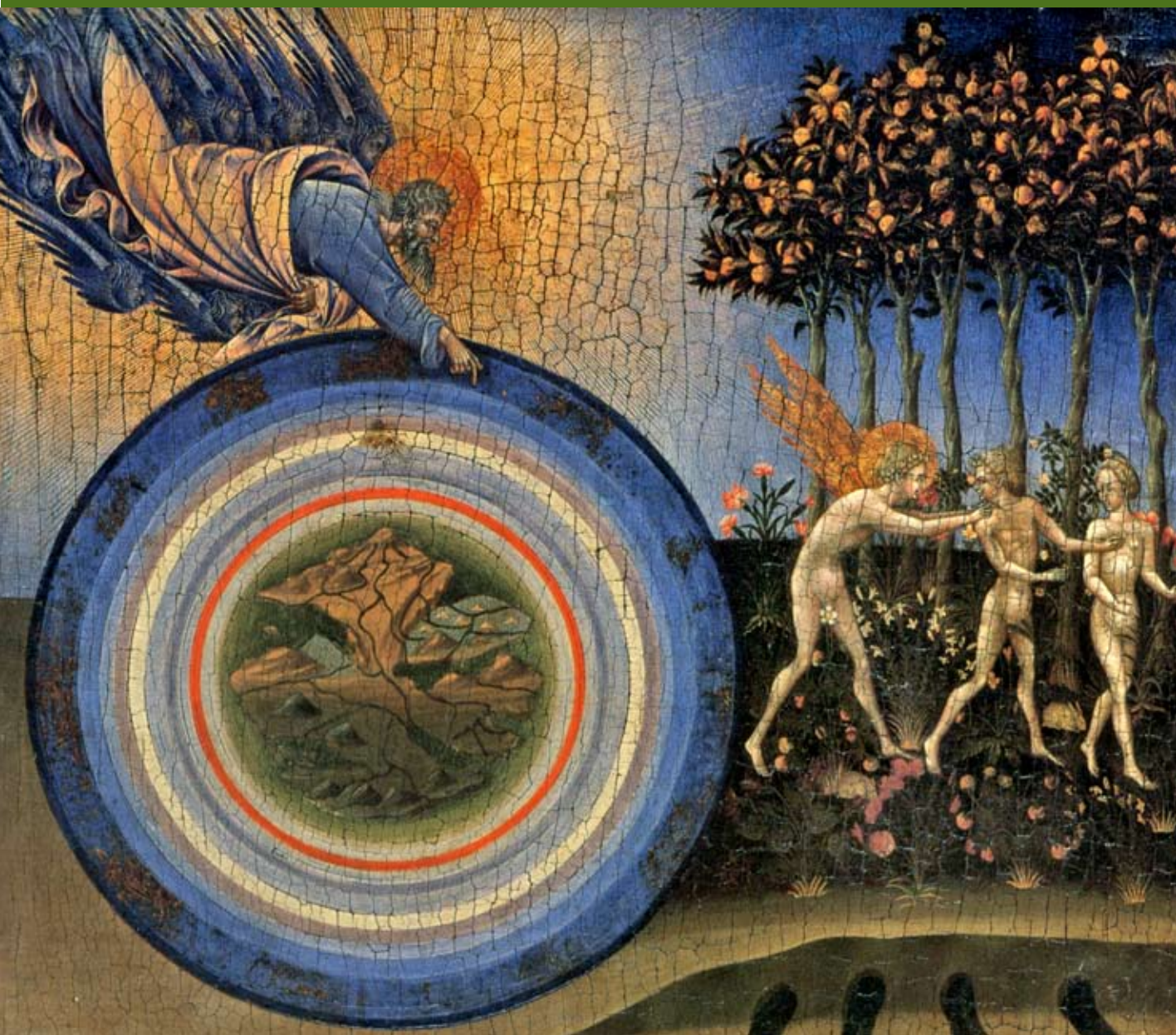
Spring 2007

Reflections

YALE DIVINITY SCHOOL

GOD´S GREEN EARTH

Creation, Faith, Crisis



"The Earth will not function in the future in the same manner that it has functioned in the past. A decisive transformation has taken place. The human had nothing to say in the emergent period of the universe before the present. In the future, however, the human will be involved in almost everything that happens. We have passed over the threshold. We cannot make a blade of grass. Yet there is liable not to be a blade of grass in the future unless it is accepted, protected, and fostered by the human. Sometimes, too, there is a healing that can be brought about by human assistance."

Thomas Berry, from *Evening Thoughts*

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We welcome letters to the editor. All correspondence regarding Reflections *should be addressed to Ray Waddle at the School's address or at* reflections.editor@yale.edu.

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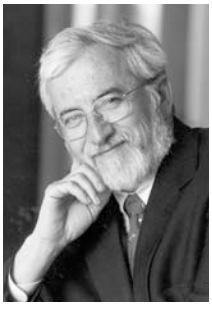
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection, 1975 (1975.1.31) Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art
page 1: Emmet Gowin: Abandoned Air Strip, Old Hanford City Site, Hanford Nuclear Reservation Near Richland, Washington, 1986

GOD´S GREEN EARTH

Creation, Faith, Crisis

From the Dean's Desk



Harold W. Attridge

Dean of Yale University Divinity School & Lillian Claus Professor of New Testament

In the lead article for this issue of *Reflections*, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim conclude by saying, "A many-faceted alliance of religion and ecology along with a new global ethics is awakening around the planet ...This is a new moment for the world's religions, and they have a vital role to play in the emergence of a more comprehensive environmental ethics. The urgency cannot be underestimated. Indeed, the flourishing of the Earth community may depend on it."

Sobering, yet hopeful, words. Like exhortations resonate throughout this issue, which we have named *GOD'S GREEN EARTH: Creation, Faith, Crisis*. From the article "Green Discipleship" by ethicist Larry Rasmussen, to evangelical thinker Richard Cizik's ruminations in a "New Moral Awakening," to the appeal for grassroots activism by Sally Bingham in "Power, Light, and Hope," we are told that planet Earth is in danger of spinning out of control — but that people of faith, uniquely positioned to bring together theory and practice, can help right the planet. Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, reminds us that the planet belongs to all, and she poignantly recounts her grassroots Green Belt Movement's successful campaign to plant millions of trees in deforested sections of Africa. And Gus Speth, dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, speaks of "ethical duties" to rescue the ecosystem from ravages of the world economy, concluding with the affirmation, "We can save what is left."

It is our hope that this issue of *Reflections*, along with the accompanying study guide on the Yale Divinity School website (www.yale.edu/reflections), can make a modest yet valuable contribution to assigning the task of religion in this age of environmental crisis. Perhaps, as Tucker and Grim suggest, the religious community can play as significant a role in elucidating the moral dimensions of this predicament as it did in the abolitionist and civil rights movements.

Talk is cheap, as they say, and I want to note that Yale Divinity School has taken some steps toward putting its own environmental house in order. Perhaps the most visible manifestation of our efforts are the solar panels that now grace the roof of one of our large dormitories, Fisher Hall. Sunlight harnessed by the panels is sufficient to provide about two-thirds of Fisher's electrical needs. Automated light switches have been installed on Sterling Divinity Quadrangle, turning lights on and off based on room usage. And, starting with this issue, we will be printing *Reflections* on paper with guaranteed recycled content. Small steps, but a beginning.

We have also strengthened our ties with the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. In April 2006 the boards of the Divinity School and School of Forestry & Environmental Studies met in a joint session, leading to a clarion call for stronger collaboration between environmentalists and the faith community. Subsequently, Tucker and Grimm were named to joint appointments in both schools as Research Scholars and Senior Lecturers in Religion and the Environment for five-year terms, beginning July 1, 2007.

I also want to note that *GOD'S GREEN EARTH: Creation, Faith, Crisis* marks the first issue of *Reflections* produced under the guidance of the journal's new editor, Ray Waddle, an experienced writer who served as religion editor of *The Tennessean* in Nashville for seventeen years, all the while writing on a freelance basis for publications such as *The New York Times*, *Christian Century*, *USA Today*, and *Religion News Service*. We are pleased to have him on board. At the same time, we bid a fond farewell to Jamie Manson, who left in January to pursue her writing interests. Jamie brought *Reflections* back to life in 2004 after a hiatus of nearly ten years, and her efforts are deeply appreciated.

Finally, I wish to thank Willis Jenkins, the Margaret Farley Assistant Professor of Social Ethics, for serving as guest faculty editor on this issue. Willis's research focus includes environmental ethics, religion, and sustainable development, and his input was vital.

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Daring to Dream: Religion and the Future of the Earth

By Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Yale University

There is a dawning realization from many quarters that the changes humans are making on the planet are comparable to the changes of a major geological era. The scientific evidence says we are damaging life systems on Earth and causing species extinction (20,000 species lost annually) at such a rate as to bring about the end of our current period, the Cenozoic era. No such mass extinction has occurred since the dinosaurs were eliminated 65 million years ago by an asteroid.

Our period is considered to be the sixth major extinction in Earth's 4.7 billion-year history, and in this case humans are the primary cause. Having grown from two billion to six billion people in the twentieth century, we are now a planetary presence devouring resources and destroying ecosytems and biodiversity at an unsustainable rate. The data keeps pouring in that we are toxifying the air, water, and soil such that the health of all species is at risk. Global warming is already evident in melting glaciers, thawing tundra, and flooding of coastal regions.

This increasing damage to ecosystems reveals we are making macrophase changes to the planet with microphase wisdom. We are not fully aware of the scale of the damage we are doing and are not yet capable of stemming the tide of destruction.

For decades, environmental issues were considered the concern only of scientists, lawyers, and policy makers. Now the ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis are becoming more obvious. What is our moral responsibility toward future generations? How can we ensure equitable development that does not destroy the environment? Can religious and cultural perspectives help solve environmental challenges?

Among environmentalists, a conviction deepens: though science and policy approaches are clearly necessary, they are not sufficient to do the job of transforming human consciousness and behavior for a sustainable future. Values and ethics, religion and spirituality are important factors in this transformation.

In 1947, historian Arnold Toynbee declared: "The twentieth century will be chiefly remembered by future generations not as an era of political conflicts or technical innovations but as an age in which human society dared to think of the welfare of the whole human race as a practical objective."

We might expand Toynbee's powerful statement to declare that the twenty-first century will be remembered by this extension of our moral concerns not only to humans, but to other species and ecosystems as well — the Earth community as a whole. From social justice to ecojustice, the movement of human care pushes out in ever widening concentric circles. The future of our withering planet, a commitment to its protection and restoration, may depend on the largeness of our embrace.

Our challenge now is to identify the vision and values that will spark a transformation toward creating such a planetary civilization. A sustainable future requires not just managerial or legislative approaches — the saving of forests or fisheries — but a vision of that future, evoking depths of empathy, compassion, and sacrifice for the welfare of future generations. We are called to a new intergenerational consciousness and conscience.

Currently, we in the "developed" world are easily distracted from these tasks by mass consumerism, media entertainment, and political manipulation. Our plundering power is almost invisible to the majority of people in the world who are intent simply on feeding their families or, in affluent regions, on

Emmet Gowin: Cooling Towers and Power Station, Bohemia, Czech Republic, 1992

acquiring more goods. We need a serious wake-up call from our slumbers.

But solutions must inspire participation and action rather than frighten or disempower people. The next generation is searching for ways to contribute to a positive future. Life in all its variety and beauty calls to us for a response — a new integrated understanding of who we are as humans. This is not only about stewardship of the Earth, but about embracing our embeddedness in nature in radical, fresh, and enlivening ways. Humans, Earth and the rest of life are bound in a single story and destiny. It is no longer a question of "saving the environment" as if it was something out there apart from us. We humans are the environment, and it is us — shaping our minds, nourishing our bodies, refreshing our spirit.

Solutions must inspire participation and action rather than frighten or disempower. The next generation is searching for ways to contribute to a positive future.

The task of articulating an integrated vision and identifying effective values requires new language, broader framing, inspiring images, captivating metaphors, and, most of all, new stories and dreams. As cultural historian Thomas Berry says: "If a society's cultural world — the dreams that have guided it to a certain point — become dysfunctional, the society must go back and dream again."

Currently the dreaming meets an impasse. There's a puzzling disconnection between our growing awareness of environmental problems and our ability to change our present direction. We have failed to translate facts about the environmental crisis into effective action in the United States. We are discovering that the human heart is not changed by facts alone but by engaging visions and empowering values. Humans need to see the large picture and feel they can act to make a difference.

Failing to Dream

We could name many complex factors that have contributed to this impasse, the failure of dreams. Here is a brief summary of a few of them:

1. Institutions and leadership — in business, in government, and in religion — put up resistance. In business, a corporate mentality operates with a single-minded mantra that economic growth is an unqualified good and ecological cost accounting is unnecessary. Corporate power resists attempts at environmental regulations and insists on economic globalization abroad without limits or restraints.

Government at all levels is no longer widely perceived to be democratic or trustworthy, but rather controlled by special interests, deadlocked by culture wars, and driven by the enormous ambitions of politicians.

Organized religion, too, has lost much of its moral authority. It is either beset by its own scandals, preoccupied with sexual politics, or divided by theology and fearful of science.

2. Academic hierarchies and research traditions minimize the role of values. One indication of this is the tendency of scientists to claim value-free knowledge and shun advocacy. Though they contribute facts based on research, they rarely pose solutions. (Scientific uncertainty is used by politicians to undermine action, as in the case of global warming.)

