the survival of planet Earth. And this means that a corresponding political and economic strategy must be compatible with the cosmos, with future generations, with the spiritual, religious world and, above all, with the poor.”³²³

³²³ Cf. Esterman, Josef, *EcoSofia Andina: un paradigma alternativo de convivencia cósmica y de Vivir Bien*, FAIA, Vol. II, Nos. IX–X, 2013.

Responding to the Exaggerations of Secularization and Fundamentalism

Archbishop Thomas Menampampil

Asians are generally known to be very religious. And yet Western secular ideologies of dialectical materialism and capitalistic materialism have influenced Asian life and thought for over a century. Today the global society finds itself in a world where religion is marginalized in the economic, political, educational, professional and recreational spaces of life; where again the faith dimension is carefully excluded from social reflection; where, unfortunately also, religious faith is often held up for public ridicule and militant atheism actively propagated.

There is a resurgence of religion in Asia in reaction. Aggressive secularism has provoked aggressive religiosity into existence. It has given birth to religious fundamentalism which is daily growing more conservative in outlook, radically aggressive in relationships, and fiercely fanatic in self-expression. One exaggeration leads to another. Cynicism provokes cynicism, venom produces venom, anger generates anger. Religious motivations get mixed up with racial and national pride, memories of historic injuries, sense of humiliation, perceptions of current injustice, self-interest of individual leaders or dominant groups. Human future moves into uncertain hands.

History has often taken humanity by surprise. Notice, for example, that in the year 650 there were 440 dioceses in Anatolia, the present-day Turkey.³²⁴ Where are they now? In 1914, 40% of the area covered by Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey were Christian; today less than 2%. One third of displaced Palestinians were Christians.³²⁵ But what has happened to these communities? Will what happened to the Christians in Ottoman Empire happen to

³²⁴ Cf. Küng, Hans, *Islam*, Oxford 2007, 403.

³²⁵ Cf. Bruce, Steve, *Secularization*, London 2011, 191.

the Christians of Africa and Asia?³²⁶ Or, with increasing Asian immigration to the West, will something similar happen to the Christian West itself?

Swami Vivekananda pointed out that the leadership of the Muslim Turks were originally Buddhist. Those whom they conquered were also Buddhist. But all these communities have disappeared.³²⁷ Similarly, the people of the present day of Bangladesh practiced some form of Buddhism earlier. But they are all Muslims today.³²⁸

The Positive Consequences of Secularization

However, secularization still remains an expanding force. As change of religion was a possibility in earlier times, loss of religion is a greater possibility today. The forces of secularization are threatening all religions, unconsciously giving rise to religious radicals.

No one needs to doubt the validity of a secular point of view in public life. In fact, Judaism and Christianity were among the first to make an effort to remove from religion what did not stand the test of good sense and reason, when they launched a campaign against superstitions, rejecting belief in a multiplicity of gods, spirits, image worship, deification of natural forces, occult practices and magic.³²⁹ They questioned even legitimate expressions of religious faith like fasts, sacrifices and holocausts, if these lacked authenticity or ignored injustice.

Hence it is evident that Christianity is not opposed to a secular perspective. In fact, many scholars hold that the present Western thrust towards secularization derives from Thomas Aquinas who introduced to Europe Aristotle's concept of the autonomy of human reason. Thomas' contention that philosophy has its own autonomy because it belongs to the natural order set in motion a gradual shift from the prevalent theological abstractions to the creaturely and empirical, to rational analysis and scientific research.³³⁰ From this

³²⁶ Cf. Elst, Koenraad, *Decolonizing the Hindu Mind: Ideological Development of Hindu Revivalism*, New Delhi 2001, 373.

³²⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 338.

³²⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 379.

³²⁹ Cf. 1 Kings 18; 1 Sam 28:3–25.

³³⁰ Cf. Küng, Hans, *Christianity*, London 1995, 419.

starting point arise the idea of the 'natural man and free citizen' and the urge for "technical invention, material prosperity, trade crafts, investment, banking".³³¹

From the Thomistic understanding of the 'autonomy of reason,' Enlightenment thinkers moved ahead to its total independence from religion. The end result was that secular thinkers gave up not only the guidance of the Catholic Church that Reformation rejected, but also the spiritual vision of the Reformation Churches.³³² Not only were many of the religious and moral perceptions embedded in Christian tradition discarded one by one, but every new insight that dawned in the mind of man was accepted in haste, tried out without adequate reflection, and taken to the extreme: Marxism, liberalism, libertinism, collectivism, individualism, atheism, mysticism, agnosticism, syncretism, fundamentalism and relativism.³³³

The social advantages to be derived from a secular vision of society like the recognition of the dignity of the individual and equality of all citizens before the law were too precious to be underestimated. The economic advantages, too, were evident: the advance of science and technology, division of labour, specialization, mechanization, rationalization, and automation. These processes gave a great impetus to large-scale production and brought cheaper goods to the market, and made life more comfortable. The benefits were too many to be ignored.

Negative Consequences of Secularization

However, exaggerated forms of secularization gave rise to a materialistic worldview, over-emphasizing economic expansion. The mobility of people due to the growth of commerce and industries led to the enfeebling of social bonds typical of Asia, like those of the extended family, village school and neighbourhood. The result was the breakup of families and communities, erosion of cultures and loss of ethical values. This reduced the effectiveness of the traditional patterns of social formation and the handing on of religious convictions and social norms from one generation to the next. The same thing happened to the handing on of the Faith and traditional ethical values.

³³¹ Küng, Hans, *op. cit.*, 383; *Ibid.*, *Das Christenium: Wesen und Geschichte*, 469.

³³² Cf. Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge 2007, 262.

³³³ Cf. Jankunas, *Gedeminar, Dictatorship of Relativism*, New York 2011, 190.

We tend to forget that values are generated in organic communities based on ethnicity, culture and religion. In modern society, on the contrary, individuals find themselves in impersonal social entities like the state, party, class, movements, economic network, and a globalized world, that have no capacity to generate values. Gradually ardent consumerism takes the place of fervent faith that used to be found in traditional families. The contraceptive revolution shakes up all accepted principles of sexual morality, paving the way to divorce and abortion. Excessive individualization undermines the meaning and purposefulness of social life, creating a sense of alienation, insecurity and worthlessness, leading to drugs, sex and suicide.

The Response of Pastoral Leaders

Looking back, we may have to admit that ordinary Christians did not know how to handle the secularizing trends in their society except to remain hopelessly conservative. Not many developed the skill for dialoguing with the new ideas generated by the expansion of secular beliefs, sciences, technology, industry, freedom, autonomy, reason, progress. Pastoral leaders in particular had the anxiety of taking along with them the less enlightened and more conservative crowds of believers. Their cautious approach to new thinking made them look more traditional than they actually were.

This is not to deny the impressive role played by many Christian intellectuals or activists. Some of them, however, plunged themselves headlong into the secular field without a sense of responsibility and became secularized themselves. Others turned ultra-conservative in reaction.

Secularization in Asia

The first encounter of Asia with secularization was during the colonial period. The history of that period remains painful. However, the exposure of Asia to Western secular thinking, political styles, economic skills and modern values helped the nations of this continent to modernize themselves. Democracy, equality before law, separation of church and state, right to participation in decision-making, freedom of expression, basic human rights, and equal access to economic opportunities... these concepts proved to be of immense value to Asian societies that were longing for freedom

and development. Western secular education was welcomed with enthusiasm.

In fact, what the Asian Christian minority asks for today is a secular government, by which they do not mean a government that denies spiritual values or persecutes religious believers, but one that deals with every religious community with equal respect and extends protection even to minority communities. Several governments in Asia claim to be secular, but not all of them actually are.

But there have been negative consequences to secularization as well. The younger generation is drawn in the direction of religious indifference on the one hand or fundamentalism on the other. Some Catholic youths are reported to have forgotten the basics of Faith and others to have shifted to Pentecostalism in reaction.

Studies show unemployed Hindu and Muslim youth readily joining radical outfits like the *Bajrang dal*, *Al Qaeda* or *ISIS*, when they see all other doors close around them. Developing countries with a high youth proportion are not able to offer adequate opportunities for education and employment to their youth, and consequently these are easily led into reckless ideologies, or religious or ethnic violence. A creative response to this situation would be to educate, train and motivate such young people to responsible life and committed citizenship.

Addressing the Exaggerations of Fundamentalism Intelligently

a) Addressing Muslim Sensitivity with Respect

The belittling of religion by secular-minded persons like Christopher Hitchens or Richard Dawkins did invite a literary response that pointed to the weakness of their arguments. But the mocking of religious leaders, burning of religious books, satirizing religious belief have proved themselves to be culturally insensitive, even directly provocative.

Samuel Huntington had already predicted that an aggressive Islam would replace an aggressive Communist alliance.

Memories associated with colonial times and emotions related to the exploitation of natural resources had created a sensitive context. But the recent satirizing of Islam added fuel to the fire. The world has been stunned by the tragedies at Bali, Casablanca, Riyadh, Istanbul,

Madrid, London and recently, Paris. Religious Fundamentalism rises to new heights to respond to Secular Fundamentalism.

There are two ways of looking at issues related to this new world phenomenon. One approach would be to trace extremist groups to their historic origins, study the statements of their most radical leaders, list the horrors that they have inflicted on others, and sit back in helplessness wondering how to approach this gigantic problem... or to equip oneself with determination for a prolonged struggle, keeping to the norm 'eye for an eye...'

A creative and spiritually-inspired approach would be different. I would propose that we explore the psycho-social reasons for the emergence of this terrible phenomenon in modern times, observe the emotional content of what is being said and done, attempt bringing down the anger by making an effort to remove causes within possibility, and engage people in a dialogue once the emotions are down. We need today persons who can demolish walls of prejudice and build bridges of dialogue.³³⁴

Ernest Renan used to say that nations must forget the past, forgive each other, and move forward. Religious and ethnic groups today must do precisely that. Representatives of every section of the global society must make it possible: intellectuals, media men, politicians, business leaders, religious personnel, students, associations. Arnold Toynbee in his voluminous *Study of History* argues that the collective violence of a society (nation, civilizational block) in one direction is a response to an earlier violence in the opposite direction.

Negative memories of the past harden. But they can also be changed. What is most important is to cultivate sensitivity in sensitive matters. Neither Salmon Rushdie's provocative writings, nor the Danish cartoons, nor even Charlie Hebdo's satire have made a positive contribution in this respect.

In response to the Paris tragedy, many nations have gone for inflated defense budgets at the expense of funds for health and education. They would have acted more perceptively putting a little more of energy and resources into promoting religious and cultural

³³⁴ Cf. Küng, Hans, op. cit., XXIV.

sensitivity among their people and spending some time on self-examination whether they are promoting their own collective interest in a questionable manner.

Immanuel Kant had prophesied over a century ago that societies had become so interdependent economically and in other ways, that violence (war) would be damaging to the aggressor himself. "Progress by Ideas" is what Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize winner, would call "Public Reasoning." Such a secular message can serve as a thought-provoker for all, whether they be political stalwarts and religious champions.

b) Addressing Hindu Sensitivity with Respect

Though the Hindus claim that they cannot be called fundamentalists if the literal interpretation of the scriptures is the criterion, the unyielding resistance to reform on the part of a section of them has earned them the title fundamentalists.³³⁵ Of late they have shown that they are capable of violence, too. However, in all fairness we ought to give them a hearing before we take a rigid stand in judging their public position.

It is only right that we pay attention to the collective psyche of an aggrieved community first of all. That is being creative. A Hindu-sympathizer, Koenraad Elst, reminds us that for nearly a millennium Hindu society has felt humiliated through the political, ideological and psychological domination of Muslim and European powers.³³⁶ They have come to believe that they have been taken advantage of because of their mild nature. Further, they feel culturally humbled. Such self-alienation has led many Hindus to what may be called "self-hatred" and an inferiority complex.³³⁷ This in turn has given rise to exaggerated forms of self-assertion and aggressiveness towards others in reaction.

However, our Hindu friends must feel encouraged when they remember that there must be some inner worth in their religion if it survived more than seven centuries under Islamic rule, whilst the great civilizations of Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Persia and vast areas

³³⁵ Cf. Elst, Koenraad, *The Saffron Swastika*, New Delhi 2001, 13.

³³⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 9.

³³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 237.

of Byzantine Empire lost their original identity despite their pristine greatness. Such an awareness itself provides a door to confident dialogue.

A Creative Response: Give Farsightedness a Chance and “Put the Sword Back in its Place” (Jn 18:11)

A creative response to secularization and fundamentalism would be to develop an intelligent and respectful approach to persons of religious faith and, equally, to those who hold a secular worldview. Solutions come when everyone brings a bit of balance into everything. That is the answer we can give to all those who exaggerate.

Jesus tells us to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God; which means, to every sphere of human activity what is its due and central attention to what is central to humanity. However, many lessons that Jesus teaches are not easy. He tells us to forgive. That is going to be hard. We ought to ask for forgiveness as Pope John Paul II did on several occasions. We need to create a climate in society for mutual forgiveness. The most daring challenge before the Christian missionary today is the healing of hurt memories and creation of a climate for dialogue. He/she must lead society to its depths.

Creativity always holds an element of surprise. Jesus was full of surprises. His message stunned his listeners, his answers amazed them, his authority had unexplainable power. He knew how to be relevant to changing situations, his response adapted to needs and possibilities. He invariably remained unpredictable: he challenges the one who slaps him, he is silent before Herod, he dialogues with Pilate. He converts Peter with a look, he forgives those who put him to death. Christian creativity is shaped after this model. Jesus' style of being creative costs. However, it is guided by the Spirit who does not only prompt innovative ideas but supplies the needed strength.

Last year was the Centenary year of the birth of Bro. Roger of Taizé. Bro. Roger felt drawn to bring healing to the divided Christian Family in his own original manner. His creative approach got Christians to reflect. He invited them to their depths and a new vision of the future.

Can we develop a sense of mission to bring healing to a divided Human Family? Can we work towards a new understanding of history that will motivate us for such a mission? Maybe this mission has to be fulfilled not at the glamorous level, but at the level of the deeper psyche, the collective unconscious. Its success will depend more on depth of reflection, power of symbols, and quality of relationships than in the heat of debates or manoeuvres of power. It will allow no room for confrontations and mutual accusations (1 Pet 2:22-24), only for sensitive clarifications.

Indeed, a new atmosphere of trust and mutual confidence can be brought into existence. A new process can be set in motion³³⁸ with long term consequences. The gradualness of its progress may look like the slow growth of a plant (Mk 4:26-29) or of a mustard seed (Mk 4:301-31). But one day, the prophecy of Micah about turning swords into ploughs will be fulfilled 4:3-4. For this we need to reinterpret the zeal described in Ps 139:21-22 into profound concern for others expressed at Lk 6:27-36; Mt 5:43-48 and commitment to the common good and the collective future of humanity. We can draw the collective thinking of society to new directions and deeper levels.

Appealing to the Good Sense of the Opponent

“Offering the other cheek,” in its true meaning, is not a sign of timidity or passivity. It stands for confidence in the goodness of the opponent, and consequently for respect. It is a pointer to one's own dignity and conviction about one's cause. It is a warm-hearted appeal to the better sense of the aggressor, inviting him to rethink his approach and change. It means drawing persons/societies to reveal their better selves. This is the most urgently needed mission in the world today.

It is true, occasionally we may have to work as “lambs among wolves” (Lk 10:3). While acting gentle as “doves,” we shall also learn to be cautious as “serpents” (Mt 10:16), studying changing trends in the historic processes and influencing thoughts that give them direction.

³³⁸ Cf. Pope Francis, Apostolic letter *Evangelii Gaudium* about the promulgation of the gospel in *Today's World*, 24 November 2013, Announcements of the Holy See, No. 194, Bonn 2013, 222–224.

The Art of Persuasion, the Need for Bridge-builders, Culture-translators

Fortunately, even in the secular field, the collective thinking of society is moving in the direction of moderate positions, opposing all sorts of antagonisms and encouraging good neighbourliness, peaceful co-existence of religions, cultures, and ideologies. Asian cultures always fostered tolerance and had an 'inclusive' attitude towards each other and to different points of view. In this climate of openness, Jesus' message of peace, too, finds it possible to make itself heard.

But it must be offered in persuasive tones and in a creative manner. Unfortunately we have long lost the Art of Persuasion. We need to rediscover it and give it precedence over the art of denunciation. "What our age needs above all are bridge-builders who, despite all difficulties, clashes and confrontations, have a shared worldview, ethical values and attitudes".³³⁹

Searching for Convincing Paths towards Ultimate Human Destiny

The creative message with which we wish to shake the world should sound genuinely 'human,' have clear social relevance, and be supported with personal witness. That is how mysticism comes to the frontier of action. Can Evangelizers live a life which itself will evoke reflections about ultimate human destiny and the convincing path towards it in Christ?