Another academic factor is the influence of postmodern deconstruction, which tends to question the basis and motivations of traditional values and commitments. Though deconstruction is by no means nihilistic in its intentions, for some individuals its discourse can result in relativism or non-engagement with real-world issues or solutions.

3. American cultural assumptions — media-tailored soundbites, anti-intellectualism, instant solutions — deepen the impasse. A consequence of a pragmatic, quick-fix framing of issues is an American antipathy toward complex answers and an absence of understanding of how historical changes take place over time.

An expectation of speed — fast results, fast food, fast relief, fast cars — also holds true for many of the movements pushing for political, social, and environmental change. Activism is often characterized by impatience with anything that obstructs the quick realization of goals. The result is we now have something of an aversion to long-term efforts and long-range planning that demand time and commitment.

4. Faith in technology has become all encompassing. Utopian myths of science and progress automatically regard technology as the answer to life's challenges and the way to usher in a better world. Accordingly, any restraints posed by a precautionary principle about the potential harm of certain technologies on humans or the environment are overridden by an almost blind belief in the saving power of technology. The "technological fix" becomes a means of solving any difficulty, taking away pain, extending life, and manipulating nature and genes to human ends. Management and

control of nature are the driving forces behind the unrestrained embrace of technology. The strength of the precautionary principle in Europe (as regards genetically modified foods, for example) suggests that these issues can be approached differently.

Signs of Hope

Against these imposing obstacles, we must learn to cultivate long-term perspective and persistence — also a sense of history, mystery, and humor. Evidence for these is not impossible to find.

It is important to note, for instance, that environmental awareness in the United States is only some four decades old, if we measure its inception from the publication of Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* in 1962. We have cause for impatience and even alarm that after four decades we are not yet far enough along in environmental awareness, action, and change. Nonetheless, many are realizing that change — especially of the magnitude now required — occurs over long periods of time. An engaging environmental movement will demand continued effort to identify broad principles and long-term strategies. History reminds us of the uneven and unpredictable pace of change. The abolition movement against slavery began in the mid-nineteenth century in America, but it was not until the mid-twentieth century that its fruits were claimed in the civil rights movement. This movement for civil rights is still under way in education, job opportunity, and environmental justice. Similar slow but steady progress has been made with women's issues from the time of the early suffragettes in the 1920s until now. Indeed, all social and political movements evolve with both incremental improvements and unexpected breakthroughs.

Our openness to the mystery and serendipity of such change is crucial as we note the unexpected yet successful nonviolent revolutions in South Africa and the Philippines. Likewise, the unpredicted fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 abruptly ended four decades of the Cold War. These are encouraging reminders that even with all the intentional efforts of humans for social and environmental change, it often happens despite us and in ways we could not have imagined. There is a refreshing realization here of the unintended and unpredictable consequences of human action.

Not least we need humor and detachment — the former for our sanity, the latter from our ego. We are working toward large-scale and long-term changes that may emerge well beyond our lifetimes or in times and places we will never know. Such long-term perspective seeds hope.

And despite frustrating trends, hopeful dreams are stirring, especially within religious communities.

Until recently religious communities have been so absorbed in internal sectarian affairs that they were unaware of the magnitude of the environmental crisis at hand. To be sure, the natural world figures prominently in the major religions: God's creation of material reality in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the manifestation of the divine in the karmic processes underlying the recycling of matter in Hinduism and Jainism; the interdependence of life in Buddhism; and the Tao (the Way) that courses through nature in Confucianism and Taoism. Despite those rich themes regarding nature, many religions turned from the turbulent world in a redemptive flight to a serene, transcendent afterlife.

Wanted: A New Ontology

But some within religious traditions, such as Thomas Berry, do acknowledge the urgency of our present moment. His concern, which is arising in religious and environmental circles alike, is whether humans are indeed a viable species — whether our presence on the planet is sustainable. As the Greek Orthodox theologian the Metropolitan John of Pergamon has written, the problem is not simply about creating a stewardship ethic in which humans "manage" the Earth. Rather, he suggests that the current crisis challenges us to reformulate our ontology, our very nature as humans. How do we belong to this vast unfolding universe?

Religions demonstrate that they can change, transforming themselves in response to new ideas and circumstances.

We need not deny the limits or the intolerant dimensions of religions that erupt in sectarianism and violence. However, religions have notably contributed to liberating movements for social justice and human rights. Religions demonstrate that they can change over time, transforming themselves and their dogma in response to new ideas and circumstances. Christian churches in Britain and the United States came to embrace the abolitionist movement of the nineteenth century and the civil rights movement of the twentieth. As the moral dimension of the environmental crisis becomes ever more apparent, we have reason to believe that religions will energize and support a new generation of leaders in the environmental movement. Religions

have developed ethics for homicide, suicide, and genocide; now they are challenged to respond to biocide and ecocide.

The environmental crisis presents itself as the catalyst pressing individual religious traditions to awaken to their ecological role. In addition, it calls the religious traditions toward cooperation in robust interreligious dialogue. Building on the efforts that have been made over the past several decades in ecumenical and interreligious circles, the religions may be able to transcend their differences for the good of a larger whole. The common ground for all humanity is the Earth itself, a shared sense of the interdependence of all life.

A conviction is emerging that we need a new "species identity" to rally humanity to a stronger sense of solidarity than nation, faith, or family can muster.

Among scholars, a new field of religion and ecology is emerging, with implications for environmental policy as well as for understanding the complexity and variety of human attitudes toward nature. The effort to identify religiously diverse attitudes and practices toward nature was the focus of a major international conference series from 1996 to 1998 on world religions and ecology. Held at the Center for the Study of World Religions, at the Harvard Divinity School, it resulted in a ten-volume series of books, published by the Center and distributed by Harvard University Press. More than 800 scholars of religions and environmentalists attended, leading to a continuing Forum on Religion and Ecology that has grown to more than 5,000 participants *www.environment.harvard.edu/religion*.

The ongoing work of the Forum is now located at Yale at the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and the Divinity School. These two schools have created a joint master's degree program in the area of religion and ecology. In addition, the Center for Bioethics at the Institution for Social and Policy Studies is encouraging a larger understanding of the need for ethics not only for the human sphere but for the whole biosphere.

The major professional organization for teaching religion and theology, the American Academy of Religion, has a vibrant section focusing on scholarship and teaching in religion and ecology. The leadership of the Academy has expressed interest in furthering sustainability work in colleges, universities, and seminaries. A scholarly journal, *Worldviews: Environment, Culture, Religion,* is celebrating its tenth year of publication. A two-volume encyclopedia of religion and nature has been published by Continuum. Undoubtedly this field of study will continue to expand as the environmental crisis grows in complexity and requires increasingly creative responses from the world's religions.

Religions Go Green

As scholars and theologians explore environmental ethics, religions are starting to find their voices regarding the environment. The monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are formulating original eco-theologies and eco-justice practices regarding stewardship and care for creation. Hinduism and Jainism in South Asia, and Buddhism in both Asia and the West, have undertaken projects of ecological restoration. Indigenous peoples bring to the discussion alternative ways of knowing and engaging the natural world. All of those religious traditions are moving forward to find the language, symbols, rituals, and ethics for encouraging protection of bioregions and species. Religions are beginning to generate the energy needed for restoring the Earth in such practices as tree planting, coral-reef preservation, and river cleanup.

Some of the most striking examples of the intersection of religion and ecology have taken place in Iran and Indonesia. In June 2001 and May 2005, under former President Mohammad Khatami, the government of Iran and the United Nations Environment Programme sponsored conferences in Tehran that focused on Islamic principles and practices for environmental protection. The Iranian Constitution identifies Islamic values for appropriate ecological practices and threatens legal sanctions against those who do not follow them. In Indonesia projects of tree planting and restoration draw on the Islamic principle of maintaining balance (*mizaan*) in nature. Students in Islamic boarding schools are taught such principles and are encouraged to apply the Islamic doctrine of trusteeship regarding the environment.

In the United States, the greening of churches and synagogues leads religious communities to search out sustainable building materials and renewable energy sources through Interfaith Power and Light. A group of Christian leaders in the Evangelical Climate Initiative is focusing on climate change as a moral issue that will disproportionately hurt the poor around the world. The National Religious Partnership for the Environment has been working with Jewish and Christian organizations to promote environmental concern. "Green Yoga" is exploring ways in which yoga practitioners can

bring their meditative focus to greater awareness of environmental concern. The "Green Nuns," a group of Roman Catholic religious women in North America, sponsors a variety of environmental programs drawing on the ecological vision of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, who describe the story of the universe in both sacred and scientific terms. In Canada the Indigenous Environmental Network is speaking out about the negative effects of resource extraction and military-related pollution on First Nations Reserves. Internationally, the Greek Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has led several international symposia on religion, science, and the environment, focused primarily on water issues.

And finally, a conviction is emerging in some quarters that we need a new "species identity" to rally humanity to a stronger sense of solidarity than nationhood, faith, or family can muster. It means coming to understand our place within this vast field of force we call nature and evolutionary history. It means embracing a new story, a universe story, one that evokes awe, wonder, and responsibility, and inspires humans to influence evolution in benign directions.

"The time of innocence ... is now past," declares Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in his 1992 book *The Evolving Self*.

> It is no longer possible for mankind to blunder about self-indulgently. Our species has become too powerful to be led by instincts alone. Birds and lemmings cannot do much damage except to themselves, whereas we can destroy the entire matrix of life on the planet. The awesome powers we have stumbled into require a commensurate responsibility. As we become aware of the motives that shape our actions, as our place in the chain of evolution becomes clearer, we must find a meaningful and binding plan that will protect us and the rest of life from the consequences of what we have wrought.

With an awakening sense of global responsibility comes an emerging global ethics, such as that contained in the Earth Charter.

The Earth Charter, a document of enormous potential, emerged out of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) held in Rio in 1992. The international community under the auspices of the United Nations was seeking principles for guiding sustainable development. The Earth Charter is such a document, outlining the complex interdependency of humans and nature. It reflects the aspirations of the thousands of groups and individuals who helped to shape this people's document in the decade that followed the Earth Summit. It embodies the idea that the physical, chemical, and biological conditions for life are in delicate interaction over time to bring forth and sustain life. Our response to this awesome interplay should be a sense of responsibility for its continuity. The Charter provides an integrated vision of three related areas for a viable future: ecological integrity; social and economic justice; and democracy, non-violence and peace. Care for the whole community of life is embraced by this declaration of interdependence *(www.earthcharter.org)*.

As all these examples illustrate, a many-faceted alliance of religion and ecology along with a new global ethics is awakening around the planet. Attitudes are being reexamined with alertness to the future of the whole community of life, not just humans. This is a new moment for the world's religions, and they have a vital role to play in the emergence of a more comprehensive environmental ethics. The urgency cannot be underestimated. Indeed, the flourishing of the Earth community may depend on it.

Mary Evelyn Tucker *and* **John Grim**, *founders of the Forum on Religion and Ecology, recently joined the Yale faculty with joint appointments in the Divinity School, the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, and the Department of Religious Studies as Research Scholars and as Senior Lecturers in Religion and the Environment.*

IN A COUNTRY ONCE FORESTED
by Wendell Berry

The young woodland remembers
the old, a dreamer dreaming

of an old holy book,
an old set of instructions,

and the soil under the grass
is dreaming of a young forest,

and under the pavement the soil
is dreaming of grass.

The Beginnings of a Beautiful Friendship: Religion and Environmentalism

By Roger Gottlieb

In 2005 a study of the umbilical cord blood of ten randomly chosen newborns in the United States was tested for toxic chemicals. A total of 287 were found, with the average for each individual infant being 200. Nearly three-quarters of the chemicals were known carcinogens, and the rest were identified as threatening the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems.

The effects of these chemicals on a fetus, individually or collectively, are not known (how exactly would one design an experiment to find this out?), but it is widely accepted that a developing child is much more vulnerable to toxics than an adult.[1]

This is but one of the thousands of environmental horror stories that shape the awareness of environmentalists. The threats to the physical health of the most defenseless are obvious. The threats to any adult's sense of security, an expectation that safety is possible anywhere on this Earth, are perhaps less blatant but deeply serious as well. The story is yet another confirmation of pioneering environmental ethicist Aldo Leopold's bleak pronouncement that environmentalists walk "in a world of wounds."[2]

What has this got to do with religion? As we have learned, a great deal. For one thing, religious people (most of them at any rate) hope to have healthy children who are not exposed, even before birth, to 190 carcinogens. This would surely be motivation enough for action. Yet the depth of our environmental crisis indicates that we are facing not only a danger to our health and well-being, but a comprehensive challenge to virtually every facet of our civilization. Environmental problems are not simple "mistakes," no matter how serious, that can be remedied once known. We know this because the wounds have been identified for more than four decades. Though some positive steps have been taken, things are worse than they were when Rachel Carson helped create modern environmentalism when she joined love of nature and critique of industrial agriculture in *Silent Spring* (1962). To be confronted by widespread pollution of our air, water, land, climate, and children, and not to change our ways, shows that the source of our failings resides not in some easily correctable negligence but deep in our politics, economics, psychology, and moral values.

And in our religion. To begin, no matter how much faith traditions represent themselves as bearers of timeless truths, they must of necessity respond to significant historical changes and events. The rise of democracy, the emerging powers of science, and the growth of socialist parties or feminism all challenged and changed religion's understanding of itself and the world. Perhaps most relevant, the Holocaust demanded that religions ask themselves about their complicity in both mass murder engendered by ethnic hatred and bureaucratic indifference, their failure to criticize the devastating misuses of technology, and their abdication of moral responsibility in the face of a kind of collective madness. Despite obvious differences the environmental crisis is in some ways a kind of holocaust inflicted on everyone, not just Jews, gypsies, and homosexuals. There is the same collective madness while countless people continue to "just do their jobs." There is ethnic hatred expressed in the unequal effects of pollution on racial minorities. There is the same abuse of technology and the same desperate need to resist enormously powerful and evil forces.[3]

Further, when Western religions speak of the Earth as creation, as God's gift to humanity, they must simultaneously ask themselves how they can

be responsible Jews, Christians, or Muslims and still be despoiling that gift. Or when we argue for (or take for granted) the special moral status of human beings, our being uniquely "created in the image of God," we must now shrink from how that image is reflected in societies that live by excess, cruelty to animals, and a reckless abandon with their own waste. Buddhists who seek to "end the suffering of all sentient beings" now face a level of suffering made infinitely worse by human action. And all religions, implicated by their presence in societies that may be undermining the Earth as a livable home of human beings, must ask themselves: "Why did we not see this sooner? How have we contributed? How must we now change?"

Speaking to the Crisis

The good news is that during the last thirty years or so the world's religions have indeed been asking — and answering — these questions. Facing the same environmental crisis as their secular counterparts, people of faith have been transforming their basic attitudes toward nature and seeing the moral connections between our treatment of nature and our treatment of people.

Of all progressive political movements, environmentalism may be the one most likely to be sympathetic to religious input.

Let us look at just a few telling examples.

Pope John Paul II began his reign in 1979 by warning of "threats to man's natural environment" and criticizing practices that "alienate us from nature."[4] Two decades later, in 2000, he went further — speaking poetically and passionately of trying to return nature to its rightful position as the "sister of humanity." When one considers that for centuries the Church repressed any indigenous religion that taught the sanctity of nature, we see that this is a profound change.[5]

In 2001 the Catholic Bishops of the Columbia River Watershed, a 259,000-square-mile region including parts of Washington, Oregon, Montana, and British Columbia, issued a glossy twenty-page booklet advocating an "ecological vision" in which the "common goal" of industry and environmentalists would be the "well-being of the entire community of life"; agriculture would be as organic as possible; mining would not endanger water, fish, air, or land; environmental damage from logging would be paid for by logging companies, not pawned off on the public; and alternative energy sources would be developed.[6]

In 1998 the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches adopted a long-term program to assess globalization critically, paying special attention to its intertwined economic, ecological, and social effects. By 2004 the Council's subgroup on environmental justice could sum up some of its most damaging practices:

- multinational corporations moving outlawed operations to developing countries;
- the shipping of toxic wastes from industrialized nations to the economic south;
- free trade agreements that restrict the capacity of national governments to adopt environmental legislation;
- destruction of Southern Hemispheric rainforests to provide exotic timber for northern consumers;
- and pressure on poor nations to engage in ecologically destructive agricultural practices to produce cash crops for export in order to service foreign debt payments.[7]

The world's Sikhs have committed themselves to a 300-year project of making all their institutions low-impact and energy efficient. Buddhist monks from five different nations have organized against Asian deforestation and water pollution. The Evangelical Lutheran Church has supported Fair Trade Coffee and a ban on the selling of timber from old-growth forests.[8]

This list could be extended indefinitely, and includes profound changes in theology, broad institutional commitment, and thousands of contributions to real-world environmental struggles.[9] But alongside these details it is important to stress that this new-found religious environmentalism comprises more than people of faith simply joining the Sierra Club or Greenpeace. Religions have some distinct, indeed unique, gifts that they bring to the secular environmental community. Here are four.

Fishing and Faith

Most important perhaps is the fact that religious institutions and teachings retain authority throughout the world as a primary source for ethical values. Environmental admonitions coming from an imam or priest, reinforced by pronouncements of an ayatollah or bishop, may have far more impact than those of politicians or scientists alone. In one telling instance, Tanzanian fishermen who used dynamite to guarantee their catch were taking in a lot of fish but also depleting fish stocks and destroying the sheltering coral reef. These fisherman paid zero attention first to government pamphlets, then to

stringent laws, and finally to advice from Western ecologists. What led them to stop, and to undertake plans for long-term sustainable fishing practices, was the Koran. In 2000 local sheiks were brought together by the U.K.-based Alliance for Religions and Conservation, the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science, and the World Wildlife Fund. The sheiks ruled that dynamiting transgressed Koranic injunctions against wasting God's creation — and the practice was ended.

Religion's tradition of demanding sustained, at times painful, moral reflection is a valuable resource for the secular environmental movement.

Half a world away, under the influence of Chinese religions rather than Islam, researchers at the world-renowned Beijing School of Traditional Chinese Medicine are trying to protect endangered species by changing traditional prescriptions that called for ingredients like tiger penis, bear gal, and rhinoceros horn. The high price of these ingredients leads poachers to violate international bans on their trade, but the researchers have argued that the use of endangered species goes against Buddhist and Taoist principles of balance in nature, and thus are bad for both the environment and the soul.[10]

Religion, the Sleeping Giant

It is of course true that most religious people do not take the moral imperatives of their religion as seriously as they might. (When was the last time you saw anyone loving their enemies?) Therefore nothing is guaranteed by joining environmental concern to religion's moral teaching. Yet adding even a fraction of the force of the world's religions will surely add momentum to a global struggle for ecological sanity — a struggle that desperately needs all the help it can get.

Second, religion's tradition of demanding sustained, at times painful, moral reflection is an intensely valuable spiritual resource for the secular environmental movement. Though critics of religion like Marx have always (correctly) complained of religion's escapist tendencies — a future eternity of bliss in heaven, individual enlightenment based in detachment from the world's woes — there are also religious practices that require a fierce and unflinching engagement with pain, death, and one's own moral failings. Every Jewish prayer service ends with the prayer for the dead — not only to let mourners mark their loss, but to remind everyone else of the brute reality of our mortality. The Catholic tradition of confession requires the faithful to take a hard look at their own ethical limitations. Buddhists have forms of meditation in which they sit in graveyards, or contemplate what their own bodies will look like in a hundred years.

Such resources can be of great help in overcoming the single largest environmental problem — avoidance and denial. Arrogance, greed, and the lust for power may be a close second, but it is our collective inability to comprehend and acknowledge what we have done that most prevents us from responding to it. This inability is, I believe, firmly rooted in our fear, shame, and guilt. Insofar as religious traditions have taught us to face our greatest anxieties, and to confront the reasons for our shame and guilt, they can play a profound role in the shift to a sustainable culture.

Third, religion is by far the most widespread source for values that run counter to consumerism, the unending accumulation of stuff, that profoundly anti-sustainable form of life — before which all human purposes pale. If religions sometimes join in with consumerism (megachurches celebrating their wealth, spiritual leaders becoming celebrities), they also teach that community, morality, piety, and pleasures that cost nothing are the only true foundations for happiness. Secular environmentalists who critique consumerism often (sadly) come off like shrill spoilsports. "Don't," after all, is not much of a basis for a political movement. Religious environmentalists, on the other hand, can offer satisfactions that don't play into the addictive tendencies of always wanting more. The delights of a quiet Sabbath, the peace of a long-term practice of meditation, the joys of celebrating creation in a community of people you know — these cannot be bought or sold, but surely promise more real satisfaction than another trip to the mall.

Global Warming and Burnout

Finally, religions offer a distinct, non-utilitarian way of assessing the value of political action. To the secular political mind, for the most part, political action is purely instrumental. We have a goal — overthrow the state, increase fuel-efficiency standards, outlaw carcinogenic pesticides, save the Earth — and we will evaluate each bit of political activism in terms of how well it leads us toward that goal. Yet in confronting a global environmental crisis, a crisis sustained by government, the military, transnational corporations, and popular culture, many (if not most) of our actions will *not* succeed. There will be steps forward and steps back, campaigns won and campaigns lost,

and years where the progress we've made is undone. If we administer the standard political utilitarian calculus, how will we avoid desperation, burnout, or despair?

To the religious mind, by contrast, every ethical act has its own cosmic value no matter what its observable, practical effect. Bearing witness against injustice, cruelty, or human folly is a work of love, and all such work has immeasurable worth. How is that worth calculated or guaranteed? We do not really know. It is among the most mysterious of religious truths. But attachment to this truth is essential to the faith of the spiritual social activist, a basic part of whatever more particular image of God or Spiritual Truth he or she possesses.

Finally, it should be noted that of all progressive political movements, environmentalism may be the one most likely to be sympathetic to religious input. Other movements of the past three centuries — for democracy, women's rights, racial equality, national independence — had a somewhat restricted, somewhat partial reference group. Now that the connections between our treatment of nature and our treatment of each other have been made in the perspective of eco-justice, most secular environmentalists (and their religious counterparts) take as their essential reference "all of life." Surely this is an analogue of the biblical idea that *all* humans (and not just the group I'm fighting for) were made in God's image, or the idea (from Mahayana Buddhism) that the true religious goal is to end the suffering of *all* sentient beings.

This natural harmony is borne out not only in the concrete fact of such joint work as that between the Sierra Club and the National Council of Churches, but also by the intensely spiritual cast of most ostensibly secular environmentalism. From conservationists of the nineteenth century like Thoreau and Muir to the most hard-nosed environmental groups of today, environmentalists have talked about the sacredness of nature, wilderness as a temple, and the way in which encounters with the natural world help us transcend the limitations of the individual, competitive, grasping ego.

"Upon entering those groves a spirit of awe and reverence came over me.... In the stillness of these mighty woods, man is made aware of the divine," wrote Richard St. Barbe Baker, the pioneering international advocate of ecological tree planting for conservation, on first seeing redwoods.[11]

As Christopher Childs, public spokesman for Greenpeace USA, said quite clearly, "There is broad acceptance among Greenpeace staff that the work is quintessentially spiritual, though definitions of what is meant by the term vary."[12]

Professional foresters in Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics talk of passing the forests "with *reverence* from generation to generation."[13]

And the widely quoted Principles of Environmental Justice begin: "Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction."[14]

Goals of sustainability, cooperation with rather than domination over nature, recognition of the special value of every part of the miracle of life on Earth — all these environmental aspirations resonate with learning to serve God, love our neighbors, live nonviolently. They all resonate, that is, with goals that religions have been preaching for thousands of years.

In historical time, the alliance of religion and environmentalism has just begun. If so much of our human and nonhuman future looks dark, this is one bright spot on the horizon. In the old and hopeful phrase, this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

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Notes

1 See the Body burden website: *http://www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden2/execsumm.php*.

2 Aldo Leopold, Foreword, " in *Companion to A Sand County Almanac: Interpretive and Critical Essays*, ed. J. Baird Calicot. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 286.

3 In short, despite important dissimilarities — such as the lack of central planning and the fact that most critics of the environmental crisis are at least in some ways unwilling agents of it — the Holocaust provides some lessons as to how to understand our ecological problems. This theme is developed at some length in chapters 3 and 5 of Roger S. Gottlieb, *A Spirituality of Resistance: Finding a Peaceful Heart and Protecting the Earth* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

CARLA PRYNE

By Frank Brown

In December of 1988, the Nestucca oil barge collided with a tugboat and hemorrhaged over 200,000 gallons of oil into the waters off Washington State. The spill killed thousands of seabirds, spoiled beaches, and outraged the public. It also marked a turning point in the life of Carla Pryne, then a 34-year-old priest at Seattle's largest Episcopal parish.

"Those pictures of the birds went through my heart like a bolt of lightning. I was trying to figure out: Should I take a trip of several hours there on my day off, or should I go during work time? It hit me that this was my work," says Pryne, who earned an M.Div. from Yale Divinity School in 1979.

"This was my a-ha! moment."

A few days later, Pryne put a note in the bulletin of her church, St. Mark's Cathedral, inviting people to attend a weekday evening meeting for those interested in environmental issues. "I knew that I'd struck a nerve when sixty-eight people showed up," Pryne says. "It was almost an ecstatic homecoming for many of them. My role as priest was simply as a convener. The work was the people."

In the years that followed, Pryne's new calling became a full-blown occupation and, eventually, established her as a national figure on issues of faith and environment. First came the founding of a group based at St. Mark's, then followed the launch of the Center for Creation Ministry. But, in a telling sign of how much has changed in recent years, that name proved to be highly problematic. "Mainline people thought we were fundamentalists because we had the word 'creation' in our name. Some others thought we were New Age pantheists," she remembers with a chuckle. "That tells you how neglectful mainline denominations had been in talking about God's creation."

Finally, in 1992, the group that had first gotten together following the Nestucca oil spill incorporated as a nonprofit under the name Earth Ministry. Pryne became the first executive director. Earth Ministry, with about 1,500 members, four paid staff, and a host of volunteers, concentrates on helping congregations in the Pacific Northwest organize and network. Earth Ministry also publishes *Earth Letter*, a quarterly journal that circulates nationally and focuses on Christian environmental spirituality and theology.

With two small children and a punishing travel schedule, Pryne stepped down in 1997 to return to pastoral work in the Puget Sound region. Currrently, she is an interim rector at St. Alban's Church in Edmonds, Washington. She also serves on the national board of the Trust for Public Land, a land conservation organization.

Pryne continues to speak on Earth Ministry's behalf, raise money, and write about environmental issues. It is a passion that, once awakened nearly twenty years ago, she expects to cultivate for the rest of her life. To a large extent, Pryne credits her Bulgarian-born father with informing her spirituality with a wonder at the marvels of the physical world. "Although he rarely used the word God, this attitude of reverence, humility, and gratitude laid very deep seeds in me as a child," she says. "He combined scientific curiosity and a passion for observation with a deep sense of awe and wonder that this can't all be an accident."