Even an ardent Secularist will learn to appreciate Christian convictions when evidence will show that these stand for the very type of Humanism in which he believes: being Human to the Full. That is the way to live our Faith to the Full as well. When that happens, genuine Religiosity and valid Secularity will discover how much they need each other, and various religious traditions will discover how close they are at the core.

Creation and Responsibility

³³⁹ Küng, Hans, Islam, Oxford 2007, 544; Ibid., Der Islam: Geschichte, Gegenwart, Zukunft, op. cit., 648.

And Apple Trees still have to be planted. Journeying together down the Road to Ecological, Social and Economic Responsibility

Klaus Vellguth

The year 2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and it will undoubtedly be an occasion for reflection on the spirituality and justice of creation as well as for consideration of our ecological, social and economic responsibility. In this connection a book published in Germany, which caused quite a stir, springs to mind. Its title *Then Let us Plant an Apple Tree*³⁴⁰ – a quote from Martin Luther – pinpoints the ecological and economic issues that will decide on mankind's future in the one global *oikos*. The science journalist, Hoimar von Ditfurth, chose the quotation over thirty years ago in deliberate reference to the reformer Luther, who is alleged to have said: 'If I knew the world was to end tomorrow, I would still plant an apple tree today'. Ditfurth's book is intended to stir its readers into action. He examines the destruction of the environment, the population explosion and the threat of a nuclear war and reiterates the warning issued over a decade earlier by the Club of Rome in its report on *The Limits to Growth* (1972)³⁴¹, over 30 million copies of which have been sold worldwide.³⁴²

Both the report on *The Limits to Growth* and the book *Then Let us Plant an Apple Tree* had a long-term impact on the environmental and peace movements in Germany at the end of the 20th century. It is heartening that, in the discussions at the time, the advocates of fun-

³⁴⁰ von Ditfurth, Hoimar, So laßt uns denn ein Apfelbäumchen pflanzen, Hamburg 1985.

³⁴¹ Meadows, Donella/Meadows, Dennis, *The Limits to Growth* 1972, Stuttgart 1987.

³⁴² The Club of Rome's report contained calculations showing that exponential growth in the world's population, industrialisation, environmental pollution, food production and resource depletion would result in the limits to growth being reached within a hundred years. Cf. also Lienkamp, Andreas, "Schöpfung und Ökologie in Gaudium et spes: Eine Relecture aus christlich-umweltethischer Perspektive", in: Böttigheimer, Christoph/Dausner, René (eds.), *Vaticanum 21: Die bleibenden Aufgaben des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils im 21. Jahrhundert*, Freiburg 2016, 586–612.

damentalist escapism (in the sense of ‘complacent ideological ethics’) did not hold sway. Instead, strategies in keeping with ‘responsible ethics’³⁴³ were devised to meet the ecological challenges of the present and to map out solutions for a sustainable economy in the future. In an age in which common business activities in the context of an overall economic policy can only be pursued responsibly if a global perspective is adopted (with a view to the category of ‘space’) and an inter-generational perspective taken (with a view to the category of ‘time’), the crucial question arises as to the nature of a green economy in which goods and services can be supplied without the externalisation of key cost factors (such as ecological costs) to other geographical regions or to future generations. This is precisely the issue Hoimar von Ditfurth raised in his widely-read book thirty years ago. The underlying concept here is the economic ‘polluter pays’ principle, which Pope Francis endorses in his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’*. What is at stake here ultimately is the exercise of inter and intra-generational responsibility in the economy and the provision of inter and intra-generational justice³⁴⁴ in the age of globalisation without detriment to the poor or to future generations, i.e. those who are unable to defend themselves.

Reconciling the environment and the economy

At the end of the day the issue at stake is how the economy and the environment can be harmonised in the one *oikos* in such a way that present and future generations can co-exist and survive. In his environmental encyclical *Laudato si’* Pope Francis says with regard to the issue of responsible economic activity that ‘the environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces.’³⁴⁵ Ottmar Edenhofer, Director of the Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change, agrees with the Holy Father: “The Pope is right. The markets will not protect the

³⁴³ Cf. Jonas, Hans, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*, Frankfurt on the Main 1979.

³⁴⁴ Pope Francis has criticised individual countries for putting national interests above the global common good. Cf. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’* of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home, No. 169. Referred to hereinafter as LS, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html (31.07.2017); Cf. Kruij, Gerhard, “Ein dramatischer Appell: Die Umwelt-Zenkylika des Papstes”, in: *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 69 (2015) 7, 341–344, here 343.

³⁴⁵ LS 190.

environment of their own accord or guarantee future generations the living conditions they need. That’s why economists insist that economic activities should not be pursued at the expense of future generations or to the detriment of third parties.³⁴⁶ But what might be the nature of an economic system which neither ignores nor demonises³⁴⁷ the laws of the market (which do not ‘fall from the skies’ but are, at best, formulated consciously or unconsciously on the basis of anthropological observations³⁴⁸ that in reality have mostly ‘coagulated’ unconsciously into convictions)? To ignore the laws of the market in escapist fashion or to demonise them on ideological grounds merely ducks the issue of responsibility for constructive economic management, since no attempt is made to really use or design the laws of the market in such a way that a framework for the development of a green economy can be established which will ensure present and future generations an acceptable living environment.³⁴⁹

Sustainability is a term which has been increasingly used in recent years with regard to the survival of mankind. It comes from the world of forestry and implies first of all that resources should only be used to the extent that they can be replaced. The term found its way into the development policy debate at about the time a United Nations commission headed by the former Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland, mapped out long-term perspectives for an environmentally-friendly development policy in

³⁴⁶ Cf. Edenhofer, Ottmar, “Der Himmel gehört uns allen’: Ein Gespräch mit dem Klima-Ökonomen Ottmar Edenhofer über die UN-Konferenz und die Umwelt-Zenkylika *Laudato si’*”, in: *Herder Korrespondenz*, No. 70 (2016) 2, 17–21, here 18.

³⁴⁷ Cf. Mack, Elke, “Tötet die Wirtschaft wirklich? Katholische Wirtschaftsethik zwischen dem II. Vatikanum und *Laudato Si’*”, in: *Theologie der Gegenwart*, No. 58 (2015) 4, 303–316.

³⁴⁸ Talking to Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, Daisaku Ikeda – President of Soka Gakkai International, a lay Buddhist association, and holder of the United Nations Peace Prize – had the following to say on this matter: ‘The basic model of human nature developed by the global market economy is that of the *homo oeconomicus*, i.e. the human being driven by the logic of profit and self-interest. And there can be no denying that this tendency does exist in people.’ (Daisaku Ikeda, quoted from: von Weizsäcker, Ernst Ulrich/Ikeda, Daisaku, *Was sind wir uns wert? Gespräche über Energie und Nachhaltigkeit*, Freiburg 2016, 21). This anthropological statement tallies with the results of research into altruism. Cf. Karylowski, Jerzy, “Focus of Attention and Altruism: Endocentric and exocentric Sources of Altruistic Behaviour”, in: Staub, Erwin/Bar-Tal, Daniel/Karylowski, Jerzy/Reykowski, Janusz (eds.), *Development and Maintenance of pro-social Behaviour*, New York 1984, 139–154; Hunt, Morton, *The Compassionate Beast: The Scientific Inquiry into Human Nature*, New York 1991; Renwick Monroe, Kristen, “A Fat Lady in a Corset: Altruism and Social Theory”, in: *American Journal of Political Science*, No. 38 (1994), 861–893.

³⁴⁹ Cf. Mack, Elke, op. cit.

the last quarter of the 20th century. The work of this commission coincided more or less with the publication of the book *Then Let us Plant an Apple Tree*. The commission's final document *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report (published in 1987), revolves around the need for sustainable development. What made it special was that it put development policy objectives on a par with social and economic development targets. This was reflected in the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals³⁵⁰ to be achieved over a period of fifteen years beginning on 1 January 2016. The UN document can be seen as a key milestone in the identification of future prospects against the background of the ecological crisis in the age of globalisation.

Sustainable Development Goals (the official title is *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*³⁵¹) builds on the previous Millennium Development Goals, although the focus is now not just on social development but also, and in particular, on sustainability.³⁵² Apart from social and economic targets, special consideration is given to ecological aspects in the development goals. These goals highlight economic growth, the reduction of disparities in living standards, efforts to bring about equality of opportunity, the sustainable use of natural resources and the preservation of the global ecosystem. Account is taken of the aspects of food security and sustainable agriculture as well as of water and sanitation, energy, education, poverty eradication, health, climate change, environment/management of natural resources and employment.³⁵³ What is important, especially from the point of view of ethical responsibility, is that grand proclamations expressed in the form of non-measurable intentions, declarations of intent and general statements were dispensed with entirely. Instead, sustainable development goals were defined which are specific,

³⁵⁰ Cf. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> (10.12.2016).

³⁵¹ United Nations General Assembly, Seventieth Session, Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E (31.07.2017).

³⁵² United Nations, The Future We Want: Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 27 July 2012, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/288&Lang=E (9.12.2016).

³⁵³ United Nations, Secretary-General's Initial Input to the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1494sgreportsdgs.pdf> (31.07.2017).

demanding and realistic and, above all, measurable and bound to a specific deadline. A total of 169 global targets were formulated for the Agenda 2030. These are to be put into practice at the national level in the years to come.

The Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*

Pope Francis published his second encyclical letter at around the time the Sustainable Development Goals were agreed. In it he turns his attention to the social, ecological and economic challenges at the dawn of the third millennium. While *Laudato Si'* does address ecological issues at a crucial point, it cannot be reduced merely to an environmental encyclical. The time it was published is important for the way it should be interpreted, because it points to the context in which the encyclical needs to be read (and understood). Pope Francis' encyclical on Care for our Common Home, dated 24 May 2015, was published simultaneously in eight languages on 18 June 2015.³⁵⁴ The date was carefully chosen. On the one hand, it was shortly after the end of the G7 conference at Schloß Elmau in Bavaria in June 2015, at which the heads of government of the strongest economic nations reached an epoch-making agreement on the decarbonisation of the global economy. On the other hand, it was a few months prior to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in New York in September 2015 and six months before the start of the UN Conference on Climate Change in Paris in December 2015.³⁵⁵ Pope Francis deemed it important, especially with regard to the UN Conference on Climate Change in Paris, that the environmental encyclical he had announced at the beginning of his pontificate in 2013 should be published in good time so that it might have an influence on the course of this crucial conference for the future of all mankind. Thus, at a press conference in mid-January 2015 during a trip to the Philippines, Pope Francis noted with regard to the pending encyclical: 'It is important that there should be a certain

³⁵⁴ The encyclical letter was presented in Rome by Cardinal Peter Turkson; the Orthodox Metropolitan of Pergamo, Giovanni Zizioulas; the German climate expert, Hans Joachim Schellnhuber; the president of the US Catholic Relief Services, Carolyn Woo; and the Italian primary school teacher, Valeria Martano.

³⁵⁵ Cf. Edenhofer, Ottmar/Flachland, Christian, "Laudato Si': Die Sorge um die globalen Gemeinschaftsgüter", in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, No. 140 (2015) 9, 579–591; Büker, Markus, "Eine gerechte Welt ist möglich: Laudato Si' – die Sozial- und Umweltenyzklika", in: idem (ed.), *Anstiftung zur Rettung der Welt: Ein Jahr Enzyklika Laudato Si'*, Aachen 2016, 2–3, here 3.

interval between its publication and the meeting in Paris so that it can make a contribution.³⁵⁶

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis voices his concern regarding a responsible approach to creation and the development of a just world economic order giving all people in the common *oikos* a fair share of the global goods of the atmosphere and the water as well as the regional goods of the mineral resources, forests, etc.³⁵⁷ He strives for intra and inter-generational social justice and ecological responsibility. In his analyses – especially with regard to the debate on climate change – Pope Francis is very much abreast of the times, this being reflected, for instance, in the positive reception given to the encyclical in leading scientific journals such as *Nature* and *Science*.³⁵⁸

The fact that the perspective of the southern hemisphere is prominent in the encyclical *Laudato Si'* is due primarily to Pope Francis' commissioning of the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Cardinal Peter Turkson from Ghana, to prepare an initial draft. Turkson, who had been regarded as *papabile* in the election of a successor to Benedict XVI, had previously made himself a name by publicly denouncing the ecologically harmful methods used in the exploitation of mineral resources in Ghana and highlighting the consequences for the living conditions of those affected in Africa. Turkson had repeatedly pointed out that the deterioration of living conditions in Africa would have climatic and social effects on living conditions in Europe and America, since migration pressure from the countries of the South would heighten the impact on the countries in the North.³⁵⁹ Also involved in the elaboration of the environmental encyclical was Bishop Erwin Kräutler from Brazil. Active in the past

³⁵⁶ Pope Francis, quoted from: http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/03/23/papst_feilt_an_seiner_zweiten_encyklika/1131395 (9.12.2016).

³⁵⁷ LS 13, 41.

³⁵⁸ Cf. the editorials 'Hope from the Pope' in *Nature* of 25 June 2015 and 'The Pope tackles sustainability' in *Science* of 19. September 2015. Edenhofer, Ottmar/Flachsland, Christian, op. cit., 580. Certain economic statements in the encyclical are problematical, however. In saying that 'the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth' (LS 193), Pope Francis is inferring that there is a causal connection here which economists cannot explain. Cf. Bormann, Franz-Josef, "Die Enzyklika *Laudato Si'*: Eine Aufforderung zum Umdenken?", in: *Pastoralblatt*, No. 68 (2016) 8, 240–247, here 244.

³⁵⁹ Patzek, Martin, *Laudato Si' – Ein neuer Sonnengesang? Franz von Assisi und der Bischof von Rom*, in: *Pastoralblatt*, No. 68 (2016) 1, 17–23, here 20.

on behalf of the original inhabitants and in defence of the Amazon rain forest, he was honoured for his dedication and commitment with the Alternative Nobel Prize. Pope Francis has also included in his encyclical (the final version of which bears his personal signature – not least in its clear-cut formulations) numerous statements made by bishops' conferences around the world. He quotes from declarations made by bishops' conferences in Argentina, Asia, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, the Dominican Republic, Japan, Latin America and the Caribbean, Mexico, New Zealand, Paraguay, the Philippines, Portugal, South Africa and the United States.³⁶⁰

Worthy of note is the audience to which the pontifical encyclical is addressed. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis speaks not just to all Catholics or all Christian believers, but also to 'every person living on this planet'³⁶¹ in order to 'enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.'³⁶² ³⁶³ In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis is guided in methodical terms – this being a further indication of his personal signature – by the familiar three-step method of looking, judging and acting, which has been regarded as a key principle for methodical structuring in Christian social ethics ever since the publication of the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* by Pope John XXIII.

Laudato Si' consists of a preface, six chapters and a spiritual conclusion.³⁶⁴ In Chapter One³⁶⁵, the Pope addresses the world's environmental problems before going on in Chapter Two³⁶⁶ to interpret them in the light of the Gospel and in Chapter Three³⁶⁷ in the context of his understanding of globalisation. In Chapter Four³⁶⁸,

³⁶⁰ The fact that Pope Francis draws exclusively on statements made by national or continental bishops' conferences can be explained by the absence of any prior systematic treatment of climate change in any apostolic exhortation. Cf. Edenhofer, Ottmar/Flachsland, Christian, *Laudato si': Die Sorge um die globalen Gemeinschaftsgüter*, op. cit. 580.

³⁶¹ LS 3.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ Cf. Patzek, Martin, *Laudato Si' – Ein neuer Sonnengesang? Franz von Assisi und der Bischof von Rom*, in: op. cit., 20.

³⁶⁴ The encyclical concludes, as is appropriate for the target audience, with a prayer for our earth which can be said inter-denominationally and a final Christian prayer (not in favour of but in surmounting anthropocentrism) in union with creation.

³⁶⁵ Chapter One: What is Happening to our Common Home (LS 17–61).

³⁶⁶ Chapter Two: The Gospel of Creation (LS 62–100).

³⁶⁷ Chapter Three: The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis (LS 101–136).

³⁶⁸ Chapter Four: Integral Ecology (LS 137–162).