4 Papal statements are easily found at the Vatican website. For Redemptor: *http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis_en.html*.

5 John Paul II, General Audience January 26, 2000, quoted at the Catholic Conservation website: *http://conservation.catholic.org/pope_john_paul_ii.htm*

6 For web reference on the Columbia River Projects of the Bishops of the area: *www.columbiariver.org*.

7 World Council of Churches website: *www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/economy.html*.

8 See Martin Palmer, *Faith in Conservation: New Approaches to Religions and the Environment* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2003).

9 Indeed far beyond my own knowledge. There was a time, in the early 1990s, when I could claim (accurately or not) to know pretty much everything that was going on. Now I wouldn't even dream of pretending to. For readers who want to know more of what I do know, here are three of my contributions. *In This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2003) I put together representative selections of religious environmentalism's scripture, theology, liturgy, and activism. In *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) I've surveyed the field and tried to say what I think it means. In *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) I gathered together state-of-the-art new essays by twenty-five leading scholars who focus on different aspects of the subject. All of these books have extensive references to other resources.

10 The U.K.-based Alliance for Religions and Conservation has a wealth of information on these two instances and many others (in some of which it played an instrumental role). Its website: *www.arcworld.org*.

11 Karen Gridley, *Man of the Trees: Selected Writings of Richard S. Barbe Baker* (Willis, CA: Ecology Action, 1989), 71.

12 Christopher Childs, *The Spirit's Terrain: Creativity, Activism, and Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999) 50.

13 Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics website: www.fseee.org. My emphasis.

14 Proceedings of the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, ed. Charles Lee, United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice New York: UCC, 1992). The principles were written and adopted at this summit meeting.

A Billion Trees, A Singular Voice

By Wangari Maathai

Editor's note: The awarding of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize to Wangari Maathai culminated forty years of advocacy and struggle on behalf of the women and the natural habitats of Kenya, her home country. She founded the Green Belt Movement in 1977 with the aim of helping regular citizens plant trees and reforest the nation. By the 1980s, the movement's tree planting spread to public lands — and clashed with Kenya's dictatorial government. Maathai, periodically harassed and jailed, emerged as a political voice for a more democratic Kenya. In 2002, when a freely elected president swept the previous regime out of power, Maathai was voted into parliament and appointed assistant environment minister. The Nobel announcement two years later made her a world figure.

When I was growing up in Nyeri in central Kenya, there was no word for desert in my mother tongue, Kikuyu. Our land was fertile and forested.

But over time, I witnessed forests being cleared and replaced by commercial plantations, which destroyed local biodiversity and the capacity of the forests to conserve water. Today in Nyeri, as in much of Africa and the developing world, the soil is parched and unsuitable for growing food, and conflicts over land are common. Deforestation is on the increase. In Kenya the forest cover is less than 2 percent, while the UN recommends at least 10 percent for any country.

Thirty years ago, I was inspired to plant trees to help heal the land. That is how the Green Belt Movement got started. Trees stop soil erosion, provide fuel, material for building and fencing, fruits, fodder, shade, and beauty.

At the start, I was partly responding to needs identified by rural women, namely their lack of firewood, clean drinking water, balanced diets, shelter, and income.

Throughout Africa, women are the primary caretakers, holding significant responsibility for tilling the land and feeding their families. As a result, they are often the first to become aware of environmental damage, when resources become scarce and incapable of sustaining their families.

Ecological stresses force the women to walk farther to get wood for cooking and heating, to search for clean water, and to find new sources of food as old ones disappear.

Tree planting became a natural choice to address basic needs of the women. Tree planting is simple, attainable, and guarantees quick, successful results within a reasonable time. The women are paid a small amount for each seedling they grow, giving them an income as well as improving their environment.

So, together, we have planted over 30 million trees across Kenya and other nations of Africa — trees that provide fuel, food, shelter, and income to support their household needs and children's education. The activity creates employment and improves soils and watersheds. I placed my faith in the rural women of Kenya from the very beginning, and they have been key to the success of the Green Belt Movement, which is made up of thousands of groups. Through their involvement, women gain some degree of power over their lives, especially their social and economic position and relevance in the family. Women have become aware that planting trees or fighting to save forests from being chopped down is part of a larger mission to create a society that respects democracy, decency, adherence to the rule of law, human rights, and the rights of women.

This work continues. The movement has spread to countries in East and Central Africa. Initially, the work was difficult because historically our people have been persuaded to believe that because they are poor, they lack not only capital but also knowledge and skills to address their challenges. Instead they are conditioned to believe that solutions to their problems must come from "outside."

Further, women did not realize that their quality of life depends on a well-managed environment. They were unaware that a degraded environment

leads to a scramble for scarce resources and may culminate in poverty and even conflict. They were also unaware of the injustices of international economic arrangements.

In order to assist communities to understand these linkages, the Green Belt Movement developed a citizen education program, where people identify their problems, the causes, and possible solutions. They then make connections between their own personal actions and the problems they witness in the environment and in society. They confront a litany of the world's woes — corruption, violence against women and children, breakdown of families, and disintegration of cultures. They discuss the abuse of drugs and chemical substances, especially among young people. They hear about devastating diseases or epidemics that defy cures or eradication, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, and diseases associated with malnutrition.

On the environmental front, they are exposed to the widespread destruction of ecosystems, deforestation, climatic instability, and contamination in the soils and waters that contribute to excruciating poverty.

Participants discover that they must be part of the solutions. They learn their hidden potential; they're empowered to overcome inertia and take action. They come to recognize they are the primary custodians and beneficiaries of the environment that sustains them.

Entire communities also come to understand that while it is necessary to hold their governments accountable, it is equally important that in their own relationships with each other, they exemplify the leadership values they wish to see in their own leaders, namely justice, integrity, and trust.

Although initially the Green Belt Movement's tree planting activities did not address issues of democracy and peace, it soon became clear that responsible governance of the environment was impossible without democratic space.

Eventually, the tree became a symbol for the democratic struggle and conflict resolution in Kenya. Citizens were mobilized to challenge widespread abuses of power, corruption, and environmental mismanagement. In Nairobi's Uhuru Park, at Freedom Corner, and in many parts of the country, trees of peace were planted to demand the release of prisoners of conscience and a peaceful transition to democracy.

Through the Green Belt Movement, thousands of ordinary citizens were mobilized and empowered to take action and bring change. They learned to overcome fear and helplessness and moved to defend democratic rights.

The tree as a symbol of peace is in keeping with an African tradition. For example, the elders of the Kikuyu carried a staff from the *thigi* tree that when placed between two disputing sides caused them to stop fighting and seek reconciliation. Many communities in Africa have similar traditions.

Such practices are part of an extensive cultural heritage that contributes both to the conservation of habitats and to cultures of peace. With the destruction of these cultures and the introduction of new values, local biodiversity is no longer valued or protected and, as a result, is quickly degraded and disappears. For this reason, the Green Belt Movement explores the concept of cultural biodiversity, especially with respect to medicinal plants and indigenous seeds.

The planet does not belong to those in power. It is a gift to all of us, not only a source of profound beauty but the sustenance for all life. And each one of us can help conserve and protect the Earth.

The connection between peace and the environment can be explained using the analogy of the traditional African stool, which has three legs that support the base on which we sit. I believe these three legs are symbolic. One represents good management of our natural resources, equitable distribution of the same, and a sense of accountability. Another represents good government — a democratic state that respects the dignity of human beings. The third represents peace. The base on which we sit is development. If you try to do the development where you have no legs, or where you have just two legs or one leg, the base is out of balance. It is unsustainable.

It is thirty years since we started this work. But activities that devastate the environment and societies continue unabated. Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own — indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty, and wonder. This will happen if we see the need to revive our sense of belonging to a larger family of life, with which we have shared our evolutionary process.

Many actions can be taken all over the world. Individuals can choose to "reduce, reuse, recycle, and repair" whenever they can (in Japan this is known as *mottainai*). Many people are opting for hybrid cars, public transportation, and alternative sources of energy. This is why the Billion Tree Campaign is so wonderful. Everyone can get involved — individuals, institutions, corporations, and governments. Everyone can make a difference. [Editor's note: The Billion Tree Campaign, launched by the United Nations Environment Programme, is a worldwide tree-planting effort to plant one billion trees in 2007. The initiative was inspired by Wangari Maathai.]

I would like to call on young people to commit themselves to achieving their long-term dreams. They have the energy and creativity to shape a sustainable future. They are a gift to their communities and indeed the world. I have a lot of hope in youth. Their minds do not have to be held back by old thinking about the environment.

The situation is serious: youth of today will experience the consequences of their elders' mismanagement of the environment. Unless we change course, the coming generations will inherit an impoverished environment that will mean a hungrier, less fertile, and more unstable world. More conflicts will erupt. Through the Green Belt Movement we have tried to instill in young people the idea that protecting the environment is not just a pleasure but also a duty.

In conclusion, I recall my childhood experience when I would visit a stream next to our home to fetch water for my mother. I would drink water straight from the stream. Playing among the arrowroot leaves I tried in vain to pick up the strands of frogs' eggs, believing they were beads. Later, I saw thousands of tadpoles: black, energetic and wriggling through the clear water against the background of the brown Earth. This is the world I inherited from my parents.

Today, over fifty years later, the stream has dried up, women walk long distances for water, which is not always clean, and children will never know what they have lost. The challenge is to restore the home of the tadpoles and give back to our children a world of beauty and wonder.

Wangari Maathai, *environmentalist, biology scholar, women's rights advocate, parliamentarian, and founder of the Green Belt Movement, was the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2004 she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters at Yale.*

TREE OF HEAVEN
by Naomi Long Madgett

I will live.
The ax's angry edge against my trunk
cannot deny me. Though I thunder down
to lie prostrate among exalted grasses
that do not mourn me,
I will rise.

I will grow:
Persistent roots deep-burrowed in the earth
avenge my fall. Tentacles will shoot out swiftly
in all directions, stubborn leaves explode their force
into the sun.
I will thrive.

Curse of the orchard,
blemish of the land's fair countenance,
I have grown strong for strength denied, for struggle
in hostile woods. I keep alive by being troublesome,
indestructible,
stinkweed of truth.

Emmet Gowin: Subsidence Craters, Looking East from Area 8, Nevada Test Site, 1996

Nature and Grace: Making Environmental Issues Matter for Christian Life

By Willis Jenkins

Adapted excerpt from *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology,* Oxford University Press, Fall 2007

Consider how commonly nature writers reach for a salvation metaphor when they want to communicate the power of an environmental experience. Of course the rapturous John Muir, who saw cathedrals in the forest, choirs in the storms, and put the words of Jesus into the mouths of trees, often did.

His register was blatantly soteriological ("I pressed Yosemite upon him like a missionary offering the gospel.") I have in mind the more subtle reaches of down-to-earth environmental writers, like the scientist Rachel Carson: "There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature." Or the usually plain-spoken forester Aldo Leopold; when explaining what he learned from "the fierce green fire" in a wolf's eyes and from trying to "think like a mountain," Leopold misquotes Thoreau's dictum, "in wildness is the preservation of the world," to say "in wildness is the *salvation* of the world." This, he immediately goes on to say, "is the hidden meaning of the wolf, long known to mountains."[1]

Contemporary environmental writers exhibit the salvific instinct as well. Scott Russell Sanders writes that encountering nature involves a kind of faith "in the healing energy of wildness, in the holiness of creation. One of the reasons many of us keep going back to Thoreau and Muir and Leopold and Carson is because they kept that faith." Environmental writing thus seems to dwell near the literatures of faith, as attested by the fact that an editor would ask Barry Lopez to introduce an anthology of spiritual writing. Lopez does so by writing about the cultivation of reverence, which allows a landscape to enter and elevate a person. Humans are "creatures in search of...a pattern of grace," writes Lopez elsewhere. When "the land gets inside of us," as Lopez puts it, those patterns of grace are crucial for deciding what we will do about it.[2]

These writers seem to sense that they hold a sacred trust, remembering forms of holiness and salves of healing nearly forgotten by an alienated world. Terry Tempest Williams: "There is a holy place in the salt desert, where egrets hover like angels...I am hidden and saved from the outside world." Even upstart David Gessner, who professes to be sick of pious writing about nature, cannot help himself, concluding one book: "If we look for it, we will find that a whole world is waiting for us. And it is in that world that we, not seeking it, will find a sort of salvation." Some of our best environmental writers exhibit an organic reach toward grace.[3]

Other cultural observers have noticed this spiritual creep in environmental thought and trace religious valences in the civic reform of American environmentalism, sometimes with dismay. The veneration of nature, the feelings of prophetic alienation, the raptures and epiphanies, the sense of apocalyptic doom, the missional project of personal and cultural transformation — all this makes the environmental movement look religious.[4]

Meanwhile, the religious are beginning to look environmental. Religious leaders from many traditions have committed their respective faiths to addressing environmental problems. Religious communities from across the spectrums of diversity have begun to lift their voices for greener policies. Faith-based grassroots organizations around the world work to reclaim, restore, and replant. Religious thinkers regularly propose ecological retrievals, critiques, and revisions of their traditions.