Pope Francis develops ethical guidelines before dealing in Chapter Five³⁶⁹ and Chapter Six³⁷⁰ with motivations for action and (in some cases astonishingly specific³⁷¹) options for action.³⁷² Here he ties environmental issues very closely to economic questions and issues of justice, appealing to everyone to be conscious of the global challenges facing mankind at the start of the third millennium. ‘The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. ... Particular appreciation is owed to those who tirelessly seek to resolve the tragic effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the world’s poorest.’³⁷³ Pope Francis confronts all those who refute any change in the climate, describing its denial as an expression of hidden power interests. This earned him fierce criticism from the United States, for example.³⁷⁴ Pope Francis points out that poor people, above all, are affected by the consequences of climate change, because their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry.³⁷⁵ Moreover, he sees the impacts of water scarcity, air pollution and the loss of biodiversity in particular on the marginalised, since these go hand in hand with increasing migration flows and wars even.³⁷⁶

³⁶⁹ Chapter Five: Lines of Approach and Action (LS 163–201).

³⁷⁰ Chapter Six: Ecological Education and Spirituality (LS 202–246).

³⁷¹ The formulation of specific options for action has led to this passage in the encyclical being discredited by some as ‘naive eco-romanticism’. In actual fact, however, Pope Francis is not concerned with providing an approach to resolving the global ecological challenges along the lines of a cause-and-effect assessment. Such an insinuation fails to recognise that, in drawing up the encyclical, Pope Francis drew on the competent advice of renowned consultants (e.g. representatives of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research) and, in describing the ecological challenges, took due account of the scientific state of the art. As regards his specific proposals for action, Pope Francis is concerned rather to show by way of example how each and every one of us can assume personal responsibility for the environment rather than to simply point a finger at others (institutions, systems, players, etc.).

³⁷² LS 180, 211.

³⁷³ LS 13.

³⁷⁴ LS 54, 135, 188; cf. Kruij, Gerhard, “Ein dramatischer Appell: Die neue Umwelt-Enzyklika des Papstes”, in: Herder Korrespondenz, No. 69 (2015) 7, 341–344, here 341; Tuschen, Stefan, “Wieder die blinde Technikgläubigkeit: Kulturwandel statt Klimawandel”, in: Bükler, Markus (ed.), Antstiftung zur Rettung der Welt: Ein Jahr Enzyklika *Laudato Si’*, Aachen 2016, 4–7.

³⁷⁵ LS 25.

³⁷⁶ LS 57.

It is perhaps debatable whether the poor are worst affected by global climate change and the worldwide increase in air pollution. However, that poverty and ecological issues, especially climate protection, are closely intertwined is made dramatically apparent by the living conditions of people in China, India and other countries that have witnessed rapid economic growth. People in these countries suffer from local air pollution caused by the energy emissions connected with economic growth. Thus Pope Francis pleads in his encyclical for a responsible approach to the climate and the atmosphere, which he regards as ‘a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.’³⁷⁷ He advances similar arguments with respect to the oceans.³⁷⁸

Clearly, it is not the task of an encyclical to produce scientific findings³⁷⁹ (but certainly to respond to them) or to postulate political strategies. Rather it should formulate objectives, specify norms and criteria and suggest attitudes. Be that as it may, the date of publication of the encyclical does highlight the political context in which it should be read. The international community of states had already agreed on preventing excessive global warming by limiting it to two degrees Centigrade above the pre-industrial level. The report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that, if this target is to be achieved, global cumulative emissions of carbon dioxide must be limited to around one thousand gigatonnes. Just how ambitious this target is can be seen from the fact that around 35 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide were emitted in the year 2013 alone. In other words, in 2013 alone 3.5 percent of the total amount of space available for the absorption of carbon dioxide in the ‘atmospheric storage space’ was used up. This is all the more alarming in that, despite all the commitments to climate protection, annual global emissions have continued to climb. Normative speeches are, therefore, clearly no use unless a responsible policy is formulated and implemented which sets out clear-cut, measurable targets with a specific deadline – and ensures that they are met. All the more significant, therefore, are the words found by Pope Francis – at the right time – immediately before the Paris Climate Conference, in the context of which they must be read.

³⁷⁷ LS 23.

³⁷⁸ LS 174.

³⁷⁹ Cf. Bormann, Franz-Josef, “Die Enzyklika *Laudato si’*: Eine Aufforderung zum Umdenken?”, in: op. cit., 244.

Turnaround in the Age of Decarbonisation

The international community appears to be in a dilemma as a result of the dramatic increase in air pollution and the concomitant climate change. On the one hand, there are ever more vocal warnings about the use of nuclear energy, since even its peaceful use in the wake of Sellafield (Windscale)³⁸⁰, Harrisburg³⁸¹, Chernobyl³⁸² and Fukushima³⁸³ is seen as being associated with incalculable and potentially devastating risks for present and future generations. On the other hand, climate researchers previously vehemently opposed to the peaceful use of nuclear energy have recently come out in its favour in the light of the imminent climate changes, since the consequences of rising carbon dioxide emissions now strike them as more serious than the risks associated with the use of nuclear energy. This should not be seen as a premature plea for the use of nuclear energy, however, but rather as a warning signalling the dramatic nature of the present situation. Germany is now confronted by a dilemma in its energy supply, for instance. Nuclear power plants are to be phased out by 2022. A public debate is now under way about how the energy so far generated in nuclear power plants can be replaced by wind and solar power. At the same time there are plans 'to fill the electricity gap caused by the shutdown of nuclear power plants with the help of fossil fuels. That has not attracted a great deal of public attention, but it is a fact nonetheless.'³⁸⁴

Coal, indeed, is experiencing a worldwide renaissance, despite the fact that carbon dioxide emissions pollute the air and fuel climate

³⁸⁰ Sellafield (formerly Windscale) is the site of a nuclear complex erected in north-west England after the Second World War. In 1957, fire broke out in one of the reactors of the reactor core resulting in radioactive radiation in an accident that was assessed as 'serious'. This was only one of several accidents at the nuclear reactor. The renaming of Windscale as Sellafield is regarded as a measure to relieve the nuclear site of its Windscale image and give it an unsullied name (and a clean image).

³⁸¹ Harrisburg (United States) was the site of the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant, where a core meltdown in Block 2 in 1979 resulted in almost a third of the reactor core being fragmented or melted down.

³⁸² It was in Block 4 of the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl (Ukraine) that the world's first-ever design basis accident (DBA) occurred when the reactor exploded and the graphite used as a moderator caught fire.

³⁸³ A DBA or 'major accident' (Level 7 event classification on the International Nuclear Event Scale) also occurred in Fukushima (Japan) in 2011, when there was a core meltdown in three reactor blocks and large amounts of radioactive material were released.

³⁸⁴ Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, quoted from: von Weizsäcker, Ernst Ulrich/Ikeda, Daisaku, Was sind wir uns wert? Gespräche über Energie und Nachhaltigkeit, op. cit., 89.

change. Pope Francis, too, writes in *Laudato Si'*: 'We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels – especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay.'³⁸⁵ The reference made by Pope Francis to decarbonisation is now the focus of a debate about how to ensure mankind's common survival on earth. Together with other prominent climate researchers, Ottmar Edenhofer, therefore, advocates the global taxation of carbon dioxide emissions or the introduction of global trading in carbon credits. Like Hoimar von Ditfurth, who denounced the externalisation of economic costs in his bestseller of thirty years ago, Ottmar Edenhofer calls for a price to be put on carbon dioxide emissions so as to provide incentives for carbon dioxide-free technologies. Furthermore, he warns that the use of fossil fuels is associated with costs and that revenues must be generated in order to improve living conditions for people in the southern hemisphere. 'Investments would be possible that would benefit the very poor. The supposed conflict of interest between the eradication of poverty and climate protection could be largely mitigated'³⁸⁶, says Edenhofer, who has elsewhere described the encyclical *Laudato Si'* with its linking of ecological, social and economic issues as an 'encyclical for justice'.³⁸⁷

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis likewise advocates carbon credits trading³⁸⁸, although he also calls for economic incentives and the incorporation of environmental costs.³⁸⁹ Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, President of the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy until the year 2000 and Co-President of the Club of Rome since 2012, favours additional technological measures to speed up the development of efficient high-voltage transmission lines and the installation of smart grids. In the political field he calls for statutory efficiency regulations and a policy to

³⁸⁵ LS 165; Cf. Kruij, Gerhard, "Ein dramatischer Appell: Die neue Umwelt-Enzyklika des Papstes", op. cit., 342.

³⁸⁶ Edenhofer, Ottmar, "Der Himmel gehört uns allen", op. cit., 18.

³⁸⁷ Edenhofer, Ottmar, "Entstellte Erde: Der Papst sagt: Gewalt gegen Natur ist auch Gewalt gegen Menschen: Wir beenden sie nur, wenn wir Gemeingüter schützen", in: Die Zeit of 25 June 2016.

³⁸⁸ LS 171, 190.

³⁸⁹ LS 194, 195; cf. Kruij, Gerhard, "Ein dramatischer Appell: Die neue Umwelt-Enzyklika des Papstes", op. cit., 344.

overcome the cheap energy mentality encouraged by the subsidising of energy consumption.³⁹⁰

Just how close the links are between the environment and the economy and the 'haves' and 'have-nots' is apparent from a look at the target of decarbonisation. While Pope Francis concedes that factors such as volcanism, changes in the earth's orbit and the solar cycle may possibly contribute to climate change, he points to a very solid scientific consensus that global warming and the rise in sea levels can be attributed, in particular, to the strong concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitroGen. oxides and others).³⁹¹ However, if decarbonisation is to be a priority target, given the limited 'atmospheric storage space' for carbon dioxide, a dilemma will inevitably arise, since numerous fossil resources around the world are sequestered in soils. To pursue a sustainable climate policy, four-fifths of the coal and one-third of the oil and gas must remain sequestered in soils. But this will have immediate economic consequences. 'It will devalue the assets of the owners of coal, oil and gas.'³⁹² Hence it is all the more important that Pope Francis should have drawn attention in *Laudato Si'* to the fact that the climate is 'a common good, belonging to all and meant for all' and issued a reminder that ownership (of fossil resources) entails an obligation (towards the climate as a common good).³⁹³ He thus implicitly harks back to Thomas Aquinas' teachings on property ownership, according to which God left his creation to all people.

Worldwide Reception

The environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'* has elicited a very wide-ranging response. The American president, Barack Obama, has emphasised the aspect of inter-generational ethical responsibility in the encyclical, saying that 'the United States of America must set an example for others in its endeavours to end environmental pollution while fostering clean energies and energy efficiency and engaging in responsible management of our natural resources.'³⁹⁴ The German

³⁹⁰ Cf. von Weizsäcker, Ernst Ulrich/Ikeda, Daisaku, Was sind wir uns wert? Gespräche über Energie und Nachhaltigkeit, Freiburg 2016, 89.

³⁹¹ LS 23.

³⁹² Edenhofer, Ottmar, "Der Himmel gehört uns allen", op. cit., 19.

³⁹³ LS 89.

³⁹⁴ Barack Obama, quoted from Publik-Forum Extra of 26 June 2015. On the controversial

Environment Minister, Barbara Hendricks, has emphasised both the ethics of responsibility with a view to the economically poor as well as the connection between the economy and the environment: We must 'listen to the lamentations of the poor as well as to the sighs of the earth'.³⁹⁵ Cardinal Reinhard Marx has called the encyclical 'a strong signal for creation'.³⁹⁶ The website of the Green Party has gone so far as to publish 'five quotes showing that the Pope is a Green'.³⁹⁷

Statesmen and women are called upon to clearly back a consistently environmentally-friendly policy. Recognition also need to be given to the witness of innumerable men and women who are not prepared to wait for statutory provisions or regulatory mechanisms (and then respond passively to them) but who, as social pioneers, have developed a new consciousness of social and ecological justice; they advocate a new awareness of sobriety and a new definition of the quality of life (and thus play a proactive role).³⁹⁸ The younger generations, in particular, are attempting to respond to the greed that accompanies environmental destruction by developing alternative lifestyles. They already live what Pope Francis refers to as 'a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption.'³⁹⁹ And it 'will be necessary to convince the masses that happiness can be achieved without a pursuing wasteful way of life.'⁴⁰⁰

The Encyclical in the Context of International Agreements

At least as important as the statements of politicians and the pursuit of new lifestyles on the part of individuals are the binding international agreements on climate protection. Following the pub-

reception of the encyclical in the United States cf. Kruij, Gerhard, "Ein dramatischer Appell: Die neue Umwelt-Enzyklika des Papstes", op. cit., 341.

³⁹⁵ Hendricks, Barbara, Publik-Forum Extra of 26 June 2015.

³⁹⁶ <http://www.dbk.de/presse/details/?presseid=2833&cHash=a9e442212ee740934ea9c97086b838cc> (31.07.2017).

³⁹⁷ <https://www.gruene.de/themen/klima-schuetzen/5-zitate-die-zeigen-dass-der-papst-ein-oeko-ist.html> (31.07.2017).

³⁹⁸ Cf. Kämpchen, Martin, "Lob der Einfachheit: Eine geistige Vision", in: Stimmen der Zeit, No. 139 (2014) 5, 326–334.

³⁹⁹ LS 222.

⁴⁰⁰ von Weizsäcker, Ernst Ulrich, quoted from: von Weizsäcker, Ernst Ulrich/Ikeda, Daisaku, Was sind wir uns wert? Gespräche über Energie und Nachhaltigkeit, op. cit., 63.

lication of *Laudato Si'*, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015 which are designed to harmonise the economy with the environment. December 2015 then saw the Paris Climate Conference, which Pope Francis hoped to influence by means of his encyclical and where the Paris Protocol was agreed that entered into force on 4 November 2016 – its rapid ratification serving as an indication of the urgency of global climate protection. The Paris Protocol will thus follow on from the Kyoto Protocol which expires in 2020. These international agreements are important to create a reference framework for national action which, in turn, forms a frame of reference for the profit-based activities of business enterprises and all players in the market.⁴⁰¹

In principle, there is nothing to be said against activities pursued for financial gain, provided they are designed to achieve advantages for all, especially the poor and the marginalised; provided they are geared to the benefit of future generations in the sense of the 'responsibility principle' formulated by Hans Jonas; provided they aspire to the common benefit of all living beings⁴⁰² on the planet symbiotically linked to each other by the biological cycle; and provided neither the costs nor the risks of commercial activities are heedlessly unloaded on other beings (living on the earth now or in future).⁴⁰³ The principle which must be consistently applied is that those who wish to secure a profit for themselves and others must take due account of all the social and ecological costs (and risks) involved in their production costs and that they must not pass them on either to people living now or to future generations (and only to a limited extent to other beings living now or in the future).

⁴⁰¹ The Senegalese moral theologian, Alfred Waly Sarr, among others, has recently pointed out that every consumer bears ecological responsibility as a market participant. Cf. Waly Sarr, Alfred, "Unsere ökologische Verantwortung", in: *missio konkret*, No. 4 (2014), 9–10, here 10.

⁴⁰² This raises the question of the role played by anthropocentrism and the Christian image of mankind. It might be the case that the one-sided theological concentration on questions of soteriology has meant that, in the reception of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed formulated in 381 A.D., the emphasis was placed initially on faith in Jesus Christ the Redeemer and only later on a belief in the Creator of Heaven and Earth, to which representatives of a 'theology of natality' have latterly drawn attention. Cf. Ibrahim, Isis, *Geschaffen zum Leben: Entwurf einer (Schöpfungs-)Theologie des Geborensseins*, Freiburg 2015. All the more important, therefore, are the statements made by Pope Francis on a God who loves the whole of creation as well as his remarks on creation spirituality.

⁴⁰³ Cf. Voges, Stefan, "Tiere müssen drinnen bleiben: Zum prophetischen Ort der Tiere in den Städten", in: *Bibel und Kirche*, No. 71 (2016) 4, 240–241.

Bearing the Social and Ecological Costs

On the road to an ecological and economic balance, great care must be taken to prevent the externalisation of ecological and social costs. For this to happen, the necessary legal framework must be in place. Methods must then be developed to properly identify the ecological and social costs so that in future better account can be taken of them in price calculations for the provision of services. In addition, methods must be developed which put a price on the identified ecological and social costs – initially for the goods. However, this should not take the form of an additional tax (as was the case recently with the 'ecotax'HoweHo) designed to consolidate ailing public finances.⁴⁰⁴ On the contrary, they should make a contribution to an ecological and social balance.