The charged relations between religious and environmental thought produce some ambivalence in what we might mean by "religious environmentalism." The term could mean the environmental responses and practices of various religious communities. That includes a range of phenomena from theological redefinitions of environmental goals to the mobilization of religious adherents in social reform movements. Or "religious environmentalism" could mean the religious themes of environmental thought. That ranges from the missionary postures of the environmental movement to the spiritual dimensions of environmental experience. And there are hybrid uses of the term, as in the perception that global environmental problems are so complex, terrifying, and significant that they require a religious register for understanding and responding to them.

Life with God, Life on Earth

For Christian communities, making sense of what we mean by "religious environmentalism" means making sense of how to talk about life on Earth and life with God as a mutual venture. It means finding ways to make environmental problems morally intelligible for Christian experience, significant for Christian identity. Because problems of such scale and scope are new to humanity, that task challenges theological traditions in ways unprecedented by other debates in Christian ethics, like arguments about war, sexuality, or poverty. Species loss and threats to biodiversity obviously arrest our moral attention, but how do they matter for Christian life? New technological capacities seem to exercise transgressive control over nature, but what part of the Christian story offers approval or critique? Globalizing capitalism changes everything from agriculture to local economies, but how is it measured by theological wisdom? In an urbanizing world, the need for sustainable planning, housing, and energy use calls for imaginative new political forms, but how are they intelligible to Christian communities? Climate change places new dimensions of society in jeopardy, but how is that preachable on Sunday mornings?

As pastor, lay leaders, ethicists, and theologians try to answer those questions we have to decide what resources can engage Christian practice most directly, what parts of the Christian story can inform faithful response most adequately. Our theological traditions and moral practices are challenged, maybe even jeopardized, by environmental crises. In what ways does a wounded Earth matter for Christian spirituality? How do unsustainable or exploitative forms of inhabitation trouble Christian community? Good theological answers reestablish the Christian synthesis of life on Earth in the context of life with God.

So it is unsurprising that some of the most effective Christian initiatives inscribe environmental issues into the heart of Christian experience and identity by drawing on the metaphors, logics, and narratives of grace. They sense that nature matters for the Christian soul when it comes into contact with grace. Nature and grace — the bedrock logic of Christian experience. So perhaps in addition to reviewing our creation stories we should look also to our salvation stories, reading them as accounts of life on Earth in the context of life with God. What are our ecologies of grace? How does nature matter for the Christian experiences of redemption, sanctification, or reconciliation?

In what ways does a wounded Earth matter for Christian spirituality?

At first glance soteriology appears an unlikely starting place, for it seems to focus on the human, the spiritual, the interior, the otherwordly — quite the opposite of environmental concerns. Indeed, some compelling critiques blame the human-centered, spiritualized ambitions of salvation stories for generating the bad worldviews that underlie environmental problems. For better worldviews, therefore, Christian environmental ethics often begins from creation stories, reconsidering the moral dimensions of religious cosmology. Yet look carefully and you will see ethicists relying on the tropes and concepts of grace to make those cosmological reformulations come to life within Christian experience. Even while talking about other things, Christian environmental ethics tends to draw on background stories of salvation at the moments it wants to make environmental issues matter for Christian life.

They do so, I think, for reasons of pragmatic resonance. Species loss and threats to biodiversity require urgent and wholehearted responses; relationship with God animates Christian responses. Changes in agriculture and land use alter basic patterns of human experience; views of salvation shape the patterns of basic Christian experience. Technologies grow ominous with gargantuan and transgressive power; Christian conversion envisions powers overthrown and transformed. Unsustainable economies and climate change jeopardize contemporary forms of community; Christian communities form within economies of grace.

Redemption and Reforestation

Let me offer two examples from my experience working with faith-based community development organizations. The first I came across several years ago in Uganda. As an assistant to a Church of Uganda (Anglican) development program, I learned how Ugandan churches theologically mobilize community responses to new social problems. Core parish committees, often centered around revivalist prayer groups, have adapted community responses to HIV transmission and AIDS outreach; they help protect and school orphans; they start and manage local clinics and schools; they protect water sources, organize microdevelopment loans, and plan community land use. And, as priests give voice to these organic theological innovations, all of those practical responses somehow inflect the preaching and worship on Sundays.

For each new problem, church communities were finding ways to redeploy their traditions (both theological and cultural) in order to address a social problem. New forms of Christian practice were striving to keep unprecedented social problems and dramatic socio-economic changes from fracturing the centers of common life. Each mode of response, I began to see, invented some new capacity from their traditions to make social issues significant for the experience of Christian life.

Many of these church groups, especially in the deforested hill country of western Ankole and Kigezi, include tree-planting initiatives in their activities. Despite familiarity with their expansive register of social ministries, I was surprised to see very poor church communities, possessed of revivalist evangelical faith, working to replant native trees. To my mind, reforestation was an "environmentalist" issue somewhat removed from more immediate concerns like protecting water and traditionally evangelical concerns like caring for orphans. Yet here were Christian groups who had started a nursery for seedlings and were planting trees all around the village. Priests regularly approved the practice from the pulpit, and when the local bishop made the rounds his exhortations always included tree planting (along with marriage, sexual fidelity, and good schools.)

Why should the revivalist faith of poor community groups express itself in reforestation? The usual diagnostic tests do not seem to help: the degree of nature's moral standing (low) and anthropocentrism (high) in revivalist preaching cannot explain why prayer groups would care about reforestation. Why would tree planting make it into a sermon headed for an altar call for an outburst of ecstatic dancing? I suspected that I needed to ask theological questions closer to the heart of the community's identity, which meant, for these communities, asking soteriological questions.

Somehow hills and trees had become significant for their experience of redemption. "Walking in the light" of Christ's regeneration meant reclaiming their village highlands as the environment of God's grace for them. Denuded hills were a sign of shame, and reforestation a way to give witness to God's new abundant life for this faith community.

A few years later, on the other side of the world, I visited the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) in Nasushiobara, Japan. ARI is at once an experimental farm for sustainable agriculture, a training institute for NGO leaders from the two-thirds world, and a remarkable interfaith community. College volunteers, staff leaders, and NGO participants from around the world form a life together, working among their organic chickens, high-yield rice paddies, bio-gas generators, and onsite cannery. The community requirements: everyone works and everyone attends chapel. They decide together how to run the farm and why, and they take turns holding chapel, each in the tradition of her own faith.

If Christians inadequately understand the ecology of God's desire for humanity, then they stutter before the fullness of their gospel.

ARI believes that spiritual, economic, and ecological alienations must be healed together, and that the path to restored communion with each other and with God comes through learning the Earth's lessons. Roommates Fr. Jovy, a Filipino Anglican priest, and Markuse, an Indian Hindu, exemplify ARI's lived theology. Both had graduated from the ARI program and started successful ecumenical environmental initiatives in their home countries, and had now come back as staff. Now they share a simple dorm room and vision for reconciliation through sustainability. Jovy and Markuse believe that interfaith peace comes through collaborative work to restore human communities to ecological harmony. The daily work of understanding and tending fields is for them also the theological work of understanding one another and creatively entering communion with the divine.

As I reflected on the implicit theologies of ARI and the revivalist tree-planters, I began to see lived

environmental theologies that formed according to distinct notions of grace. The patterns of their environmental responses seem contoured by their notions of relationship with God. They seem to embody grassroots theologies of living on Earth according to their experience of living with God. They seem to inhabit, that is to say, distinct ecologies of grace.

Nature and Grace in Environmental Theology

Following a clue from the revivalist reforesters and reconciling organic farmers, I wonder whether soteriology might illuminate practical strategies. Following the hunch of the nature writers, I wonder whether vocabularies of grace might name resources for restoring ways of living ruptured from the Earth or haunted by loss. Suppose we let our stories of nature and grace show how environmental issues matter for Christian moral experience. How might our narratives of redemption and reconciliation guide the way churches should think about species loss or sustainability or community gardens? What role does the Earth play in God's invitation to participate in the divine life? How does the environment matter for becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ? Such questions lead Christian communities of all theological stripes to discover the ecological dimensions of their experience of God.

George Kehm argues that a practical environmental theology must "demonstrate the indispensability to the Christian story of an idea or theological claim: that this idea or claim must be in the story or else the story would not be that story."It must show precisely how, as Luke Timothy Johnson writes, environmental problems are "a crisis in Christian identity." Insofar as Christianity revolves around a story of persons liberated, the sick healed, covenant restored, sinfulness redeemed, experience made holy, or the world reconciled, so far should environmental theologies seek soteriological roots. A practical Christian ethic, in other words, should show how the environmental crisis amounts to a crisis in the intimacies of God's salvation.[5]

Joseph Sittler, who began rewriting theology for the environmental crisis in the early 1960s, insisted then that "nothing short of a radical relocation and reconceptualization of the reality and doctrine of grace is an adequate answer to that problem." For Sittler, the church rediscovers its relation to the natural world by reconsidering its teachings on the presence of God for humanity. For in God's saving acts we find a doctrine "large enough and ready enough and interiorly most capable of articulating a theological relationship between theology and ecology." The paradoxes of grace and nature orient human persons to both humble soil and heavenly glories, shaping them for friendship with God and love of the world.[6]

Sittler thus suggests that environmental theologies should focus on showing how life with God and life on Earth are shared ventures. But that is no easy task, for as Oliver Davies (among a number of recent theologians) laments, modern theology somewhere lost the facility to hold together divine and natural aspects of createdness. If "our intimacy with God is set outside our intimacy with the world," says Davies, then theology will fail to make sense of creation. In order for intimacy with God to illuminate the way of the world into Christian experience, theology must show how we are intimately related to the Earth, and the Earth to us, through God's ways of relating to creation.

Davies argues that when Christianity fails to maintain relations among humanity, creation, and God's presence, Christian experience loses its sense of the world. Failing to hold together God's invitation to humanity and the human enfleshment within creation, says Davies, Christianity impoverishes both its christology and its soteriology – and so begins to lose the very center of its faith. So Davies raises the practical stakes: if Christians inadequately understand the ecology of God's desire for humanity then they stutter before the fullness of their gospel. So too the converse: if they inadequately connect God's saving work to inhabiting creation, environmental theologies will sit awkwardly with Christian identity and mission.

Sittler and Davies thus connect environmental issues to pastoral strategies from both sides. Without the fullness of grace, a Christian environmental ethic will falter. Without its environmental dimensions, a Christian story of salvation will falter. That not only issues a challenge but presents an organizing clue: if Sittler and Davies are right, then we would expect successful practical strategies of Christian environmental ethics to organically connect environmental issues to experience of God.

And in fact we see something like that happening in grassroots environmental initiatives. Ecojustice theologies tend to draw on themes of sanctification in order to connect respect for creation's integrity to the spirituality and practice of God's justice. Stewardship theologies rely upon tropes of redemption, where encounter with God creates vocational responsibilities to care for creation. Creation spiritualities appropriate themes of deification, in which

eucharistic creativity gathers all creation into the gift of union with God.

I could proliferate examples; the point is that each strategy brings environmental issues within Christian moral experience by fitting them into a shared pattern of grace. That helps explain the diversity of Christian environmentalisms by the diversity of theological communities. Alternative stories of the experience of God make for various experiences of our Earthly habitat. We can argue (and do!) about which stories narrate the experience more fully or truthfully, and which forms of inhabitation live on Earth more appropriately. The point is that the story and the habitat connect.

Listening to theologians like Sittler and Davies, and following lessons learned from innovative Christian environmentalisms from the global south, I propose we take a second look at the way stories of grace bind the ventures of life on earth to the ventures of life with God. If we do, we may find ways of restoring the intimacies of nature and grace.

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Notes

1 John Muir, *Nature Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1997), 238; Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 87; Henry David Thoreau, *Collected Essays and Poems* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 239; Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 137.

2 Scott Russell Sanders, *Hunting for Hope* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 39; Barry Lopez, Introduction to *The Best American Spiritual Writing 2005*, ed. Philip Zaleski (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), xvii–xxiii; Barry Lopez, *Resistance* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 11; Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 411.

3 Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge* (New York: Random House, 1991), 237; David Gessner, *The Prophet of Dry Hill* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 181; Cf. David Gessner, *Sick of Nature* (Lebanon: Dartmouth Press, 2005).

4 See, for example, Thomas Dunlap, *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

5 George Kehm, "The New Story: Redemption as Fulfillment of Creation," in *After Nature's Revolt: Eco-Justice and Theology*, ed. Dieter Hessel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 91; Luke Timothy Johnson, "Caring for the Earth: Why Environmentalism Needs Theology," *Commonweal* 132, no. 13 (2005): 18.

6 Joseph Sittler, *Essays on Nature and Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1972), 6. Joseph Sittler, "Ecological Commitment as Theological Responsibility," *Zygon* 5 (1970), 180.

7 Oliver Davies, *The Creativity of God* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6–7.

A Harvest of Selected Books for a Greening Faith

Sisters of Dust, Sisters of Spirit: Womanist Wordings on God and Creation *by Karen Baker-Fletcher (Augsburg Fortress)*

A scholar fashions a justice-oriented spirituality of creation. "Our task is to grow large hearts, large minds, reconnecting with Earth, Spirit, and one another. Black religion must grow ever deeper in the heart," she says.

Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I *(Eerdmans)*

This collection assembles the declarations and speeches by the "green patriarch," the worldwide leader of Orthodox Christianity who has steadily called attention to the ecological crisis and insisted that spiritual values should shape solutions.

The Splendor of Creation: A Biblical Ecology

by Ellen Bernstein (Pilgrim Press)

This writer offers a careful, accessible, sometimes autobiographical meditation on creation in the Hebrew Scriptures. Written with spiritual seekers and environmentalists in mind, the book also chronicles her re-engagement with Judaism.