Those concerned at the dawn of the third millennium with the exercise of responsibility and contributions to effective environmental protection (and not merely demonstrating their individual environmental attitudes in public) will find much to think about in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Standard responses will not be sufficient for them, however. Their ecological and social convictions will oblige them to work out economically viable methods of proceeding. It is now far from enough to stick Greenpeace stickers on your car with a famous statement by the legendary Indian Chief Seattle – one which he probably never even made. Instead, there is a need to identify and accept the real social and ecological costs and to devise political and economic regulatory instruments. 'Warnings' about alleged planned-economy tendencies are completely out of place in view of the crisis of neo-liberalism and a capitalist system devoid of any sense of responsibility. To quote Pope Francis once again: 'The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces.'⁴⁰⁵

Then Let us Plant an Apple Tree

The shaping of an ecological, economic and social future is the paramount challenge we face at the beginning of the third millennium.

⁴⁰⁴ One of the reasons for the 'debts' governments are obliged to 'service', which in many countries inhibits development is that, in the past, politicians have not acted in a responsible inter-generational manner but rather at the expense of future generations. They have quite simply sinned against the future. It may also be a problem inherent in democracy in view of the short-term necessity of winning elections.

⁴⁰⁵ LS 190.

It is a task to which religions can make a valuable contribution thanks to their spiritual approach⁴⁰⁶, albeit in an age which has recently been dubbed 'post-factual'⁴⁰⁷ because – given the complexity of social challenges⁴⁰⁸ in a multi-optional age – a growing and ever more vocal minority responds to the complexity of this reality by adopting an escapist approach and basing its understanding of reality not on empirically verifiable facts, but rather on emotions, media presentations and fictitious projections. Is it really possible to pave the way to an ecologically, socially and economically responsible future in a 'post-factual' age? While a sceptical response may be understandable it is not really helpful. In view of the challenges that will decide our future, there is in all likelihood no alternative to 'the principle of hope'⁴⁰⁹. Thus, Pope Francis writes in his encyclical: 'Although the post-industrial period may well be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history, nonetheless, there is reason to hope that humanity, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities.'⁴¹⁰ Or, to quote Martin Luther: 'If I knew the world was to end tomorrow, I would still plant an apple tree today'.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. also Koordinationsrat der Muslime (KRM), Umweltschutz: Moscheen setzen sich ab: Publication on the Day of the Open Mosque, 3 October 2013, Cologne 2013.

⁴⁰⁷ The term 'post-factual' refers to the fact that, in political and social discussions, emotions are increasingly becoming more important than facts. In December 2016 the term 'post-factual' was voted 'Word of the Year' by the Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache (German Language Society). Cf. <http://gfds.de/wort-des-jahres-2016> (11.12.2016).

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Ernst, Andreas, "'Unser Gehirn ist nicht mitgewachsen': Umweltzerstörung, Hunger, Finanzkrisen: Der Psychologe Andreas Ernst über die Frage, ob manche globalen Probleme zu groß und kompliziert für den Menschen sind", in: Die Zeit of 3 June 2015, 16–17.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. the book of the same name by Ernst Bloch (The Principle of Hope, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Book 1), MIT Press, 1995). In the foreword Bloch writes: 'The point is to learn hope. Its work does not renounce, it is in love with success rather than failure.' In his book entitled 'The Principle of Responsibility' Hans Jonas contradicts Bloch's views. Given the challenges we face at the start of the third millennium, a synthesis of the approaches of Bloch and Jonas is probably needed.

⁴¹⁰ LS 165.

Humanisation in Creation

Diego Irarrazaval

The great priority today is to be oneself. People nowadays aspire to 're-invent' themselves and to conquer the world. This goal is due in part to the promotion of the personal and to the insignificance of many institutions. What matters most is to embark on a venture, to be a "winner", not a "loser". Likewise, people extol attitudes such as inner spirituality, being Catholic "my own way", faith in God with no need for Church structures. As every one of us ranks as sacred, it is easy to juxtapose our own desires and divine will.

On the other hand, Latin America has forged traditions of solidarity and has refuted privatisation because it dehumanises us. Broad sections of the population consider it normal to take up the cause of the suffering, to offer support to others (in emotional relationships, in the family, at work, among neighbours), to look after God's creation (which is the house we all share). Moreover, disadvantaged groups have changed the ways in which they assimilate Christianity; sacrificial rites have given way to constant popular festivals. The way we express our humanity has roots in the community and in symbol, and it transforms human relations.

Responsibility for God's creation informs the bonds between male and female. Some centuries ago, in the colonial context when women were not allowed to study or teach theological discipline, Juana Inés de la Cruz described the Mother of Christ in these terms:

"La soberana Doctora // de las Escuelas divinas,
de que los Angeles todos // dependen sabiduría,
por ser quien inteligencia // mejor de Dios participa,
a leer la suprema sube // Cátedra de Teología.
Por Primaria de las ciencias // es justo que esté aplaudida,
quien de todas las criaturas // se llevó la primacía.
Ninguno *de Charitate* // estudió con más fatiga,
Y la materia *de Gratia* // supo aun antes de nacida.

Después la *de Incarnatione* // pudo estudiar en sí misma,
con que en la *de Trinitate* // alcanzó mayor noticia”.⁴¹¹

“She, sovereign doctor // of all divine Schools,
From whom all the Angels // gather much wisdom,
For she shares in the supreme // intelligence of God,
And to read that surpasses // any Chair in Theology.
As the First Lady of Science // it is right to applaud her,
Who of all creatures // has taken first place.
None studied *de Charitate* // with greater diligence,
And the stuff of *de Gratia* // she knew before she was born.
Then *de Incarnatione* // she studied in herself,
For which in *de Trinitate* // she received much acclaim.”

Mary is credited with internalising Christian thought (as expressed in the classical texts such as *De Charitate*, *De Gratia*, etc.). This is a way of asserting the potential and ability of every believer. In keeping with the times, the gates of theology remained closed to Sor Juana Inés (or Sister Joan Agnes of the Cross). Nevertheless, she managed to unfold her human, artistic and spiritual talents.⁴¹² A similarly challenging spirit can be detected in a number of knowledge practices among God’s people, and in particular ways though male and female forms of symbolic interaction.⁴¹³ In ordinary custom, constant references are made to wisdom (especially when expressing gratitude to God for life in all its details).

In the following observations, I have highlighted human responsibility in the Creation. I do so in harmony with the reflections of St. Paul. The Christian community gives thanks to God because the *pneumatika* or *charisma* of the Holy Spirit is given “to each one for the general good” (1 Cor 12:7), and because “the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us in groans that cannot be put into words” (Rom

⁴¹¹ De la Cruz, Sor Juana Inés (1648–1695), *Obras Completas*, Mexico 1996, 206.

⁴¹² Francisco Monterde notes: “prohibited from reading on the orders of an unsympathetic mother prior, Sister Juana observed physics amid her very simple everyday tasks ...(and) was archivist and accountant to the Convent of Saint Jerome” (Prologue to the *Obras Completas*, XVI–XVII).

⁴¹³ Cf., for example, Salinas, Maximiliano, *En el cielo están trillando: para una historia de las creencias populares en Chile e Iberoamerica*, Santiago 2000; Passos, Mauro (ed.), *A festa na Vida, significado e imagens*, Petrópolis 2002; Steil, Carlos Alberto/Mariz, Cecília Loreto/Reesink, Mísia Lins (eds.), *Maria entre os vivos*, Porto Alegre 2003; Marzal, Manuel et al., *Para entender la religión en el Peru*, Lima 2004.

8:26). In other words, spirituality is present in everyday occurrences throughout the universe, in the lives of “ordinary people”, in what is shared, suffered and enjoyed in human activities. May God grant that Andean and Latin American experience continues to dialogue with that of other regions of the world.

Contexts and Challenges

Every region or social class has its own approach to consolidating or devaluing what is human. We cannot assume that there is a homogeneous Latin American mindset or an innate propensity for community-based thinking. Rather, by engaging in warm and critical reflection, we should be asking where the strengths lie in each situation and walk of life. In my own case, I have sought, over the decades, to familiarise myself with Andean counter-positions, both internal and external, and to record their admirable energies (and obscure ambivalences).

Many have given thought to the particular bonds, both internal and external, created by the people of the Andes. Fernando Montes comments that “some aspects of the mask towards the *mistí* resemble those of the shadow cast on the *ayllu* and, by the same token, some attributes of the shadow cast on the oppressor are like those of the mask towards one’s peers”; and as for striking the difficult balance, this role is fulfilled by feasting and rebellion.⁴¹⁴ Jose Estermann, for his part, picks up on everyday language to explain the theological philosophy: “Quechua and Aymara have two different personal pronouns (and verb forms) for ‘we’, *noqanchis/jiwasanaka* in the inclusive sense, and *noqayku/nanaka* in the exclusive sense,” and he describes this relationship as a fundamental factor and ethical proposition: “a human being is a cosmic sacrament... of the mystery of life and universal order”.⁴¹⁵

What this tells us is that a human being is not an isolated entity, nor a mere tool of marketing, but rather a bridge, a node of relationships. The “I” does not hold pride of place, nor does it exist

⁴¹⁴ Montes, Fernando, *La máscara de piedra: Simbolismo y personalidad aymaras en la historia*, La Paz: Armonía, 1999, 314: “the imprisoned inner self is liberated, overflowing unbounded into the world; this is precisely what happens during Andean festivals and rebellion”.

⁴¹⁵ Estermann, José, *Filosofía Andina: Sabiduría indígena para un mundo nuevo*, La Paz 2006, 213, 216.

alongside or above a community and interactions with all living reality. Dania Lopez comments: “the novelty of reciprocity in Latin America lies in its rediscovery of workers within resistance to capitalism and its recent trends, i.e. contractual and precarious alternatives to salaried labour ... Reciprocity is not exclusive to peasant and indigenous communities – where, incidentally, ‘tradition’ and ‘hierarchies’ play a central role – but extends to the urban world, where equality is one of its hallmarks, and where we are dealing principally with relations of symmetrical reciprocity”.⁴¹⁶

But then again, why is there dehumanization in both urban and rural milieus? It is painful to observe how people are often weary and fearful due to peer violence among families and neighbourhoods. These are inexplicable, endless scars. On a global level, we are drained by “coloniality” and face the challenge of “decolonialization”.⁴¹⁷ This affects personal, group, political and spiritual behaviour. There are dark sides to the colonial condition: allowing those who are different to be treated as objects, and even becoming accustomed to complicity in subordination to the powerful.

Just as we are affected by factors of violence and structures of imitation and subordination, so we are fascinated by neo-technologies which (in their own way) have magical and prophetic matrices. As Daniel Cabrera has observed, “the imaginary anthropological matrix associates the efficacious actions of magic with the divining words of the prophet,” and new technologies are like a “phenomenon of faith that functions because people trust and believe in them”.⁴¹⁸ Pablo Batto highlights “the devotion of individuals to goods ... that surpass religious love or the cult of a Leader”.⁴¹⁹

Consumption has so surpassed itself that even the consumer is an object of consumption. Not only are its circumstantial and transitory

⁴¹⁶ Lopez, Dania, “La reciprocidad como lazo social fundamental entre las personas y con la naturaleza en una propuesta de transformación societal”, in: Marañón, Boris (ed.), *Buen Vivir y Descolonialidad*, Mexico 2014, 116–117.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Spedding, Alison, *Descolonización*, La Paz 2011; Mignolo, Walter, *La Idea de América Latina: La herida colonial y la opción decolonial*, Barcelona 2007; Quijano, Anibal, *Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina*, Buenos Aires 2000.

⁴¹⁸ Cabrera, Daniel, *Lo tecnológico y lo imaginario: Las nuevas tecnologías como creencias y esperanzas colectivas*, Buenos Aires 2006, 219–220.

⁴¹⁹ Batto, Pablo, “La mercancía totalitaria”, in: www.alainet.org/active/72412&lang=es (02.08.2017).

aspects absolute; consumers seek by consuming to turn themselves into someone else, implying a “modern substitute for salvation and redemption, which have fallen into disrepute and are rejected by the majority”.⁴²⁰ From the self-deception of believing oneself to be an object-ego, the next step is the pseudo-salvation provided by the feeling of happiness unleashed by identifying with the consumption.

However, the condition of faith offers us other, genuinely transcendent paths. By redirecting our gaze towards the Gospel, we return to good sources. The relational is rooted in the enigma of incarnation and configured by the occurrence of a crucifixion followed by resurrection. God declares his presence not through fleeting powers but through kenosis. The human condition can be reinterpreted and reformulated on the basis of dying and rising again. So here are theological lights to guide our way, in the sense of a decentred humanism and a radical affirmation of alterity. The alterity of God and the alterity of our fellows are the factors that bring us plenitude.

The Fidelity of God’s People

As we pursue the path of community, the gifts of God abound – interweaving, defying and nourishing each other, and enabling us to advance towards new realities. We can no longer place our own self at the centre, for God wills and fulfils salvation in the world. This does not happen in introverted spaces, like some education establishment or parish institution obsessed with its own interests. No, it is in human dealings that God manifests Himself.

Sadly, for many centuries, barriers were built between believers/non-believers, Christians/pagans, consecrated/lay individuals. Thanks to the renewal initiated by the Council, we now recognize each other as sharing responsibility for our mission, sealed by baptism and called upon to place ourselves in the service of today’s world.

The backdrop is our shared, innovating fidelity to the Gospel. The evangelical renewal within our Church requires us to reaffirm that we are disciples of Jesus Christ seeking a joyful kingdom of God which advocates for the poor. In other words, an innovative fidelity that rejoices with and from God, and with and from service to others,

⁴²⁰ Bauman, Zygmunt, *Vida de Consumo*, Mexico 2007, 154 (on this subject Bauman draws inspiration from the novelist A. Stasiuk).

and which has chosen those who suffer marginalization and who are fighting for a life in plenitude.

Hence the mission, in keeping with the Gospel, is not to swell the membership or to fill the institutions. Rather, each expresses his/her faith by rejoicing with God and being ready day and night to serve others. Faced with the crisis of our age, each of us expresses his/her faith by confronting egotries and pseudo-gods and by contributing to the “other possible world”.

Practices of collaboration – in the mission that renders human and divine – go hand in hand with spiritual experiences and ways of relating to God. Those surveyed say that this shared labour is guided by Christ. Every community (every believer) has particular ways of recognizing and engaging in dialogue with God. Let me add my own experience of living with Aymara communities, which had a transformative effect on this spiritual co-relationship. For years I was primarily focused on the omnipotent Lord; for some decades now, I have addressed him as *Tatitu* (dear Father), and occasionally as “my God”. I prefer the invocation *Tatitu*, as it reveals the confidence placed in him by the people of faith, and because it is in harmony with the Gospel.

When collaborating in the mission that is assumed by God’s whole people, one observes a shared vocation in the Body of Christ. When addressing God amid those who are “socially insignificant” (and who are in fact His preferred partners), one senses the transcendental energies emanating from the Holy Spirit. In egocentric worldly spaces, this offers a revitalizing alternative, a powerful light to ward off the darkness, the magnificent good news of humanization.

Spiritual Responsibility rooted in Community

The condition of being Christian is sometimes regarded as a more or less static membership, its point of reference being a form of worship or the commandments. Moreover, political engagement among marginalized groups tends to be seen as an intra-worldly matter. In Latin America in recent decades, those Christians who were most dedicated to social transformation have been slandered and all but eliminated. We are accused of reducing evangelical choices to a historical setting, and the martyrdom suffered by millions of believers is often not recognized. On the other hand, there are individuals

who give indications of a radical approach, whether among the lay disciples or in ecclesiastical ministry.

At the present time, there are not merely controversies of a social nature about ways of being a disciple and practising the Gospel. There are also issues around emotional relationships and personal dealings. There are pathological leanings towards forming closed groups and factions, and there are narcissistic tendencies. In other words, the challenges do not lie solely in our great human responsibilities, and not only is it taken amiss when an option is taken for the poor or commitment is made to respecting the environment or indicting totalitarian commerce. Controversies also arise when the subject is comfortable with dehumanizing spectacles, or when subjectivity becomes excessive and egocentric behaviour holds sway.

Sofía Uribe wisely recommends: “gradually weave a web of encounters rather than rifts, with God, with yourself, and with others ... see yourself as a work in progress, without shirking conflict, and tolerate frustration and change”.⁴²¹ This challenge of weaving a tissue of relationships is crucial, for it prevents us from drowning in our own interests and suffocating in self-exaltation.

To continue down those good paths it is useful to recall some original messages. In terms of our conduct we might be guided by the teachings of the apostle Paul. Of particular interest is the situation in Corinth, where there were disputes and fragmentation, even narcissism on the part of those who spoke in tongues and felt themselves superior. Above all, there was a strong sense of being members of the Body of Christ and recognizing the primacy of Love.

As there were profound problems (social marginalization, clashes over spiritual power, asymmetries in human qualities), the community supported by Paul sought unity in the Body of Christ and the Spirit of Love. Doubtless the circumstances Paul encountered were different from those of Latin America today or from life in other human arenas. The important thing, it seems to me, is that Paul’s actions and thoughts help us to examine today’s short circuits and rivalries, skills and tasks.

⁴²¹ Uribe, Sofía, “Los vínculos como gran tejido que construye humanidad”, in: Revista CLAR, No. XLVI/2 (2008), 42.

In Paul's writings, *charisma* signifies a particular ability – within a social framework – that emanates from the Spirit.⁴²² This occurs amid tense rivalry and confusion. Irene Foulkes draws attention to the situation in Corinth, with hierarchical disputes and messy links between those in possession of different gifts.

These concrete problems are tackled on the basis of Love and the composition of the Body of Christ.⁴²³ There is the instructive and moving metaphor of the Body (1 Cor 12:12-30), followed by the unquestionable primacy of Love (13:1-13). This results in the defining edification of all (14:1-19). Here we have revealing indications of the mystery of being with God and with our fellows in the here and now. The community of the Church is forged thanks to the abundant gifts received by different individuals.

Poles of Humanization

Let us review the two poles on the path of faith, drawing on examples of attitudes in Latin America.

One pole assimilates and replaces; this has been a dominant factor from the beginnings of colonialism until today. It is reflected in a paradigmatic Mesoamerican text by Domingo de Vico. The hallmark of the other pole is to recognize difference and engage in spiritual dialogue; this is a posture that has germinated in Latin American theology (for example, in the works of José Comblin, Victor Codina, Faustino Teixeira, Maria Clara Bingemer, María José Caram). The first pole frames the benefits of exchange; the second pole attaches value to having different partners.

First pole: incorporate the other into the self, while at the same time attempting to replace the difference (i.e. an assimilation-substitution). This was a benevolent version of colonialism (and today it is implemented through subtle mechanisms). An illustrative case in point is the *Theologia Indorum* by Domingo de Vico.⁴²⁴ This 16th-century

⁴²² Cf. Berger, Klaus, "Art.: χάρισμα", in: Balz, Horst/Schneider, Gerhard (eds.), *Diccionario Exegético del Nuevo Testamento*, Salamanca 1998, 2060–2065.

⁴²³ Foulkes, Irene, *Problemas pastorales en Corinto*, Costa Rica 1996, 341–354; cf. Mesters, Carlos, *Pablo Apóstol*, Bogotá 1993, 118: this highlights Paul's ability to "articulate any problem ... with Great Love... problems common in day-to-day community living".

⁴²⁴ De Vico, Fray Domingo, *Theologia Indorum (1553–4)*, facsimile, Guatemala 2010; Acuña, René, *La Theologia Indorum de Fray Domingo de Vico*, http://www.iifilologicas.unam.mx/X/12-Acunha_x.pdf (02.03.2014).

Dominican friar wrote in Quiché and he adopts a benevolent approach to superimposing theism on Maya beliefs: "the former and creator (*tzakol, bitol*) venerated by your fathers is the God of whom we speak", encouraging the Maya to abandon "the idols (in particular the cult of the stone and the stick), for these can do nothing for the benefit of anyone".⁴²⁵ The spiritual alterity of the Maya is neither understood nor respected here, for it is assumed that their belief system equates to the "God of whom we speak". Moreover, the sacred meaning of rock and wood is misinterpreted as idolatrous (and hence it is replaced by true religion). Consequently, there is neither any dialogue with the spirituality of a different human culture and history, nor is there a co-relationship to humanize the bringer and the recipient of the Gospel alike.

Second pole: acknowledge differences and grow in a co-relational manner. In the writing of María José Caram, the Argentinian theologian, the Andean way is a "manner of speaking of God and relating with Him (which) interweaves Andean and Christian symbols and concepts"; and "for faith communities, Mother Earth is a permanent manifestation of the face of God and a call to live consistently with the values this entails".⁴²⁶ In other words, creation and transcendence are neither blurred nor mutually exclusive.

In the current turbulent context, the challenge of humanization is not about a dichotomous transition between the poles of human/divine or profane/sacred. Rather, it generates dynamics which can either obstruct or strengthen encounters.

I have stressed how humanization is lived in a co-relational manner, and that this is nourished by the Gospel. Life emerges and takes hold through mutual relations; one wonders at one's own mystery before, within and alongside those of others. One cannot remain neutral, for in every situation (in Andean regions and elsewhere) there are dehumanizing currents at work. There is a tendency to convert nature and the environment, technology, the other person, into commercial objects.

Being simply and deeply human is to be understood as a gift for the benefit of others. This is how we enjoy the breath of the Spirit in creation. We feel the reality, and above all we give thanks for the presence of God.

⁴²⁵ Acuña, 288.

⁴²⁶ Caram, María José, *El Espíritu en el Mundo Andino: Una pneumatología desde los Andes*, Cochabamba 2012, 248, 272.

Reconstructing an African Spirituality of Creation.

A Tanzanian Value-Based Paradigm and Best Practice

Aidan G. Msafiri

Terminology

Spirituality

This term originates from the Latin term “*spiritus*”, which means spirit or soul. It entails the concept that the human person is a be-souled being with his/her essence, which manifests integrally in the cosmic or material world. Spirituality restores and revolves around immanent values (e.g. love, peace, justice, care, etc.), in concrete “*Sitz im Leben*”, that is, life context politically, socially, environmentally, economically, etc.

Briefly, spirituality simply means a noble life, lived with true love for God, the neighbor and creation.

Creation

The term creation comes from the Latin word “*creatio*”, which means bringing something into being or existence. It encompasses such multiple synonyms as putting together, forming, setting-up and building. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, creation can be defined as an act of bringing the world into existence out of nothing (“*ex nihilo creatio*”). Briefly, creation entails everything created by God, which is visible, human, the cosmos, plants, animals, atmospheres, as well as the invisible phenomena.

A sustainable spirituality creation demands a true culture of care, stewardship, accountability, among creatures of creation, particularly humans.

Rationale/Justification

Admittedly, Pope Francis' strong and urgent call for a personal and collective sense of stewardship of God's creation is aptly epitomized in his famous 2015 Encyclical "*Laudato si me*". We do not have a Planet "B". We only have Planet "A". Consequently, responsible stewardship of all of God's creations is necessarily a moral/ethical imperative. It demands the human being to be a "co-creator" and "co-conservator" in protecting, caring, respecting, guiding and sustaining spiritual values and lifestyles for a sustainable and dignified life for humans and non-humans, for thousands of generations to come. Hence challenging the destructive cultures of dominion, hyper consumerism, greed, indifference, profit-orientedness, moneyism, exclusivity, immoderation, bluffing, irresponsibility, etc.

At this juncture, Pope Francis' Encyclical played both a providential and ecumenical divine-sent blessing, particularly in influencing and making COP 21 in Paris, in December 2015 the best COP ever!

Thought-Provoking Questions

Has Africa (Tanzania) contextualized Pope Francis' *Laudato si*? Why is a truly African Christian spirituality of creation a real need in Africa today? What constitutes a true spirituality of creation both in terms of content and method? Do we agree that we are all guests on Earth? Which fundamental Christian and African values need to be rediscovered for a credible and sustainable eco-spirituality in Africa in general and Tanzania in particular?

What are the biblical, cultural, anthropological and ethical pillars, which constitute a vibrant edifice of African spirituality of creation? Is "Homo Africanus" tabula rasa in terms of formative ecological values, attitudes, traditions, norms, beliefs and life-views?

Does Africa (Tanzania) consider the ever-growing eco-crisis as both a "Kairos" (opportune time) as well as praxis for a true paradigm shift? What are the discrepancies, "lacunae" and weaknesses in the current Earth-keeping spiritualities in Africa and Tanzania in particular?

What can each and every Christian in Africa and Tanzania contribute to curbing further ecological destruction individually, communally (e.g. in the small Christian communities), regionally, nationally and continentally?

Could we redefine our Christian faith in Africa today as truly a value-based, life-protecting, life-sustaining and life-promoting mission?

In this Holy Year of Divine Mercy, do we see the need for a true "metanoia" and deep change, particularly in amending life-threatening cultures and lifestyles? Which transformative and practical ethical-based steps could we promote as effective tools and role models for sustainable management and stewardship of God's creations, both renewable and non-renewable resources?

As Africans (Tanzanians), priests, bishops, laity, religious, catechists, scholars, politicians, decision makers and professionals, do we see the urgent need of promoting and sharing Earth-keeping values and spiritualities of care, protection, stewardship, accountability, responsibility, moderation, foresight, cooperation, agape and solidarity in saving the Mother Earth?

Lastly, what is the "best time" to escape ecologically destructive philosophies and materialistic ideologies for a better, dignified and sustainable living in Africa?

Methodology

The paper entails a profoundly multi- and interdisciplinary approach. It utilizes theological, biblical, ethical and socio-economic tools. These entail both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

Chapter One tries to unpack some critical qualitative and quantitative effects of human-induced impacts on creation. In Chapter Two, an attempt is made to unveil some of the anthropological factors behind ecological destruction. The last part tries to underpin the ethical principles and values for a credible and sustainable eco-spirituality in Tanzania, in particular, and Africa, in general.

PART ONE

Critical Qualitative and Quantitative Impact and Risks

Destructive Impact on Agriculture, Food Productivity and Security

Due to prolonged drought spells as a result of increased mean annual temperatures and ever-changing rainfall patterns in the past 10 years, staple food productivity has substantially declined. This is significant agricultural vulnerability scenario.

According to the World Bank, “food crop production accounts for about 65% of the agricultural GDP of Tanzania, while cash crops account for only about 10%. Among food crops, maize is the most important, accounting for over 20% of the total agricultural GDP, followed by rice, beans, cassava, sorghum and wheat.”⁴²⁷

In spite of Tanzania’s huge potential for agricultural irrigation, with the size of land available for irrigation estimated to be 29.4 million hectares, only about 450,000 hectares are being utilized. This is about 15% of the land available for irrigation farming.⁴²⁸

What does this mean or imply? It means that agricultural yields are getting less and less, despite the expansion of cultivation land. This is the direct result of the major driving factors of deforestation, which have resulted in the decrease of both precipitation (rain) and ground water aquifers, springs and rivers, hence giving way to food insecurity, famine, desertification, conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, etc. In short, rainfall and foods security are closely interconnected and interdependent.

Substantial Decrease in Freshwater Resources

Due to the ever-growing rainfall unreliability, rains and the reliability of water have decreased significantly, particularly in Lake Victoria, Lake Manyara, Lake Rukwa, Nyumba ya Mungu Dam, and Lake Eyasi, at the rate of 0.5-6% annually.⁴²⁹ This is mainly due to

⁴²⁷ The World Bank, Tanzania Agricultural Sector Risk Assessment, [http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/248961468001158010/Tanzania-Agricultural-sector-riskassessment;jsessionid=c8iXxnYsYUitA5W75ytWErjW \(02.08.2017\).](http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/248961468001158010/Tanzania-Agricultural-sector-riskassessment;jsessionid=c8iXxnYsYUitA5W75ytWErjW (02.08.2017).)

⁴²⁸ The United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives (BRN): 1–10.

⁴²⁹ United Republic of Tanzania (2011), National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan,

the fact that many ecosystems, wetlands, groundwater aquifers, rivers and springs in Tanzania and in the neighboring East African countries (Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda) are undergoing severe and recurrent La Niña rains and immense water evaporation leading to enormous water-stress scenarios in both the rural and urban areas.

Also, due to ever-rising temperatures induced by increased urbanization and motorization of cultures and lifestyles in Tanzania and East Africa leading to massive GHG emissions, most of the beautiful glaciers and snow on the peaks of East African Mountains are vanishing year after year. It is estimated that the amount of snow on Mount Kilimanjaro has dwindled by about 80% in the last 50 years due to climate change, and it is estimated that the remaining snow might disappear completely in the next 10 years.

Critical Impact on Wildlife and Tourism

Tanzania and East African countries are endowed with the world’s largest numbers of renowned wildlife species, as well as abundant biodiversity in national parks, such as Serengeti, Ngorongoro, Tarangire, Ruaha, Kilimanjaro, Arusha, Selous, Mikumi, etc.; and Maasai Mara and Tsavo, in Kenya. These countries are also endowed with large game reserves and long coastal lines and beaches. Some of us may be familiar with the famous film “*Serengeti darf nicht sterben*”, which was produced by a German filmmaker years ago.

A recent study carried out by the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI), in collaboration with other researchers, reveals the impact of climate in change in altering tropical ecosystems in the Serengeti National Park ecosystems and biodiversity. The study claims that a greater proportion of species affected by climate change in Serengeti is the soil fauna (e.g. elephants, antelopes, birds, herbivorous vertebrate feeders, etc.) as well as soil flora (different plant species), which are increasingly disappearing in numbers.⁴³⁰

Daressalaam – Vice President’s Office (Division of Environment), 16, [https://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKewj2xtOlnrmOAhXELMAKHd5vAnkQFggeMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Ftanzania.um.dk%2Fen%2F~%2Fmedia%2Fanzania%2FDocuments%2FEnvironment%2FTANZANIA%2520CLIMATE%2520CHANGE%2520STRATEGY%2FTANZANIA%2520CLIMATE%2520CHANGE%2520STRATEGY.pdf&usq=AFQjCNF7g4g-EMDc96zuMFnlPnNceCCn1Q \(02.08.2017\).](https://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKewj2xtOlnrmOAhXELMAKHd5vAnkQFggeMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Ftanzania.um.dk%2Fen%2F~%2Fmedia%2Fanzania%2FDocuments%2FEnvironment%2FTANZANIA%2520CLIMATE%2520CHANGE%2520STRATEGY%2FTANZANIA%2520CLIMATE%2520CHANGE%2520STRATEGY.pdf&usq=AFQjCNF7g4g-EMDc96zuMFnlPnNceCCn1Q (02.08.2017).)

⁴³⁰ Cf. Sinclair et al., Africa Journal of Ornithology – Proof TOST 901430, 2014, 5–15.

Critical Hydroelectric Power (HEP) Crises

In the last 50 years, due to severe and prolonged drought spells occurring in many regions in Tanzania, there have been ever-increasing instances of power blackouts. These have caused a constant decline of water levels at Tanzania's main HEP generating dams due to fewer rains that are the main water source of the rivers that flow into the dams, such as Ruaha River and Pangani River, the main water sources for the Mtera, Nyumba ya Mungu, Hale and other HEP dams.

Increased drought spells in Tanzania due to climate change and environmental degradation will definitely be a significant obstacle to Tanzania's Power System Master Plan (PSMP), which comprises 16 of HEP projects that have an estimated power capacity generation of 3,000 MW.⁴³¹ This means that the large HEP projects might become mere "white elephants" and thus become massive losses of capital and national financial resources.

It is also claimed that "charcoal demand has increased rapidly in the last 10 years, driven by rapid urbanization and the relatively high prices or scarcity of energy substitutes (such as kerosene, electricity, biogas, biomass, briquettes and LPG). Natural gas usage in households, which is an abundant fuel resource in Tanzania, still remains negligible. This is the result of an almost inexistent natural gas distribution network in urban centers, apart from a pilot project in Dar es Salaam."⁴³² In this Mega City that is home to about 5 million people, the major source of cooking fuel is charcoal, therefore it is a significant contributor to climate change through the decimation of forests for charcoal production to meet the large and growing demand for household energy.

Critical Impact on Land

From our Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) perspective, "large scale mining activities in Tanzania (Geita, Buzwagi, Mwadui, Ngara, Chunya, etc.) have given rise to massive deforestation and

⁴³¹ Cf. The United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM), November 2012, 1–10.

⁴³² The United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM), Sustainable Energy for All – Tanzania's 5E4 All Action Agenda, 29 September 2015, 15.

environmental damage. This is largely due to uncontrolled forest clearing and other practices. Further, speculative mining, particularly by the youth, has resulted in less food productivity and thus led to food insecurity and famine. Large artisanal activities eventually lead to bush fires, which destroy soil flora and drive away wildlife".⁴³³

Last but not least, uncontrolled decimation and downsizing of the viable and available finite pieces of land for economic purposes has led to multiple injustices and stress, both qualitatively and quantitatively, hence, giving way directly and/or indirectly to climate change risks. Let us now try to unpack the intrinsic with interconnectedness and dependency, particularly between Climate Change (CC) and Renewable Energies (RE) from a Tanzanian perspective.