The Care of Creation *edited by R. J. Berry (InterVarsity)*

Berry assembles a collection of commentary that starts with the 1994 Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation. The book regards creation care as a test of human survival and Christian faith. It includes Calvin DeWitt, Jurgen Moltmann, and Alister McGrath.

Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community *by Thomas Berry (Sierra Club)*

A leading cultural historian frames the ecological crisis as a spiritual crisis. This collection of writings suggests a narrative of creation that weaves modern evolutionary thinking and traditional religious insights. Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker.

Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor *by Leonardo Boff (Orbis)*

Written by a South American theologian/priest famously at odds with the Vatican, this book links ecology to liberation theology, social justice, and process thought. He focuses on the fate of the Amazon rainforests and indigenous peoples.

For the Beauty of the Earth *by Steven Bouma-Prediger (Baker)*

A Reformed theologian offers a readable introduction to a biblical theology of creation care. "Authentic Christian faith requires ecological obedience," he declares.

This Sacred Earth *by Roger Gottlieb (Routledge)*

A philosopher gathers a broad, interfaith-oriented series of readings in religion and environmental thought, with some classic essays. Included are Thoreau and Emerson, Annie Dillard, John Muir, Barry Lopez, and selections from traditional religious texts.

What Are They Saying About Environmental Theology?

by John Hart (Paulist)

A Christian ethicist analyzes Roman Catholic teaching on the environment, examining official statements from Rome and from bishops of the Americas as well as the work of contemporary theologians.

Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-being of Earth and Humans*, edited by Dieter Hessel and Rosemary Reuther (Harvard)*

This collection is gathered by Harvard's Forum on Religion and Ecology. Contributors describe how the current crisis hastens an ecological reorientation in Christian thinking, church organization and personal discipleship, and explore how faith can be a green ally.

The Environment and Christian Ethics

by Michael Northcott (Cambridge)

Northcott issues a comprehensive environmental challenge to Christian ethics, arguing that Christianity has lost a biblical awareness of the interconnectedness of life. He pleads for the restoration of prophetic covenant thinking.

Earth Community, Earth Ethics *by Larry Rasmussen (Orbis)*

Rasmussen here surveys the range of dangers threatening planetary life. His scope includes analysis of industrialism, politics, and gender discrimination, and he sketches a constructive ethic as a future guide. The book won the 1997 Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Religion.

New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation *by Rosemary Radford Reuther (Beacon)*

This classic of ecofeminist theology and cultural critique, first published in 1975, finds connections between sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, environmental destruction, and other forms of domination.

Worldly Wonder: Religions Enter Their Ecological Phase

by Mary Evelyn Tucker (Open Court, 2004)

A leading scholar offers an interdisciplinary perspective on humankind's place in the history of the cosmos. The challenge for the world's religions, she says, is to rethink our role as citizens of the universe and reinvent our niche in the Earth community.

A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics *edited by Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton (Columbia)*

This collection deepens ecological connections by examining how the world's faiths incorporate animals into their beliefs, rituals, and art. Contributors explore animal consciousness, suffering, and stewardship, among other themes.

How Big Should People Be?

A sermon by Bill McKibben

How big should people be? For most of human history the answer was clear — people were going to be pretty small in the general scheme of things. That's been the human posture through almost all of human experience. We were one small species among many, eking out our own way, our own survival on this planet — until very recently, I mean within the lifetimes of the people in this room, when our stature began to change in remarkable ways.

The first inkling we got was with the invention of nuclear weapons. What was it that Oppenheimer said watching the first bomb explode over the New Mexico desert? He quoted from the Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu scripture, and said, "We have become as Gods, destroyers of worlds."

Well, that was a theoretical danger, the thought that we would wipe ourselves out with nuclear weapons. And so far, thanks be to God, we have avoided that. But in the past fifteen or twenty years we've come to understand that we're now embarking on a course of destruction that is in no way theoretical. It's happening every moment of every day. And it comes not from a few grand explosions of nuclear weapons but from a billion explosions every minute of pistons inside cylinders around the world spewing carbon into the atmosphere.

In 1989 when I wrote a book called *The End of Nature*, it was the first book about global warming for a general audience. And at the time we thought of this as a hypothesis. I thought it was a strong hypothesis — this idea that human beings were burning enough coal, gas, and oil to put enough carbon into the atmosphere to materially alter the climate. But it was very much in the nature of a hypothesis. And it seemed emotionally counterintuitive: even if scientifically accurate, how could one species grow big enough to affect the vast play of climate? When you change the amount of the sun's energy that's trapped in this narrow envelope of atmosphere, you basically change everything that happens on the surface of the Earth. Except for tectonic and volcanic forces, everything else — precipitation, melt, freezing — runs off wind speed and solar energy.

From 1989 to approximately 1995, the world's scientists, pouring more money and talent into this one problem than into any problem before or since — set to work with a vengeance. They sent up weather balloons and satellites, they cored ponds, they examined tree rings. They refined over and over again these very powerful computer models that allow us to understand what happens as we add more carbon to the atmosphere. And by about 1995 those scientists were willing to say — out loud and with a remarkable unanimity — that human beings were heating up the planet and it was going to be a serious problem. They were giving us a wake-up call, saying our species has grown incredibly big in a very short time. We're now casting a shadow over the entire planet: every cubic foot of air on Earth holds the imprint of our habits and our economies and our conveniences.

Since 1995 it's as if the planet itself had been conducting a rigorous peer review of this research to make sure it was correct. We've had nine of the ten warmest years on record. Having raised the temperature of the planet through our actions about one degree Fahrenheit, we've begun to understand just how finely balanced this system is. Twenty years ago we didn't understand the system well enough to predict just how dramatic a change even of one degree would be, but it's enormous. Everything frozen on

the face of the Earth is now melting, and melting very, very rapidly. Pack ice didn't fully reform in the Arctic ocean the past two winters in a row. We see the dramatic increase in intensity and frequency of severe storms.

A Short Soggy Winter

We can begin to sense some of these things very close to home. You all remember what last winter was like, it was like really no winter that Vermont had ever seen — short and soggy, more mud than snow. You all recall what this spring was like when it rained and rained and rained. It's precisely the kind of thing we can expect more of because warm air holds more water vapor than cold air does. So you get more evaporation and more drought in dry areas and more precipitation, more deluge, in wet areas.

The average Western European uses half as much energy as the average American. Half as much.

And it's only just begun. The computer models make it very clear that unless we do very dramatic things in the very near future then the temperature will rise another five degrees Fahrenheit. That's not the worst-case scenario; that's the middle-case guess, in the lifetime of the youngest people in this room. That'll make the world warmer than it's been for hundreds of millions of years. It'll result in what NASA climatologist James Hansen recently called a totally different planet. That's the challenge we face.

And we need to face it if we care about creation, because everything around us is at risk. The best guesses are that the extinction consequences of that kind of temperature-warming would be at least as great as the last time a great asteroid hit the Earth, except this time the asteroid is us. Probably some of you have been off to the tropics and snorkeled around reefs and seen that incredible, fantastic profusion of life — just the most enchanted corner of God's brain. That ecosystem will be gone in fifty years around the world if we keep raising the temperature because the animal that builds those coral reefs can't survive that kind of bleaching.

If you care about social justice, and the injunctions that Jesus over and over again tells us to love our neighbor, then this is the issue that matters most of all because we've never managed to impoverish and wreck the lives of marginal people around the world more effectively than to destroy the basic physical stability on which those lives depend.

Most of all, the reason we should care is this complete overturning of this sense of who we are in the scheme of things. Because all of a sudden, we don't need to sit down and shut up like Job did. We can taunt God right back, we can spit in God's face.

God set the boundaries of the ocean? Not really, we're starting to get in that game too. Simply by raising the temperature of the water, there's a thermal expansion coefficient — warm water takes up more space than cold. So even before we melt anything we'll raise the levels of the seas two and three feet. God told Job, "Do you know where I store the rain and the wind?" But now that's kind of our thing too —severe storms that drop more than two inches of rain in a 24-hour period have increased about 20 percent at this latitude in the past twenty years.

We saw what happened last year across the Gulf coast. You can't call Hurricane Katrina anymore an "act of God," as an insurance policy would put it. That's in large measure now an act of people and more so with each passing year and with each new part per million of CO_2 in the Earth's atmosphere.

We're at the moment when the imperative to figure out how to get smaller is suddenly the dominant issue — how to make ourselves fit in again on this planet. How do we do it?

Reducing Emissions, ASAP

Some of the answer is technological, and we've got technologies that are coming that will help us. Wind power and solar power, people driving hybrid cars. These things will help, but by themselves they are not going to turn the tide. The climatologists estimate we need an immediate, worldwide 70 percent reduction in the use of fossil fuels just to stabilize climate at its current levels of upheaval. And it's extremely difficult to imagine that happening because poor people around the world, most particularly in China and India, are finally starting to burn small amounts of fossil fuel to make their lives a little more sustainable. They consume nothing compared to us — the average Chinese burns about one-ninth as much energy in the course of the year as any of us do, but still that increase makes it all the harder to get that reduction.

So technology won't do the whole trick. Politics will help; we must hold accountable all federal candidates of every party, and get them to pledge support for climate legistation and reintegrate us into the world community and change the mix of subsidies and tax policies that underwrite our overuse of fossil fuels and make progress more difficult.

But what will really help, in the end? What will help is the technology we've lost track of most — the technology of community. The ability to work together in profound ways.

Communities of faith are the last institutions in our society that posit some reason other than accumulation for existence.

What do I mean? Well, take this statistic. Most of you have been to Western Europe at one time or another. You've been to France or Germany or Italy or someplace.

You know that people there live lives just as dignified as ours. Yet the average Western European uses half as much energy as the average American.

Half as much. Why? Largely because they situate themselves a little differently on the spectrum between individual and community. They've been willing to pay the freight to make really good cities that attract people in instead of spinning them out into suburbs. They're willing not only to subsidize mass-transit trains and buses with their tax money. They're willing to get on and ride them. They accept there are moments when you don't always go exactly where you want to go at exactly the moment you want to go there — that you can rearrange your life by ten minutes here and there to be part of something larger.

One of our problems in our society and our economy is that we can't imagine anything other than "more" anymore. Communities of faith — churches, synagogues, mosques — are the last institutions in our society that posit some reason other than accumulation for existence. And that gives them potentially enormous power to do the work of the church, which is to be subversive, countercultural, contrary to the dominant currents of the world. And that's beginning to happen. You can sense its power. The deepest power that we can summon to deal with this crisis is precisely the kind of power that comes from the solidarity in this room.

The greatest problem of the fossil fuel era on this planet is not that it's destroying everything around us. The greatest problem is that cheap coal and gas and oil have allowed us to live in such independence of each other that we've largely forgotten what community means, what neighbor means. We don't depend on each other for anything real anymore. And that's why it's so spectacular to see the return of such things like local food, relationships with farmers, and so on. The erosion of that community is a tragedy because community is what we were called to by God. That is the hallmark of our species from the start, this need to be with each other. It's the greatest gift that we've been given and the one we've spurned in our culture most completely. We were built to cling to each other, and remembering that is our salvation in every way.

Environmentalist/writer **Bill McKibben** *is author of* The End of Nature, The Age of Missing Information, *and* Wandering Home. *He is scholar in residence in Middlebury College in Vermont and an active Methodist.*

Editor's Note *This sermon was delivered at Charlotte Congregational Church in Charlotte, Vermont, last September during a five-day, fifty-mile peaceful protest march from Ripton, Vermont, to Burlington, Vermont. Organized by McKibben, the walk aimed to be a catalyst for meaningful political action at the federal level in response to climate change. In spring 2007 McKibben helped orchestrate the national Step It Up call-to-action campaign. On April 14 at more than 1,400 locations in the fifty states, Americans protested global warming by challenging Congress to cut carbon emissions 80 percent by 2050.*

Emmet Gowin: Discarded Overburden near the town of Most, Czech Republic, 1992

Earthkeeping and the Bible

By Steven Bouma-Prediger

In debates among Christians concerning our responsibility toward the earth, the Bible is often cited to support various positions. To justify their right to exploit the earth, some point to the command in Genesis 1:26–28 to have dominion and subdue the nonhuman creatures.

Others refer to Matthew 24:36–42 to sanction a careless ethic for the Earth, since Christians will (on this view) be whisked off the planet when Jesus comes again; so why care for something that will (soon) be destroyed. Others cite 2 Peter 3:1–10 to legitimate the wholesale destruction of the Earth and its replacement by something entirely new.

Those who beg to differ with these views usually offer different interpretations of these texts and also refer to other biblical texts, such as Psalm 104 and Romans 8, to support their position that humans are created to care for the Earth and its plethora of creatures and that God will in the future redeem, not destroy, the Earth.

It is important to carefully examine and interpret these oft-cited texts. I and others have been doing this for years. Properly understood, Genesis 1 does not equate dominion with domination, Matthew 24 is not about "the Rapture," and 2 Peter does not legitimate the destruction of the Earth. But in these debates some important biblical texts are often ignored. What follows is a (very) short list of some of these illuminating but neglected texts.

Humans from the Humus: Genesis 2:4–15

Who are we humans? Answers have been given for as long as we have drawn breath. Some say we are souls trapped in bodies. Others that we are thinking mind hitched to extended matter. Or that we are nothing more than $27.63 worth of carbon, hydrogen, calcium, and the like.