Qualitative Injustices to Land/Creation

First, there is a profound link and interdependency between the quality of agricultural products and the quality of land or soil. Increased incidences of multiple crop pests, bacteria, virus, fungi and other diseases have been on the rise in recent years. Among others, in different regions of Tanzania, these include "a range of fungal, bacterial and viral diseases such as batobato, Bx W (Banana x anthonomas Wilt) Panama, Elihuka, Coffee wilt, headsmuts, fusarium wilt, maize streak, cassava mosaic, cassava purple stripes..."⁴³⁴ Such crop diseases include long lasting irreversible effects and conditions in the integrity of land.

Second, today, Tanzania is experiencing a synergistic growth, particularly in the use of agricultural chemicals, such as fertilizers, herbicides and fungicides, etc. All these have massive agro-biological impacts on land. This is particularly due to increases in the concentration of hazardous chemicals, acidification of soil as well as chemical-related soil degradation. These include persistent organic pollutants (POPs) as well as poly-chlorinated Bipenyls (PCBs).⁴³⁵ The

⁴³³ Msafiri, Aidan G., Land Justice for Sustainable Peace in Tanzania, Dar es Salaam 2013, 74.

⁴³⁴ United Republic of Tanzania, Vice President's Office, Division of Environment, Dar es Salaam 26 October 2011, 21.

⁴³⁵ Cf. UNEP, Africa Environment Outlook 2: Our Environment Our Wealth, Nairobi 2006, 356–357.

same dangers are increasingly being posed by industrial emission to land in the production and manufacturing sectors. Most of harmful industrial waste and pollutants are simply being discarded into land, soil and water. Indeed “sick” chemicals lead to a sick land, sick plants and sick crops and eventually to sick consumers!

Qualitative Injustices to Creation

First, land is not an unlimited resource. According to the 2012 census, Tanzania’s population has increased to about 44 million people. This exerts increasing pressure to the limited area for quality human settlement, livestock grazing, game reserves and forests. Land use change is increasingly becoming a bone of contention and discussion and disputes among crop growers, pastoralists, urban dwellers and village dwellers, foreign investors as a whole.

Second, due to increased human industrial activity, population growth and desertification process, there is a significant decrease in fertile land in Tanzania.⁴³⁶ It has been recently argued that due to massive desertification coupled with deforestation, trends in Tanzania food security productivity and sustainability are becoming dreams. This is affecting food crops as well as cash crops necessary for foreign currency earnings.

Third, injustices on land integrity, health and fertility are manifested in the widespread eco-unfriendly bush fires over the Tanzania land, particularly in Ruvuma, Iringa, Morogoro, Arusha, Tabora, Mtwara, Lindi and Shinyanga regions. An EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) study shows that bush fires interfere with the broad spectrum of biological and physical functions of different bacteria, micro-organisms and animal (soil fauna) in the production and maintenance of various soil nutrients.⁴³⁷

Fourth, the current mega urbanization trends in big cities and towns in Tanzania (e.g. Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Mwanza, Morogoro, Tanga, etc.) have a quantitatively negative effect on the integrity and sustainable land management. This is affecting not only human settlements, playgrounds and city gardens, but also game reserves,

⁴³⁶ Cf. Msafiri, Aidan G., *Towards a Credible Environmental Ethics for Africa: A Tanzanian Perspective*, Nairobi 2007, 11–12.

⁴³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 13–17.

natural parks and forest reserves and land for livestock rearing. The 2013/2014 opposition parties’ speech in the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania, read by the shadow Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Hon. Rev Peter Simon Msigwa, strongly observed that: “*Serikali ya CCM imeamua kumega ... eneo la Loliondo Game Controlled Area ya zmani na kulifanya liwe Loliondo Game Controlled Area mpya, na kwamba eneo hilo sasa litakuwa mali ya mwekezaji, OBC, kwani analimiliki kisheria. Aidha, kwa mujibi wa taarifa hiyo, endapo eneo hilo limetengwa kama ilivyotangazwa na Waziri Kagasheki, wakazi wa Tarafa ya Loliondo watakuwa wamebakiwa na eneo la km2 250 tu. Eneo hilo ni dogo sana kwa wakazi 60,000 wa Tarafa hii...*”⁴³⁸ This is just one of an array of nationwide instances that indicate the quantitative dangers facing land, hence contributing to the ever-growing injustices to land in Tanzania.

Fifth, worst still, the present day, hyper land grabbing syndrome by the so-called “foreign investors” scrambling for agricultural land in particular is simply unsustainable.

Biodiversity Injustices

First, there is increasing interference and threats to the life-giving and sustaining mechanisms of land (soil) to plants (soil flora), animals (soil fauna) and a plethora of living forms and organisms, locally and globally. This is enabled by the reality that the ecosystems are interdependent and interconnected, globally. James Howard Kunstler (2006:8) argues that today, humanity is sitting on a trashed and dilapidated planet.⁴³⁹ According to him, of “the earth’s estimated 10 million species, 300,000 have vanished in the past fifty years. Each year 3,000 to 30,000 species become extinct, an all time high for the last 65 million years...”⁴⁴⁰

Second, from a Tanzanian context, biodiversity and ecosystems’ context, observation indicates massive destruction of natural habitats, wildlife, wetlands, forests and land. Unsustainable agro-human activities, e.g. cultivation of rice, maize, etc., is largely contributing

⁴³⁸ Hotuba ya Msemaji wa Kambi Rasmi ya Upinzani Bungeni, Mhe. Mch. Peter Simon Msigwa (MB), Wizara ya Maliasili na Utalii, kuhusu Makadirio ya Matumizi ya Mwaka wa Fedha 2013/2014, tarehe Dodoma 9 April 2013, 15.

⁴³⁹ Cf. Kunstler, James Howard, *The Long Emergency*, London 2006, 8.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

to water shortage and waste around great rivers and river basins, including the Great Ruaha River and Ecosystem of Katavi National Park.⁴⁴¹

Third, due to a massive extinction of biological species, Aidan G. Msafiri (2007:6) argues that there is a very close link “between desertification, deforestation and depletion of biological species. As an example, in the Usambara Mountains, various species of birds are said to be extinct as a result of unprecedented destruction of their habitat. Further, a wide array of animal species, particularly leopards and buffaloes, has simply disappeared in most parts of the Kilimanjaro, Usambara and Pare Mountains.”⁴⁴²

Fourth, increased compulsive motorization coupled with infra-structural development in Tanzania pose notable threats to land, especially in terms of quantity and integrity. In most of the urban areas (cities and towns) development of railways, roads, ports, airports and power lines is causing land stress, disintegration and depletion of biodiversity.

Last, today, the integrity and “natural infrastructure” of both coastal and marine biodiversity (fauna and flora) are at a great risk of extinction. Recent research findings indicate that the entire coastal landscape and ecosystems from Mtwara, Lindi, Kilwa, Mafia, Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, Pemba and Tanga, in particular, are continuously being degraded. This includes the destruction of coral reefs, submergence of small coastal islands due to sea rise, destruction of human settlements, disappearance of fish varieties, marine mammals, vertebrates and sea turtles.⁴⁴³ All these phenomena, directly and indirectly affect the life, survival and sustainability of biodiversity and ecosystems, which depend on land/soil health and integrity as a whole.

There are other places in the country that share recent facts and figures illustrating land “injustices,” “cries” and “wounds” in Tanzania.

⁴⁴¹ Cf. United Republic of Tanzania, Vice President’s Office: Division of Environment, 18.

⁴⁴² Msafiri, Aidan G., *Towards a Credible Environmental Ethic: A Tanzanian Perspective*, op. cit., 6–7.

⁴⁴³ Cf. United Republic of Tanzania, Vice President’s Office: Division of Environment, 16–17.

PART TWO

Some Major Anthropological Reasons behind Eco-Destruction: Local and Global Perspectives

Misinterpretation of Certain Biblical Creation Passages

Admittedly, the biblical creation message “bring the earth under your control” (Gen 1:28) is quite often misunderstood and even misinterpreted as an oppressive stance given to humans against nature. This “dominium terrae” ideology or philosophy is not in any way a mandate for unsustainable exploitation of the resources of creation. As such it calls humans to be responsible stewards and co-creators. Indeed it echoes the Creator’s invitation (Gen 2:15) for stewardship and sustainability of all nature. Briefly, humans, therefore, have no right of disposal, but of use (“ad usum”) of the resources of this earth for a dignified life of both humans and non-humans for thousands and thousands of generations to come.

The Radical Anthropocentric Life View

Etymologically, the word anthropocentrism, which comes from the Greek term “anthropos”, connotes the human person or person. Consequently, as a radical philosophical life view, anthropocentrism considers the human person as the nucleus, center and key determinant of life or human actions and everything.⁴⁴⁴ Among other proponents of this life view, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is considered as the ardent champion of it. Indeed, it expresses and exploits the rights of creation at the expense of sheer human goals and whims.

The Biocentric Life View

According to this life view, (“bios”, which means “life” in the Greek language), animal and plant rights are exclusively accentuated and safeguarded. Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), a Nobel Prize Winner, is the pioneer of this view. Negatively, as a life-centered method and view, biocentrism excludes the rights and dignity of the human person (“anthropos”) as well as that of non-humans (cosmos, natural world, creation) as a whole.

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. Msafiri, Aidan G., *Towards a Credible Environmental Ethic for Africa: A Tanzanian Perspective*, op. cit., 60.

The Cosmocentric Life View

This life view overstates the right of the physical world (Greek: “cosmos”) while neglecting those of humans, plants and animals as a whole. Indeed, a moderate rational anthropocentric life view would underpin the intrinsic interrelationship and interdependence between the human person (“anthropos”) life form, biological life forms (“bios”) and nature (“cosmos”).

The Pathocentric Life View

This originates from the Greek word “pathos”, which means pain or suffering. From an eco-justice and climate justice point of view, in this stance the right and roles of animal life are simply over-emphasized. Peter Singer, the Australian scholar, remains the major proponent of this radical view, which exaggerates the rights of animals over those of human, plant and nature.⁴⁴⁵

The Hyper Post Modern Consumerist Lifestyles and Views

First, today, as far as the insatiable crave for endless production and consumption of material things is concerned, the human person is persistently being oriented into a culture of more “having” than “being”. The Cartesian philosophical argument “Cogito ergo sum” life view (“I think, therefore I am”), has radically been displaced by “I consume, therefore I am” and “I buy, therefore I am”.⁴⁴⁶ Consequently, this has led to massive post-modern environmental risks and threats, locally and globally. This life view is properly by powerful methods and theories behind the modern consumerist syndrome and views. Among others, Aidan G. Msafiri (2008.55-57) has systematically identified the following:

- The You-Need-More-Than-One Fashion View
- The Use-Once-And-Throw Principle
- The Limitless-Technological-Advancement Life View
- The Constant-Commodity-Transformation and Betterment Life View: The current “smart phone”, car, HDTV set, iPad, BlackBerry, Samsung, iPhone, Nokia, etc., remain the clearest and most vivid examples.

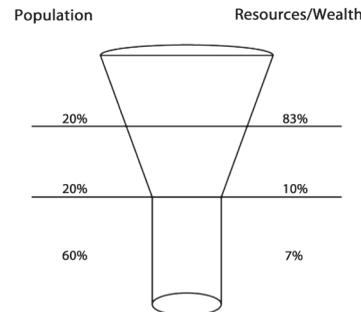
⁴⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ Msafiri, Aidan G., *Globalization of Concern*, Dar es Salaam 2008, 54–55.

Briefly, the hyper consumerist society today is never sustainable. It exacerbates ecological and climatic injustices and burdens. It is deeply rooted in human selfishness and greed, which drives the insatiable craving for more and more material gains and interests.

The Curse of the Champagne Glass Economy⁴⁴⁷ Model and Analogy

First, from a global point of view, 20% of the world’s population (First World) has amassed 83% of all resources of the world. The following 20% (Second World) has access to 10% of the world’s resources, while the remaining 60% of the world’s population has access only to 7% of the world’s remaining global resources, both human and natural.



Source: Justice, Peace and Creation Team, WCC 2005

Undoubtedly, this model not only systematically manipulates and destroys life forms and resources, but also, it paralyzes the very planet’s ability and mechanism for resource regeneration and long-term sustainability.

The Inherent Weakness of Environment and Climate Policy Paradigms

These can aptly be encapsulated in three models, which fail to deeply address global climate injustice and sustainability challenges.

- The Greedy Jackal Climate and Sustainability Policy Model
It represents a landscape where the decision-making model deals with complex issues on climate injustices and sustainability, but exploitation continues regardless of sustainability imperatives.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 55–57.

- The Ignorant Ostrich Climate Policy Model

This type continues its exploitative and selfish interests at the expense of the rights of plants, animals and all the planetary resources present and in the future.

- The Busy Bee Climate and Sustainability Policy Model

This is very keen and sensitive in dealing with the challenges of climate injustice and sustainability, but it lacks true focus and real deep change.

Using the above paradigms we can make the following logical but candid conclusions as far as eco-policy and sustainability weaknesses are concerned.

First, hitherto, the global response largely lacks global synergy, common understanding, vision and true commitment. They do not promote inclusivity or solidarity with nature. For instance, GHGs go beyond their producer and geographical boundaries. They roam from one country to another, one continent to another and finally engulf the entire planet and humanity.

Second, climate justice and sustainability policies locally and globally lack a holistic and transformative framework, especially in identifying their deeper causes. Conversely, they lack in-depth holistic approaches particularly in analyzing and responding to the unknown unknowns or unquantifiable deeper causes behind climate injustices such as greed, selfishness, insensitivity and wanton indifference.

Third, quite often there is a lack of common and coordinated long-term value-based climate change laws, policies as well as strategic rights from the national, regional, continental as well as global levels. Furthermore, referring to Hans Jonas (2011:176), Jeffrey Sachs argues that, “we need a whole new ethic for the future...”⁴⁴⁸ Finally, he concludes by asserting that “Futurology was once mocked as pseudoscience. Yet we must make it operational, at least within the boundaries of our understanding and capacity.”⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁸ Sachs, Jeffrey, *The Price of Civilization: Economics and Ethics after the Fall*, London 2011, 176.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 177.

Fourth, from the global perspective, it is true that our global response to climate injustice and sustainability challenges is remarkably shortsighted. Undoubtedly, such ignorance and shortsightedness can lead us to disaster. Of course, more than a death wish has been at play: the greed of powerful vested interests...⁴⁵⁰

The Negative Effects of High Speed Idol Culture on Creation Integrity and Eco-Sustainability

First, the present-day, high-speed culture is essentially energy-intensive. Speed is considered a virtue. Slowness is considered a vice. This means that, the higher the speed, the more the energy. Wolfgang Sachs (1995:14) claims that a “bicycle trip over 16 kilometers needs 350 calories of energy, equivalent to a bowl of rice; a car trip over the same distance on the other hand may consume up to 18,000 calories.”⁴⁵¹

Second, high-speed cultures mean not only higher consumption of energy and non-renewable resources, but also the production of more GHGs, emissions from motor vehicles, industries, aircraft, etc. Ironically, despite cars remaining to be the major cause of environmental pollution, people keep on buying cars.

Third, Philip Vinod Peacock (2011:77) remarks that “the increase of pollution caused by high-speed societies also means a decrease in biodiversity, as species are decimated by pollutants that enter into the soil, air and water. Penguins today are found to be contaminated by DDT and PCBs, even though neither of these is being used to within hundreds of miles.”⁴⁵² In the same vein of thought, Jeremy Geedom (1989) remarks that, the “car is emblematic of the human enterprise that is killing off so many species today. Many scientists are saying that biological diversity is declining at a dangerous rate. Meanwhile, the artificial diversity of machines explodes as we humans repopulate with creatures of our own invention.”⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁴⁵¹ Sachs, Wolfgang, “If Wishes Were Horses: Desire and Democracy in The History of Transport”, in: *The Ecologist Asia*, (January/February 1995), 14.

⁴⁵² Vinod Peacock, Philip, “Challenging the Idols of Speed”, in: *World Communion of Reformed Churches*, No. 61 (2011) 1, 77.

⁴⁵³ Creedon, Jeremiah, “The Fantasy Machine”, in: *New Internationalist*, (May 1989).