This text insists that we humans are Earthy and earthly creatures. In a Hebrew pun the text states that we are *'adam* from the *'adamah*. We are Adam because we are made from the *'adamah,* or arable Earth. God scoops up some soil and breathes into it his life-giving Spirit. We are animated Earth, Spirit-enlivened dirt. We are also, of course, made in God's image. But this text reminds us that we image-bearers are Earthy. We are humble humans from the humus.

Furthermore, what are we supposed to do? What is our God-given human calling? This text insists that we humans from the humus are called to serve and protect the Earth. This is the translation of the last part of Genesis 2:15. God took the human Earth-creature and placed us in the garden to *'abad* (to serve) and *shamar* (to protect) it. Just as it says on every Chicago police car: to serve and protect. Our calling is to be creation's cops, serving and protecting this our earthly home so that it and we may flourish. Our God-given vocation is to bring about shalom — not only the absence of conflict but the flourishing of all things.

Covenant with Creation: Genesis 8:1–9:17

In this passage it is clear that God remembers Noah and his human kinfolk. But what we often overlook or ignore is that God also remembers the animals — wild and domestic — with Noah in that floating species preserve of an ark. God's remembrance includes more than humans. We should not be surprised, since in Genesis 6:18-22 the text tells us that God commanded Noah to take two of every species of every living thing into the ark, male and female, with adequate food not only for the human but also for the nonhuman passengers. God remembers us and God remembers all our nonhuman kin.

Many read this story as a story about the covenant with Noah, but like a steady drumbeat, eight times in ten verses (9:8–17), Scripture tells us that God's covenant is with more than humans. Indeed, it is with the Earth itself. We tend to think that God is interested only in us humans, but this covenant with creation tells us otherwise. And while we think the rainbow is for us — to remind us of God's mercy — the text tells us that the rainbow serves as a reminder primarily to God. As Frederick Buechner puts it, the rainbow is like a string tied around God's pinky, lest God forget his everlasting covenant. God sees the rainbow and remembers his covenant with creation.

Sabbath Rest: Leviticus 25:1–7

This passage from Leviticus reminds us that in addition to the seventh day, in which all are to rest, in God's prescription for the good life there is also a seventh year. During this sabbatical year the land must be allowed to rest. Give the land some time off. Don't push the limits of what the land can bear. The purpose of this command is clear: if God's people follow these statutes, then they will flourish. The land will be productive. The trees will be fruitful. There will be peace. Shalom will reign.

The underlying principle here contains much wisdom. We all need rest. Short times of sabbath rest on a regular basis and longer times less frequently are part of wise living. And the land and animals under our care also need rest. So that all will go well with us. So that we and all God's creatures will flourish.

All Creatures Praise The Lord: Psalm 148

Can sea monsters and cedars, snakes and sandpipers give praise to God? Can trees and rivers clap their hands in praise to God? Is this talk of nonhuman creatures praising God just a figure of speech? Perhaps this is just an example of the psalmist getting carried away.

This joyous psalm is an invitation calling on all creatures — in heaven and on Earth — to offer praise to God the Creator and Redeemer. Angels and shining stars. Mountains and fruit trees. Humans young and old, women and men, royalty and paupers. All creatures are called upon to sing praise to God. This creational doxology is not commanded. Praise is, rather, simply fitting for creatures given life and redeemed by a loving God. So, says the psalmist, let's sing. Each of us in our own creaturely way joins in the hymn of praise.

We humans are to voice creation's praise. We are those creatures called and equipped by God to help creation sing its praises to God. We are like a symphony conductor who makes sure all the instruments are present, tuned, and in harmony, working together to make beautiful music. Reality these days, however, is quite different. By analogy, today we are wiping out half the violins and most of the percussion and good bit of the brass section. We are losing important members of the orchestra. And we've lost track of the score. We don't know the music and our attempts to improvise are off key and out of kilter. We need to reclaim our role as creation's conductor and reimagine the symphony that is our world.

Our Redeemer Is Creator: Isaiah 40:25–31

One of the heresies in the early centuries of the church was the belief that God the Redeemer was different from God the Creator. Some thought that the God who redeemed us in Christ could not possibly be the one who made us, since matter was considered evil and no self-respecting deity would dirty his hands by messing with the stuff of the Earth. There must be two gods, a creator and a redeemer, the former inferior to the latter. This heresy is, sadly, alive and well in the contemporary church. And it is nowhere more evident than in beliefs about our responsibility to care for the Earth, with some assuming we have none because of a split between Redeemer and Creator.

This text clearly affirms that our Redeemer is our Creator. The Redeemer of the Exodus is the same as the Creator of the ends of the Earth. Indeed, it is precisely because God is the Creator of all that he can and will deliver on his redemptive promises. Furthermore, that our Redeemer is our Creator means that matter matters to God. Earth is not foreign territory to the One who took flesh and pitched his tent among us. Our loving Redeemer is the selfsame loving Creator.

God's Good Future: Isaiah 65:17–25

The daily newspapers give sad testimony to the onslaught of distress we bear: war, famine, poverty, hunger, homelessness. Injustices of various kinds sap the soul and destroy the flesh. We yearn for a time when things will be radically different, when life will be good and right and whole. The prophet, too, yearns for that bright future, when delight abounds and the sounds of weeping will be heard no more. A time when infants grow to old age and the aged grow old with grace. When those who build houses inhabit them and those who plant vineyards eat their fruit. We long, in short, for shalom — the flourishing of all things, the coming together of God and us and our nonhuman neighbors in a rich tapestry

of delight, a world no longer bent or broken or out of kilter.

We Christians are to be aching visionaries, says Nicholas Wolterstorff. Like the prophet, we are to yearn for God's good future of shalom — here on Earth. Our yearning is not to go to heaven, but for heaven to come to Earth, for God's rule of peace and delight to be made fully real on Earth.

On Earth: Matthew 6:9–13

In the doxology we sing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow; / Praise Him all creatures here below." In the Apostles' Creed we pledge allegiance to God the "Maker of heaven and earth." In the Lord's Prayer we pray that God's will be done "on earth as it is in heaven." Here below. Heaven and Earth. On Earth.

Our faith is earthy and earthly. God's will is to be done on Earth — in our homes, schools, workplaces. Today, right now, at this time may God's will be done. We pray and work for that day when shalom will be fully realized in this present world. Christian faith is not about going to heaven, but about heaven coming to Earth. It is about God's will fully realized — that's what heaven is — here on Earth. Our hymns, creeds, and prayers contain much to inspire us to be faithful earthkeepers, if we have the ears to hear and eyes to see.

Tenting Among Us: John 1:1–14

For over a week we lived together, my students and I, in tents while canoeing and backpacking in upstate New York. When in such close quarters you get to know each other quite well. You know who snores, who likes cold cereal, and who takes joy in hanging up the bear bag. In short, tenting together brings about intimacy.

This text from John is mind-boggling. Literally it says "the Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us." The image refers to the people of Israel wandering in the wilderness. Wherever they would camp they would pitch a big tent — the tabernacle — and God would reside with them. In Jesus God tented among us. Not as a glory cloud inhabiting a tabernacle, but as one of us. We call it the Incarnation, but neither words nor minds can grasp the reality. In taking on human flesh, God knows us and our condition, intimately. And God says that physical flesh per se is not evil. While fallen, our bodiliness as made by God is good. Matter matters, to God, and so it should to us. How then can we who embrace the Incarnation not also take seriously our call to care for the Earth?

Meeting the King: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

The wedding guests rushed out to meet the bridegroom to join his bridal party as he entered the wedding hall (Matt. 25:6). The Christians in Rome journeyed forty-three miles to meet Paul and become part of his entourage as he entered the capital city (Acts 28:15). Two joyous meetings. This text from Paul's first love letter to the Thessalonians proclaims the joyous coming of Christ the King and the ecstatic response of his followers. As in Matthew 25:6 and Acts 28:15, this text is about going "to meet" a visiting dignitary in order to escort him back to where you were. Christ is coming. And those believers who are alive will be caught up, with the dead, to meet Christ in the air, so they all might be part of Christ's glorious parade to Earth.

This passage does not describe "the Rapture" — believers being whisked off the Earth and the Earth been burned up to nothing. Indeed, contrary to what many Americans believe, there is no "Rapture" in the Bible. Paul's picture here is not about escaping from the Earth but about greeting the King as he returns to establish shalom on Earth. Christian eschatology is not escapist but earthly and earthy. And since our ethics is shaped by our eschatology, our actions in the present ought to reflect this earthly and earthy view of God's good future.

A Renewed Earth: Revelation 21:1–5

John's vision of God's good future staggers our imagination. He begins, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." The Greek word for "new" used here does not mean absolutely new. It means new in quality. New means renewed, not brand new. John speaks of a renovated heaven and Earth. In keeping with so many previous biblical texts, God does not junk the world and start all over. God renews the Earth and brings it to fulfillment.

Notice also that the new Jerusalem comes down out of heaven to Earth. We do not go to heaven. Heaven comes to us, just as we should expect from a God who graciously takes the initiative to redeem us with his love. God comes to us when we are unable or unwilling to go to God.

"Behold," says the voice from the throne, "the home of God is among humans." As with the Israelites in the Judean wilderness, as with the Word made flesh, so also here God pitches his tent with the likes of us. Underlying these stories, like a common thread, is the same Greek word. God himself will make his home among us. And because of God's homemaking presence, God will wipe every tear from our weeping eyes, and death will be no

more, and mourning and crying and pain will be no more. Shalom, at last, will reign. Delight will carry the day.

"Behold," the voice continues, "I am making all things new." Not all new things, but all things new. There is, literally, a world of difference between those two — between this world junked and destroyed and this world transfigured and transformed. All things renewed, refurbished, renovated, redeemed. God is the great Recycler.

Healing Leaves: Revelation 22:1–5

In Genesis 2 we read of four rivers and two trees. In Revelation 22 we find one river and one tree. The Bible begins and ends with rivers and trees.

As in Ezekiel 47, the river of the water of life flows, bright as crystal, from the throne of God and the Lamb right through the middle of Main Street. On both sides is the tree of life. This tree puts forth twelve kinds of fruit, one for each month, so there is always food to eat. And the leaves of this tree are for the healing of the nations. No more trees used to make battering rams to lay siege to medieval cities. No more trees used to make sailing masts for colonial warships. No more trees used to make paper for propaganda to fuel the fires of ethnic cleansing and human hate. These trees are for the healing of the nations. For shalom.

When each of my three daughters was baptized, my minister wife not only baptized them according to the Trinitarian formula, but following the liturgy of our denomination said these words: "You are marked as God's own forever." You, little one, with the blessed water of baptism, bear the mark of your loving Maker and faithful Savior. In this last chapter of the Bible we read that in God's good future his servants will worship him, and they will see God face to face, and his name will be emblazoned on their forehead. In dramatic contrast to the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16), this mark — God's name — will identify them. Marked as God's own forever. We are not our own. And the Earth is not ours to own. All we have is on loan, entrusted to us by God, to use for his glory and for goodly service to our neighbor in need.

The Bible is clear. Being faithful earthkeepers is our human calling. The real question is how we will live out this calling in our individual and collective lives. This is precisely the issue Joseph Sittler identified over thirty years ago:

> If in piety the church says, "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24:1), and in fact is no different in thought and action from the general community, who will be drawn to her word and worship to "come and see" that her work or salvation has any meaning? Witness-in-saying is irony and bitterness if there be no witness-in-doing.[2]

May our witness in doing speak volumes about our being shaped by the biblical story and inspired to serve and protect the Earth for the greater glory of God.

Notes

1 See, for example, Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

2 From his 1973 essay, "Evangelism and Care of the Earth," found in *Evocations of Grace: The Writings of Joseph Sittler on Ecology, Theology, and Ethics*, ed. Steven Bouma-Prediger and Peter Bakken (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

Steven Bouma-Prediger, *Jacobson Professor of Religion at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, is author of* For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care.

Power, Light, and Hope: Fighting a Crisis, One State at a Time

By the Rev. Sally G. Bingham

After years of encouraging people of faith to grasp the seriousness of global warming and change the way we use energy, I find myself on the edge of real hope that change is imminent.

Let me explain. Fifteen years ago when the Rev. Ben Webb and I founded The Regeneration Project (TRP), with a mission of deepening connections between ecology and faith, no one was talking about climate change. No one in the religious community, that is.

If I did raise the subject, I was usually treated with hostility and skepticism.

Today things are quite different. TRP is now situated all over the country, sponsoring specific initiatives to slow climate change and persuade people of faith to reduce energy use and embrace conservation.

We do this under the catchy name of Interfaith Power and Light. TRP organizes and maintains an affiliated network of Interfaith Power and Light programs across twenty states. We educate not only with tools and ideas on energy conservation, but spell out the moral reasons too.

Why am I so hopeful? Because I think we have reached a critical mass necessary to start a movement, alter conventional wisdom, and move the culture away from previous practices. People are seeing, hearing, and feeling the consequences of global warming — rising seas, more severe storms, and changing weather patterns. Ice is melting even faster than predicted in the Antarctic and at both poles.

The ice is also melting in Washington. Our federal government, once questioning the science, is now warming to the idea of doing something about greenhouse gases, the main culprit in the warming trend.

As people awaken to the problem and make changes in their own lives — and laws on the horizon curb greenhouse gases — I cannot hold back my optimism. We may well be on the way to saving our children and grandchildren from potential catastrophe. We may well show that we do, in fact, love our neighbors and are willing to show it by investing in a clean-energy future to secure a healthy environment for generations to come.