The Quantitative, Mathematically Oriented Mechanistic Approaches to Creation, Development and Sustainability Issues

First, Western (classical) formulae and views are profoundly compartmentalized and dualistic. Quite often they overlook the holistic realities and truths in the deep interconnectedness and interdependence of all creation. These cannot measure ethical and value-based human-ontological altruisms like dignity, welfare, wellbeing, happiness, etc. That is why, for instance, John M. Itty (2008:27-28) calls for a radical rethinking on the inherent weaknesses of the current neo-liberal formula in measuring economic development, particularly by using the GNP and/or GDP paradigm.

He claims that the GDP rises even when natural disasters occur (Refer to money spent to repair the obsolete World Trade Center in New York). Ironically, the GDP grows even when the environment is constantly being damaged. How? This occasions a lucrative opportunity for the economically powerful to exploit and oppress the poor at the Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP).⁴⁵⁴ Hence, a need arises for a radical paradigm shift to value-based qualitative approaches such as the GHI (Gross Happiness Indicator or Index).

The Commercialization of Ecological NGOs and Conferences Worldwide

First, as the axiom goes, “the business of business is business”, some organizations and bodies that deal with climate-and sustainability-related crisis, locally and globally, put more emphasis on self-interest and profit. As Aidan G. Msafiri (2012:43) puts it, “most local and international conferences and symposia, etc., take in university and academic halls for scholars, gurus and special delegates and politicians only.”⁴⁵⁵ Worst still, there is an increasingly ever-growing tendency to conduct such lucrative events like COP, UNFCCC, Olympic Sports, mega-events in five, six or ten-star luxurious palaces and beautiful beach resorts, very far away from the real world of the poor people and direct victims! Again, climate and sustainability rights will never be regained in such lucrative “loci”, but in the very hearts of good and willing populace, locally and globally.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Itty, John M., *Illusions About Economic Growth*, Kerala 2007, 27–28.

⁴⁵⁵ Msafiri, Aidan G., *Globalization of Concern II*, Focus 8, Geneva 2012, 43, http://www.globethics.net/documents/4289936/13403252/FocusSeries_08_GlobalisationOfConcernII_Msafiri_text.pdf/ (02.08.2017).

Second, the current mathematical, legalistic and mechanistic models and alternatives to mitigation and adaptation, particularly by the greatest polluters of the west for Third World (Sub Saharan Africa), in particular, are neither effective nor exhaustive. Among others, these include the so-called “Carbon Development Mechanism” (CDM), “Prototype Carbon Fund” (PCF), “Polluter Pay Principle” (PPP), and “Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation” (REDDs), to mention just a few. All these have strengths and weaknesses. They “allude” a price tag to Carbon, that is, a quantitative mathematical solution to a qualitative ethical centered problem.

As a conclusion, I do concur with Oliver C. Ruppel’s observation to policy makers, that Africa remains “one of the most vulnerable climate change vulnerability, a situation aggravated by the interaction of multiple stresses, occurring at various levels and low adaptive capacity. Africa’s huge economic impacts, and this vulnerability, is exacerbated by existing developmental challenges such as endemic poverty, complex governance and institutional dimensions, limited access to capital including markets, infrastructure and technology, ecosystem degradation and complex disasters and conflicts...”⁴⁵⁶

Having seen the various philosophical-ideological policy as well as behavioral factors behind climate injustice and sustainability crisis nationally and globally, let us now embark on the last but transformative ethical part of this chapter.

PART THREE

Rediscovering Ethics and Eco-Spirituality in Tanzania (Africa)

The Principle of Care and Compassion

This value-based ethical principle calls and demands humans to avoid the current insensitivity and business-as-usual syndrome. Care and compassion for and with climate change and the planetary goods, should necessarily “avoid the potential dangers of mal-development of

⁴⁵⁶ Ruppel, Oliver C., “Climate Change Policy Positions and Related Developments in the AU and ADC”, in: *SADC Law Journal*, No. 1 (2012), 34.

the human person.”⁴⁵⁷ Briefly, the values and virtues of true empathy and moderation need to be rediscovered and practiced.

The Principle of Globalization of Concern

Aidan G. Msafiri advocates this life-and value-based principle. It underscores the collective call and responsibility of humanity in the collective quest to globalize values, virtues and ethos for human life and the planet, in a profound pro-active and preventive approach. It recapitulates the old Jewish axiom that says, “When good people do nothing, evil increases.” Hence, a new ethos and values-based commitment to climate and sustainability remains the foundation of this principle. It underpins the values of human responsibility with and for nature.

The Principle of Fairness and Equity

This is a great ethical value that emphasizes and demands not only equal treatment on the use and distribution of resources but also proper and viable stewardship of the planetary goods, in the present and future. Nonetheless, equity does not mean equality.

The Principle of Personality

This is a fundamental ethical value. It readdresses and emphasizes the inalienable dignity of each and every human person, taking into account his/her entire life, without threatening the basic and necessary means for a dignified life. This principle portrays the unique intrinsic dignity, centrality as well as interrelationship of the human person and the rest of the created world. Hans Kueng aptly summarizes this view by affirming that, “being human must be the ethical yardstick for all economic actions.”⁴⁵⁸

The Precautionary Principle

This is a key ethical principle, which stresses a conscientious and proactive mindfulness attitude and lifestyle, particularly in avoiding environmental destruction and depletion of the non-renewable

⁴⁵⁷ Hentsch, Ariane/Shanata, Premawardhana (eds.), *Sharing Values*, Geneva 2011, 206.

⁴⁵⁸ Küng, Hans, “Manifesto for a Global Economic Ethic”, in: *Global Ethics Foundation*, Tübingen 2009, 5.

resources, in particular. It entails the prevention principle and calls for a systemic in-depth eco-climate and resource impact assessment so as to prevent and avoid the worst-case eco-destruction and climate change scenarios as a whole.

The Principle of Common Good

This is a value-based principle, which emphasizes, particularly, holistic approaches and struggle for the well-being of every human person, locally and globally. It fosters the new culture of solidarity, inclusivity and care, particularly in promoting socio-economic, cultural, environmental, planetary and technological welfare and integrity. Hence, fighting against human greed, self-interest, and insensitivity to others, to climate and to the future as a whole. It involves a radical shift from the “I culture” to the “We culture”, from exclusivity to inclusivity and from equality to plurality and diversity.

The Principle of Values of Values

This is a new ethical paradigm, which tries to rediscover the indispensable role of value prioritization, especially as qualitatively viable and credible solutions to the current climate crises and sustainability dilemmas. Values do not simply fall from skies. They are formed and internalized. This principle entails an ensemble of ethical and moral ethos and particularly faith, hope, prudence, fortitude, agape, justice, communality, integrality, pro-life stance, peace, trust, solidarity, partnership, subsidiarity, transparency, honesty, moderation, fairness, conversion and forgiveness.

Admittedly, the prioritization of value of values’ approach, especially in responding to climate and sustainability crises, provides a more credible and effective alternative response than ever. They go beyond the current quantitative mathematical approaches, solutions and alternatives.

The Principle of Deep Change and “Middle Path”⁴⁵⁹

This is one of the most important principles in addressing the current climate and sustainability challenges today. Deep change

⁴⁵⁹ Sachs, Jeffrey, *The Price of Civilization: Economics and Ethics after The Fall*, London 2011.

goes beyond the ordinary arithmetic and/or geometric change. Robert E. Quinn (2004) argues that, “deep change differs from incremental change, in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible.”⁴⁶⁰

In Judeo-Christian, deep change refers to “metanoia” or total conversion. The value of deep change is necessarily reciprocated by the virtue of moderation, especially towards climate and sustainability issues as a key to “eudemonia”, a human fulfillment and true happiness.

In this regard, Jeffrey Sachs (2011:162) makes the following value-based observation: “The essential teaching of both Buddha and Aristotle is the path of moderation pursued through life-long diligence, training and reflection. It is easy to become addicted to hyper-consumerism, the search for sensory pleasures, and the indulgence of self-interest, leading to brief but long-term unhappiness.”⁴⁶¹

Among others, moderation is the use of planetary goods and resources while observing mindfulness of self, others, nature and the future.

The Principle of Efficiency

This is a value-based life view, which tries to promote a balanced use and reuse of both renewable and non-renewable resources. Among others, it supports such approaches like the “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (3Rs)” view. It also supports the “Planet, People and Profit (3Ps)” model, and others. The efficiency principle is profoundly interconnected with the other value-based ethical approaches to climate and sustainability, such as the savings, rotation and reversibility principles. According to Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker et. al. (1995:23), the principle of efficiency has to start with a true efficiency revolution. It entails seven key foundations, which are mainly better quality life, less pollution, ethically-based profit, resource reuse mechanisms, international security and, lastly, justice and the promotion of job opportunities.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶⁰ Truett Anderson, Walter, *All Connected Now: Life in The First Global Civilization*, Colorado 2004, 156.

⁴⁶¹ Sachs, Jeffrey, *op. cit.*, 162.

⁴⁶² Cf. von Weizsäcker, Ernst Ulrich, et. al., *Faktor Vier: Doppelter Wohlstand – halbiertes Naturverbrauch*, The new report to the Club of Rome, Munich 1995, 21–23.

The Principle of Love/Agape (Mt 22:37-39) and Right to Food and Water (Mt 25:34-36)

The Golden Rule remains the centre and zenith of all value-based approaches towards the Creator, fellow humans and the created world. It underscores both the verticalist and horizontalist trajectories, particularly, of the human person towards God, environment, climate and sustainable living.

As Patricia Mische nicely summarizes it, the love of “one’s neighbor also includes respecting their need for and rights to water, food, shelter and adequate resources. By further extension, one can see that loving one’s neighbor includes respect for the rights and needs of future generations. Those yet to come depend on our proper stewardship of resources on a finite planet...”⁴⁶³ Analogically, the second part of this biblical narrative (Mt 25:34-36) encapsulates broad-spectrum ethics of climate justice and sustainable growth. This, therefore, guarantees food for the hungry, clean water for the thirsty, solidarity for and with the alien, empathy and true care for the sick and the marginalized, and total inclusion.⁴⁶⁴ On its strictest sense, this principle includes not only the deontological dimensions (duties) of humans to fellow humans and nature, but also the teleological exigencies (results/consequences) of human action and inaction to the present and future generations of humans, plants, animals and the cosmos. In short, it provides the freedom from fear, want and need.

Having identified the key facets that compose the value-based principles for climate justice and sustainability, let us now make some concluding remarks.

The Principle of Care for Our Common Home by Pope Francis

Undoubtedly, Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato Si’* offers a masterpiece and breakthrough on eco-spirituality globally. It reminds humanity of its collective accountability particularly for responsible and sustainable relationship with the Mother Earth. Indeed, it is a profound inter- and multi-disciplinary eco-spirituality and timely

⁴⁶³ Mische, Patricia, “The Integrity of Creation”, in: Hessel, Dieter/Rosemary, Ruether (eds.), *Christianity and Ecology*, Cambridge/Massachusetts 2000, 594.

⁴⁶⁴ Stückelberger, Christoph, *Das Menschenrecht auf Nahrung und Wasser: Eine ethische Priorität*, Geneva 2009, 20–21.

response against any further eco-destruction. (LS Nos. 75, 84-87) It played a very substantial role particularly in COP 21 in Paris, hence making it a very successful international climate change gathering ever.

Concluding Remarks

The quest for a truly eco-spirituality in Tanzania cannot be exaggerated. Among others, the following conclusions need special attention and priority, as they constitute a new African Christian eco-spirituality.

First, ecological and sustainability challenges are per se ethical issues. They cannot be adequately addressed especially through the Western (classical) mechanistic quantitative approaches alone. Creation spirituality particularly for climate and a sustainable world must be built on deep change, ethos and “habitus” (habit) as they remain the key pillars for behavioral change, individually and collectively. Hence, it serves the role of enhancing of values as key drivers and indicators for climate justice, today and tomorrow. This demands change of heart, mind, lifestyles and priorities. Value-based approaches revive the deeper aspects of human consciousness, which remind all of us that we only have this earth as the only home with its millions of years’ life forces, which cannot simply be destroyed in a decade or century.

Second, in the realm of politics, politicians maximize power and nothing else. In the sphere of economics, they maximize profit with the motto “business as usual” and other “business of business is business”. But in spirituality, life and ethics, we must maximize values and nothing else. Hence we must build the case for the value of values for climate justice and sustainable growth against the vices of greed, power, selfishness, short-termism, lust, etc. Value systems provide moral benchmarks for proper reflection and action.

Third, more than ever before, there is a need today to rethink quite deeply on the “nexus” and *interdependency* particularly on eco-spirituality/environmental justice and holistic peace. Indeed, they are two sides of the same coin. Environmental peace entails peace as the fair distribution of natural resources as well as peace as holistic peace, socially, economically, politically, existentially, locally

and globally. At this juncture, French president Francois Hollande and Navendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, aptly summarized their views during COP 21 in Paris, saying: “We have a lot to learn from each other’s treasures of traditions and wisdom. From all ages and regions, they converged towards the following point: moderation in the use of nature and natural resources is an essential condition for peace and justice in the world and sustainable life on Earth.”⁴⁶⁵

Lastly, there is an urgent need to reaffirm ethical values, norms and life views for universal responsibility. This demands every human person to live with a deep sense of responsibility towards creation and sustainability issues as we are all citizens of this one world, this one home, regardless of our different nations, gender, cultures and status. We therefore need to synergize our different abilities, resources, human and natural, for a community of life with dignity and for hundreds and thousands of years to come.

At this juncture, we need to rediscover Christian eco-spirituality values particularly gratitude (1 Thes 5:16-18), humility, faith, hope, agape, sufficiency and justice.

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. “Ecology of Our World”, Marseilles 2015, 12.

Creation and Responsibility

Robert Athickal SJ, India

The paper attempts to go beyond the traditional understanding of creation and responsibility towards an ongoing creation and cosmogenesis “cosmos generation”

Creation: An ongoing Process

Time to move out of the simplistic creation stories where a magician God creates everything by the sweep of his hands in six days. All the creation stories of all the religions are basically simple. God or somebody similar becomes a magician and creates everything by sheer wave of his or her hands. The Biblical story, too, is not an exception. The Judeo-Christian story is that God created everything in six days and on the seventh day he rested. God sits on his throne and shouts out orders, “Let there be!” Each time something big takes place.

Studying the various myths of creation, religious historian, Mircea Eliade pointed out hundreds of similar dramatic stories filled with magical and enchanted moments.⁴⁶⁶

Written at a time when human civilizations were in their nascent stages, myths were created to communicate the ultimate meaning of the cosmos through simple vivid stories.

Creation could be a complex event in the making, neither complete nor heading towards a linear dissolution.

Today, our human science tells us that the creation event was a complex event and it took billions of years to arrive where we are. Ever since Sir Ed Hubble discovered that all the stars and planets were rushing apart from one another, way back in the twenties, science was looking for a plausible explanation. The result was the postulation of

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. Eliade, Mircea, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Princeton 1954.

the *Big Bang* theory. 13.7 billion years back there was a big explosion that gave birth to the earliest atoms of hydroGen. and helium which later merged and mingled to give rise to the complexity of creation.

The birthing of the Earth took place much later through another complex event inside the Sun. 4.5 billion years back the Earth and the sister planets came out as boiling masses of matter.

The Jesuit Scientist and cosmologist Teilhard de Chardin spoke of the very complex creation process through coining a new term, *Cosmogogenesis*, the birthing of the cosmos. Cosmogogenesis is a complex event and the process is neither over or complete. The cosmos is in the making.

We in our time realized how vast a universe we live in! We cannot even imagine how large the universe is! There are over 100 billion galaxies and each of the galaxies has an average of a 100 billion stars. We measure distances in light years. It would take 76,000 years or 2500 human generations to travel to our immediate neighborhood sun, *Proxima Centauri*, in one of our fastest rockets that has a cruising speed of 60,000 kilometers an hour. This is just to cover a distance of 4.33 light years in our proximate neighborhood! And the universe we know are billions of light years in distances.

Life was born on the Earth after a long spell of four billion years since the birthing of the Earth. The complex amino acids came together and formed the first spark of life. Most of the intense density of life formation and evolution took place last 500 million years.

See the very intricate process called *cosmogogenesis* “creation-generation!”

Neither the cosmos is heading for dissolution immediately as some of the evangelical movements of Christians warn us. After 13.7 billion years, we may be just in the early childhood of the cosmos or in the middle.

What we want to emphasise is that the whole concept of creation is a very complex process that defies our simplistic understanding.

The concept of Pralaya: story of timelessness.

While we make a linear calculation of 13.7 years after the Big Bang, we have no idea as to what happened before this cosmic explosion. Were there many Universes before it?

The Indian philosophers reflecting on it evolved the idea of *pralaya* “Dissolution” of the universe. The story of Indra (one of the Gods) and multitude ants in *Brhamavaivartha Purana* of the Hindu Scriptures points to the idea of timelessness.

The Hindu calculation of time is in eons. Four eons make one *Mahayuga* “Grand Eon” i.e. 311,040,000,000,000 years. The philosophers conjecture at the legitimate possibility of many such Grand Eons of time. This forms just one day of Brahma God! And there were many Brahma Gods each living over a hundred such years, one after another.

This takes us directly to the mystery of timelessness.

The story of Indra and the Ants *Brhamavaivartha Purana* takes away any possible human pride or any feeling of total command of history.

We refer to this idea of timelessness to put us in the right understanding of creation. Creation is not a simple idea of six days and a few thousands of years. Teilhard de Chardin’s idea of *Cosmogogenesis* puts us into the realistic view of the birthing of the Cosmos which is not a historically completed event. Rather, it is a process in which we humans are playing an important role.

Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme stories

Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) as a top-notch scientist, a paleontologist, philosopher and mystic of our times, he wrestled over the issue of creation and brought out his version in his book, *The Phenomenon of Man*.

Chardin’s thinking centered on the idea that creation was a process and humans evolved out of the atoms through the lengthy process called *Orthogenesis* “Convergent Evolution.” He agreed with Charles Darwin in his understanding that humans evolved out of primates. The evolution was not a mindless process, but a goal-driven progression which he calls the *Omega Point*.⁴⁶⁷

Thomas Berry (1914–2009), Cultural Historian and a Geologist along with Mathematician Brian Swimme (1950-) carried Chardin’s

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre, *Der Mensch im Kosmos*, Munich 1959.

thoughts in our times. They both speak of the Story of the Universe and often refer to the *Dream of the Earth*. The Dream of the Earth started at the *Big Bang* and is being completed every moment. The human beings today have become as powerful as the Earth and, therefore, they suggest, that we could work in partnership with the Earth towards the realization of the common dream.⁴⁶⁸

They spoke of a common future and common dream with the Earth where the humans, the rocks, the trees and the buffalos will live in harmony and peace. They suggested the possibility of humans taking a grave responsibility to protect the planet towards their common future.⁴⁶⁹

Chardin, Berry and Swimme point to a great partnership we, human beings, have with the ongoing evolution of creation.

Responsibility: A human kind coming into a partnership with the creation and the Creator

The ecological movements from 1970s

Very few people used the word 'Ecology' prior to 1970. The word 'Ecology' and 'Environment' started getting attention from the seventies.

The Green Movements across the planet: The *Chipko* movement started almost 260 years ago in the early 18th century in Rajasthan, India. Amrita Devi, with 84 villagers sacrificed their lives to protect forest trees from being felled on the order of the local king. In Khejarli village, 363 Bishnois sacrificed their lives in 1730 AD while protecting green Khejri trees that are considered sacred by the community. This was the start of the movement to protect the earth in India.

Up in the Himalayas, the people had to face restrictive forest policies, a hangover of a colonial era still prevalent, as well as the "contractor system", in which pieces of forest land were commodified and auctioned to big contractors, usually from the plains, who brought along their own skilled and semi-skilled laborers, leaving only the

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. Berry, Thomas, *The Dream of the Earth*, San Francisco 1988.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. Swimme, Brian, *Introduction of The Human Phenomenon by Teilhard de Chardin*, Brighton/Portland 1999.

menial jobs, like hauling rocks, for the hill people, and paying them next to nothing.

Hastened by increasing hardships, the Garhwal Himalayas soon became the centre for a rising ecological awareness of how reckless deforestation had denuded much of the forest cover, resulting in the devastating Alaknanda River floods of July 1970, when a major landslide blocked the river and affected a large area of the region of numerous villages, and bridges and roads were washed away. Thereafter, incidents of landslides became common in an area which was experiencing a rapid increase in civil engineering projects.

Soon, villagers, especially women, started organizing themselves under several smaller groups, taking up local causes with the authorities, and standing up against commercial logging operations that threatened their livelihoods.

In October 1971, women held a demonstration to protest against the policies of the Forest Department. In March, 1973, the lumbermen arrived in the region, and they were confronted by village women on April 24, 1973, where women workers were beating drums and shouting slogans, thus forcing the contractors and their lumbermen to retreat. This was the first confrontation of the movement. The contract was eventually cancelled and awarded to the Community instead. By now, the issue had grown beyond the mere procurement of an annual quota of three ash trees, and encompassed a growing concern over commercial logging and the government's forest policy, which the villagers saw as unfavourable towards them.

The women, under Chandilal Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna, decided to resort to tree-hugging, or *Chipko*, as a means of non-violent protest, very successfully. The contractors retreated and the *Chipko* movement was born.

United Tasmania Group: Looking at the global developments, the first political party to be created, with its basis as environmental issues, was the United Tasmania Group, founded in Australia in March, 1972 to fight against deforestation and the creation of a dam that would damage Lake Pedder; while it only gained three percent in state elections, it had, according to Derek Wall, "inspired the creation of Green parties all over the world."

Die Grünen: If German people are known all over the world as the country with the largest Solar programs, there is somebody who started the process in the seventies. Petra Kelly was one of the founders of *Die Grünen*, the German Green Party in 1979. In 1983 she was elected to the Bundestag via the *landeslist* as a Member of Parliament representing Bavaria.

She was subsequently re-elected in 1987 with a higher vote share. Kelly received the *Right Livelihood Award* in 1982, "...for forging and implementing a new vision uniting ecological concerns with disarmament, social justice, and human rights." Kelly wrote the book *Fighting for Hope* in 1984. The book is an urgent call for a world free from violence between North and South, men and women, ourselves and our environment.⁴⁷⁰

After the *Green Party of Canada* in 1983, the Green League of Finland became the first European Green Party to form part of a state-level Cabinet.

According to Derek Wall, a prominent British Green proponent, there are four pillars that define Green politics: ecology, social justice, grassroots democracy and non-violence.

In 1984, the *Green Committees of Correspondence* in the United States expanded the Four Pillars into Ten Key Values which, in addition to the Four Pillars mentioned above, include: Decentralization, Community-based economics, Post-patriarchal values (later Feminism), Respect for diversity, Global responsibility and Future focus.

Future Focus: The last of the core values, This received greater attention among scientists, religious followers and the many bodies of the United Nations in general.

When the United Nations brought out their concern, it was titled *Our Common Future*. *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report, from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, was published in 1987. The call to the future was a common concern where the U.N could get all the countries to respond in a meaningful way.

As of now, the World nations are divided into two major camps,

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. Kelly, Petra Karin, *Um Hoffnung Kämpfen! Gewaltfrei in eine grüne Zukunft*, Bornheim-Merten 1983.

the G77 and China forming a larger group while the economically stronger countries are gathered under several interconnected umbrella groups.

Today the mediating countries like Sweden, Norway, Finland, etc. try to push the Common Future agenda to get the ears of all the countries at the U.N.

The Role played by the United Nations Vs the Corporations for mindless Profiteering

While many political leaders were in favour of acting on a definitive way on the conservation of the planet, there were intense lobbying by the faceless corporations to create confusion and dissension.

Presenting the case, the Nobel Prize-winning Vice President of America, Al Gore, argued that while scientists, in general, agreed with the assumption of global warming, the politicians and the lobbyists managed to create controversy over the issue. They managed to create confusion in the minds of people helping them to question if the scientists were correct after all. This controversy delayed further action especially by the American government.

The many global sessions of the Conference on Sustainable Development (CSD) along with the NGO sector kept up a constant pressure on the world leaders. The famed Rio Summits 1992 and 2012 were points of departure. Perhaps it was the United Nations, through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which kept the concern for the planet alive. Rajendra Kumar Pachauri was the chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, during whose time the organisation was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The tug of war between the many sane leaders and the mindless corporations has been going strong. This will be the crux of the debate on ecological concerns today.

Efforts of the Church in India

The Indian Church has been alive to the ecological questions since the nineties. There were several groups working relentlessly on the theme. The Catholic Religious of India (CRI), with its secretariat in the capital Delhi, pushed the agenda when they organized several seminars at the national and regional levels. As the National

secretary, Bro. Mani Mekkunnel took the initiative to introduce the concern across the vast country.

About sixty Generals, Provincials and the CRI officials spent four days at Tarumitra Ashram in Patna in 2008 reflecting on the issues involved. They brought out the Patna Statement titled, *Walk Humbly and Live Joyfully on this Earth* which was a milestone among Catholic Religious of the country. In its Preamble they stated, “We, members of the CRI National Consultation, held in Patna in collaboration with Tarumitra, on October 10-13 2008, learned to listen to the earth, to respect bio-diversity and to lead a life of privilege and humility to walk on this earth as a blessing. We heard many testimonies of the cry of Mother Earth. From the abundance of our experience, we share with you this call to listen to the murmuring of the Spirit to the Religious in India to learn, to promote and to practice a new way of becoming Earth people, a new way of being the Church through an Earth spirituality that brings together peoples of many nations, traditions, cultures and religions.”⁴⁷¹

Many congregations included ecological concerns as part of their congregational concerns. Several sent their personnel to get trained in the 26-year-old Eco-movement of students, *Tarumitra*, to get trained in communicating the ecological concerns.

The Jesuits, with over 4000 men in the South Asian Assistancy, helped to highlight the concerns through several provinces taking interest in the issues involved. Twice they called Assistancy level seminars including men from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and India.

After a National Seminar held in *Tarumitra* again, the 50 plus chosen delegates stated, “We recognized the urgency and criticality of the environmental crisis and we see in it an opportunity for the entire humanity to come to a new consciousness of its role and responsibility to lead the divine-propelled movement of evolution to its fullness. We acknowledge the alarming situation of ‘polluted water, air and land’, their impact especially on women and children, development induced displacement of the poor and destruction of their habitat caused by the reckless exploitation of natural resources in the tribal areas. The cry

⁴⁷¹ Conference of Religious India (CRI), *Walk Humbly and Live Joyfully on this Earth*, No. 1 (2012), <http://fore.yale.edu/news/item/walk-humbly-und-livejoyfully-on-this-earth/> (20.06.2016).

of the earth is the cry of the poor. The dominant development model and the consumerist life-style, accelerated by technology-driven globalization and promoted by corporation today are self-defeating and suicidal, which is both disturbing and challenging.”⁴⁷²

Not that the Jesuit statement made a big difference to the conversations on ecology, it definitely gave a direction, “the cry of the earth is the cry of the poor!” and we had a partnership with God in a common dream.

Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato Si’*: an attempt to travel from Head to the Heart

The Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si’* is perhaps the most positively discussed document from Vatican in the history of the Catholic Church. People all over the world have welcomed it as a very wisdom-filled response to the climate change in our times.

An academician and U.N. level activist, Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-founder of the Forum on Religion and Ecology and *Gray Is Green* Advisory Board Member, stated, “Pope Francis is clearly one of the most popular people on the planet at present. With his love for the poor, his willingness to embrace the outcast, and his genuine humility, he has captured the hearts of millions – Christian and non-Christian alike.”⁴⁷³

The Pope’s teachings are quite complex. His understanding on ecology has a head and a heart level appeal. First the head level. He speaks of the ecological crisis as an Economic issue.

Tucker writes, “Within this valuing of nature, the Pope encourages us to see the human economy as a subsystem of nature’s economy, namely, the dynamic interaction of life in ecosystems. Without a healthy natural ecology there is not a sustainable economy and vice versa. They are inevitably interdependent. Moreover, we cannot ignore pollution or greenhouse gases as externalities that are not factored into full cost accounting. This is because, for Pope Francis,

⁴⁷² ECOJESUIT MEET, *God’s Dream with us*, 3, http://www.jesaonline.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=557:south-asian-ecojesuit-meet-2012&catid=911:documents-a-reports&Itemid=79 (20.06.2016).

⁴⁷³ Cf. Tucker, Mary Evelyn, *Climate Change Brings Moral Change*, *Yale Global*, 14.07.2015, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/our-common-homeclimate-change-brings-moral-change> (21.10.2016).

profit over people or at the expense of the planet is not genuine profit. This is what has happened with fossil fuels causing climate disruption.”⁴⁷⁴

Pope Francis highlights the issue of justice in the ecological crisis. Tucker further writes, “The Pope highlights equity. From this perspective, working within the limits of nature’s economy can lead to thriving human societies. In contrast, exploiting the Earth and using oil and gas without limits has led to increased human inequities. Ecosystems are being undermined by climate change and the wealthy most often benefit. The Pope recognizes that such an impoverished economic system results in impoverished and unjust social systems. Thus, for him, the poor must be cared for as they are the most adversely affected by climate change.”⁴⁷⁵

So far so good. These perspectives were already discussed at the U.N level as well as among the NGO groups all over the world. What’s then new about the Pope’s encyclical as an assertion by a world leader?

First of all, the Pope integrates the above-mentioned concerns through the symbol and the person of St. Francis of Assisi, “He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace.”⁴⁷⁶

The Pope dwells on St. Francis and points to the need for all of us to open our hearts to creation. It is here we discover the innovative heart-level thoughts and a spiritual dimension which have been absent from the declarations of the world leaders.

The Pope refers back to the experience of St. Francis of Assisi and joins him with a heart-level song *Laudato Si’*, “Praised be.” The papal leap is understood only by the heart. He naturally and spontaneously calls the Earth a Mother and turns to the Earth with wonder in his eyes. Then he turns and sees Creation as his own brothers and sisters. His heart leaps at them in the excitement of kinship.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Pope Francis, Encyclical *Laudato Si’* (LS) about the Worry for the Common House, 24 May 2015, Announcement of the Holy See, No. 202, No. 10, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papafrancesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.pdf (02.08.2017).

Traditionally, Christian people following the Cartesian logic separated Creation from the Creator, to a level; Creation got completely separated from the Creator. Creation was a thing out there to be exploited and used.

Tucker says, “The kinship with all creation that St Francis intuited we now understand as complex ecological relationships that have evolved over billions of years. For Pope Francis these relationships have a natural order or “grammar” that need to be understood, respected and valued.”⁴⁷⁷

St. Francis bridged the gap and looked at Creation with a “We feeling!” Pope Francis is asking us to get into the shoes of the poor friar from time immemorial.

“What is more, Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of His infinite beauty and goodness. “Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their Maker” (Wis 13:5); indeed, “His eternal power and divinity have been made known through His works since the creation of the world” (Rom 1:20). For this reason, Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty. Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.”⁴⁷⁸

Creation is not just something outside of us, we are Creation. Brian Swimme wrote “Teilhard was one of the first scientists to realize that the human and the universe are inseparable. The only universe we know about is a universe that brought forth the human.”⁴⁷⁹

Neither God is to be viewed far away from His Creation. Pope Francis, like St. Francis of Assisi, asks us to find God in everything. Looking at Creation and meditating on it, he opined, is prayer and communion with God. Does he sound pathetic?

⁴⁷⁷ Tucker, Mary Evelyn, op. cit.

⁴⁷⁸ LS 12.

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. Swimme, Brian, op. cit.

Since Pantheism has been held as a heresy since the 17th century, there is tremendous reluctance among theologians to address the issue. Italian monk Giordano Bruno was burned at the stakes for holding pantheistic thoughts in 1600. Baruch Spinoza's book *Ethics*, published in 1675, was not well received by the Christian peoples. Albert Einstein voiced similar thoughts on God's presence in our times.

Pope Francis avoids the pitfalls of pantheism, yet points to the presence of God in Creation. He is speaking of the Ignatian tradition that seeks to find God in everything and everything in God. It is more like a *pan-en-theism*, God in everything.

The crux of the teaching is that Creation reflects God's presence and, therefore, we must approach Creation with respect. This is not a matter of head, rather it is an occupation of the heart to SENSE God in nature. Like many mystics, such as Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry and scientists like Albert Einstein our hearts can sense the presence of God in Creation. The whole Creation could become the burning bush of Moses when the heart senses God in Creation.

Once we arrive at this state of communion with Mother Earth, no individual can turn to the path of destruction, instead, he and she will try their best to protect and nurture Creation.

Conclusion

It is time to look at the very notion of creation. From a simplistic six-day Creation story, we need to travel the complex route of Teilhard de Chardin and other mystic scientists of our times.

All over the world, people are coming alive to protect and stand by Creation. The efforts of the Christian world have been steady and progressively widespread.

The best example of the solidification of the Christian concern has been the most discussed Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'* which takes us beyond the popular notions of caring for the Earth. Pope Francis leads the human concern from the head level to the heart level of commitment for our common future.

Appendix

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