Our work at TRP has grown quickly, especially over the past three years. Our Interfaith Power and Light campaign has educated congregations on global warming by various methods.

Here is how it works. Congregations that join our state-level Interfaith Power and Light programs agree to make their buildings more energy efficient, practice conservation, and, where possible, use renewable energy — and serve as an example to their individual members.

The religious leaders of a state Interfaith Power and Light program become public advocates for weaning America off its dependency on fossil fuels. In our work to influence public opinion and policy, we write letters to decision makers, publish high-profile ads in newspapers, and visit legislators to discuss the moral reasons for addressing the climate crisis. We've gained considerable media attention; many of our congregations have been featured in local newspaper articles, seen on television, or heard on NPR.

Currently about 4,000 congregations participate, each of which showed the film *An Inconvenient Truth* to congregants in October 2006. This film gave the scientific evidence that people need to put their faith into action. Collectively the Interfaith Power and Light state groups have purchased and installed thousands of compact fluorescent light bulbs and

DAVID BAUMGART TURNER

By Danielle Tumminio

When David Baumgart Turner's ancestors made the arduous ocean journey from Connecticut to Hawaii at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they came to convert the tropical islanders to Christianity.

Two centuries later, with a master of divinity degree from Yale Divinity School in hand, Baumgart Turner made that same journey with what has become an entirely different mission – to preach the gospel of sustainability.

"I find it exciting to be in Hawaii at this time. As a missionary descendant, and as one who embraces these islands and their culture, there is an opportunity to be a bridge to bring these two traditions together," says Baumgart Turner, referring to native Hawaiian polytheistic spirituality. "Though this should have happened two hundred years ago, it didn't. Now is the time."

It wasn't something Turner was able to act upon immediately after graduation from YDS in 1987 as a United Church of Christ minister. But, two years ago, Turner made a bold move. He quit his job as a chaplain in Honolulu's prestigious Punahou School. Then, as now, he had few peers making sustainable ministry their full-time work. He had no organization to back him up.

The work has not been easy. Creating a new ministry has put a financial strain on his family, which is now primarily supported by his wife, Kirsten, a consultant on sustainability issues. Turner finds some people opposed to the mindset of sustainability, which requires awareness that personal choices can affect those who live thousands of miles away. "The voice of sustainability is a prophetic voice," Turner says. "It reflects how our culture needs to change the ways we live....Change doesn't come easy."

During the past two years, David has been leading workshops on greening congregations, starting organizations, consulting, offering presentations to churches and schools, and implementing programs for youth. Last summer, he started a camp for young people where small groups spent up to six weeks kayaking and backpacking in either Scotland or Hawaii; he initiated a similar program in Alaska in which the emphasis was on community service. The children's transformation was palpable: "By the time they were done, they were seeing the world in different ways," Turner says, "and it changed the way in which they lived when they went home. Their parents wrote me notes that said, 'You returned the child we thought we had lost.' Comments like that were amazing."

Baumgart Turner's own fifteen-year-old son, Maika — a diehard carnivore — questions his father's vegetarian diet, but both he and his eleven-year-old sister, Nai'a, embrace the family's sustainability-based lifestyle.

The family rides in a Jetta fueled by french-fry oil. Their clothes dry in the Hawaiian breeze. Their house is powered by photovoltaic cells on the roof. They've got radiant barriers in the attic to avoid air conditioning, a double-chambered composter, and fruits and vegetables growing in the backyard. In short, their carbon footprint is not that much bigger than that of their missionary ancestors.

Environmental awareness is so integral to their lives that when Maika saw *An Inconvenient Truth*, he came home and announced, "I was bored to tears. There was nothing new that Al Gore was telling me."

Danielle Tumminio *received a B.A. from Yale in 2003 and is currently a student at Yale Divinity School.*

hundreds of Energy Star appliances, influenced Renewable Energy Standards and Clean Car legislation, and lobbied for numerous greenhouse-gas-reductions bills now in Congress.

We hold an annual conference so all the leaders of IPL programs can share best practices and the religiously rooted reasons for accomplishing our goals. We work with evangelicals, Jews, Catholics, mainline Protestants of all denominations, Buddhists, and Muslims.

The religious voice has always been important in the history of reform in America, shaping debate on abolition, women's right to vote, and the civil rights movement. We hope to lead again as agents of change so that this nation will never be in conflict with other countries over scarce oil supplies. A transition to clean and healthful paths of creating energy is not only a way to create jobs and save money, but also an essential part of saving creation.

To join or start a program in your area, go to *www.theregenerationproject.org*. Once there click on your state to see if there is an existing program. The site will walk you through the steps it takes to join. Or call our office at (415) 561-4891 in San Francisco. We can provide you with the information you need to become energy efficient in ways that will save money and save creation.

Sally Bingham *is an Episcopal priest, environmental minister at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, and a founder of The Regenerational Project.*

Avoiding the Great Collision: "We Can Save What Is Left"

By James Gustave Speth

I believe that a central question facing societies today — perhaps the central question — is whether the world economy can be tamed to operate within constraints that protect and restore the natural world. There is ample evidence that it is not so tamed today. Almost universally, even governments agree that the environmental impacts of today's economic activity are unacceptably large and must be reduced. Recently, major international assessments of climate change and declining ecosystem services have added new weight to this conclusion.

Here is one measure of the problem: all we have to do to destroy the planet's climate and its biota is to keep doing exactly what we are doing today, with no growth in the human population or the world economy. Just continue to release greenhouse gases at current rates, just continue to impoverish ecosystems at current rates, and the world in the latter part of this century won't be fit to live in.

But human activities are of course not holding at current levels – they are growing, dramatically. It took all of history to build the $7 trillion world economy of 1950; today we add that amount of economic activity every decade. The world economy is poised to double and then double again in the lifetime of today's college students.

Modern capitalism is the powerful engine of this growth. So we can rephrase the fundamental question: can modern capitalism sustain the environment, and can the environment sustain modern capitalism? I use "modern capitalism" here in a broad sense as a system of political economy. It encompasses the core economic concept of a system where employers hire workers to use privately owned capital goods to produce goods and services that the employers own and then sell with the intention of making a profit. But the modern capitalism concept also includes free and competitive markets, the price mechanism, the modern corporation as its principal institution, the consumer society, and the state actively promoting economic strength and growth for a host of reasons.

As such we can say that the world's current operating system is capitalism or, better, a variety of capitalisms. Inherent in the dynamics of capitalism is a powerful drive to earn profits, invest them, innovate and thus grow the economy, typically at exponential rates, with the result that the capitalist era has in fact been characterized by a remarkable exponential expansion of the world economy.

As we pursue answers to these challenges, I believe we must be guided by certain values. In particular, we have profoundly important ethical duties both to future generations and to the life that evolved here with us. Our duty to future generations is aptly captured in the expression: we have not inherited the Earth from our fathers; we have borrowed it from our children. And the duty to other life was captured forcefully by the best-known graduate of the school where I am dean, Aldo Leopold. "A thing is right," he wrote in *A Sand County Almanac*, "when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." To restate these propositions, we have no right, no right at all, to leave a ruined world to our children and grandchildren, and we have no right to ruin the world for other life. Our duties lie

in precisely the opposite directions. Yet the path to a ruined world is precisely the one we are on today. It is a path we must abandon, soon.

Today, the path we are on links two worlds: it is leading us away from the world we have lost, and it is taking us to the world we are making. Let's look briefly at both.

A Haunting Absence

It is difficult today to appreciate the abundance of wild nature in the world we have lost. In America we can think of the pre-Columbian world of 1491, of Lewis and Clark, and of John James Audubon. It is a world where nature is large and we are not. It is a world of majestic old growth forests stretching from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, of oceans brimming with fish, of clear skies literally darkened by passing flocks of birds. In 1602 an Englishman wrote in his journal that the fish schooled so thickly that he thought their backs were the sea bottom. Oyster banks ran for miles, with some shells close to a foot long. Bison once roamed east to Florida. There were jaguars in the Southeast, grizzly bear in the Midwest, and wolves, elk, and mountain lions in New England.[1]

Here is Audubon on a passenger pigeon hunt that he witnessed:

> Few pigeons were to be seen before sunset; but a great number of persons, with horses and wagons, guns and ammunition, had already established encampments....Suddenly, there burst forth a general cry of "Here they come!" The noise which they made, though yet distant, reminded me of a hard gale at sea. . . . As the birds arrive, and passed over me, I felt a current of air that surprised me. Thousands were soon knocked down by polemen. The current of birds, however, still kept increasing . . . . The pigeons, coming in by thousands, alighted everywhere, one above another, until solid masses . . . were formed on every tree, in all direction. . . . The uproar continues . . . the whole night. . . . Toward the approach of day, the noise rather subsided. . . . The howlings of the wolves now reached our ears; and the foxes, lynxes, cougars, bears, raccoons, opossums, and polecats were seen sneaking off from the spot. Whilst eagles and hawks, of different species, accompanied by a crowd of vultures, came to supplant them, and enjoy their share of the spoil. It was then that the authors of all this devastation began their entry amongst the dead, the dying, and the mangled. The pigeons were picked up and piled in heaps, until each had as many as he could possibly dispose of, when the hogs were let loose to feed on the remainder.2

My colleague Steve Kellert notes that the last passenger pigeon on Earth expired in a zoo in Cincinnati in 1914. Some decades later, Aldo Leopold offered these words at a ceremony on this passing:

> We have erected a monument to commemorate the funeral of a species. It symbolizes our sorrow. We grieve because no living man will see again the onrushing phalanx of victorious birds, sweeping a path for spring across the March skies, chasing the defeated winter from all the woods and prairies....Men still live who, in their youth, remember pigeons. Trees still live who, in their youth, were shaken by a living wind. ...There will always be pigeons in books and in museums, but these are effigies and images, dead to all hardships and to all delights. Book-pigeons cannot dive out of a cloud to make the deer run for cover, or clap their wings in thunderous applause of mast-laden woods. Book-pigeons cannot breakfast on new-mown wheat in Minnesota and dine on blueberries in Canada. They know no urge of seasons; they feel no kiss of sun, no lash of wind and weather.3

We are moving, rapidly now, between the two worlds. Our movement began slowly, but now we are hurtling rapidly toward the world directly ahead. The old world, nature's world, continues, of course, but we are steadily closing it down. It flourishes in our art and literature and in our imaginations. But it is disappearing.

Economic historian Angus Maddison reports that in the year 1000 there were only about 270 million people — less than today's U.S. population. Total economic output was only about $120 billion. Eight hundred years later, our manmade world was still small. By 1820, populations had risen to about a billion people with an output of only $690 billion. Over this 800 years, per capita income increased by only a couple of hundred dollars a year. But shortly thereafter the take-off began. By 2000 populations had swelled by an additional five billion people, and, astoundingly, economic output had grown to $33 trillion. The acceleration we call exponential growth continues. The size of the world economy has doubled since I arrived at Yale in 1960, and then doubled again. And, as I indicated earlier, world economic activity is projected to quadruple again by mid-century.

Historian J. R. McNeill has stressed the phenomenal expansion of the human enterprise in the twentieth century. It was in the twentieth century, and especially since World War II, that human society truly left the moorings of its past and launched itself upon the planet in an unprecedented scale. McNeill observes that this exponential century "...shattered the constraints and rough stability of old economic, demographic, and energy regimes." "In environmental history," he writes, "the twentieth century qualifies as a peculiar century because of the screeching acceleration of so many of the processes that bring ecological change."[4]

While the twentieth century's growth has brought enormous benefits in terms of heath, education, and overall standards of living, these gains have been purchased at an enormous cost to the environment.

Half the world's tropical and temperate forests are gone. The rate of deforestation in the tropics continues at about an acre a second, lost. About half the wetlands and a third of the mangroves are gone. Ninety percent of the large predator fish are gone, and 75 percent of marine fisheries are now overfished or fished to capacity. Twenty percent of the corals are gone, and another 20 percent severely threatened. Species are disappearing at rates 100 to 1,000 times faster than normal. The planet has not seen such a spasm of extinction in 65 million years. Most agricultural land in drier regions suffers from serious deterioration and desertification. Persistent toxic chemicals can now be found by the dozens in essentially each and every one of us.

Dead Zones and Ozone

Consider also that human activities are now large relative to natural systems. We severely depleted the Earth's stratospheric ozone layer without knowing it. We have pushed atmospheric carbon dioxide up by one-third, and started the dangerous process of warming the planet and disrupting climate. Everywhere Earth's ice fields are melting. We are fixing nitrogen at a rate equal to nature's; one result is the development of at least 150 dead zones in the oceans due to overfertilization. We already consume or destroy each year about 40 percent of nature's photosynthetic output, leaving too little for other species. Freshwater withdrawals doubled globally between 1960 and 2000, and are now approaching a quarter of all river flow. The following rivers no longer reach the oceans in the dry season: the Colorado, Yellow, Ganges, and Nile, among others. We live in a full world, dramatically unlike the world of 1900, or even that of 1950.

If we could speed up time, it would seem as if the global economy is crashing against the Earth. And like the crash of an asteroid, the damage is enormous.

Physicists have a very precise concept of momentum. To them momentum is mass times velocity, and velocity is not just speed but also direction. Today the world economy has gathered tremendous momentum — it is both huge in size and growing fast. But what is its direction? Where are we headed?

The pattern is clear: if we could speed up time, it would seem as if the global economy is crashing against the Earth. The Great Collision. And like the crash of an asteroid, the damage is enormous. And for all the material blessings our economic progress has provided, for all the disease and destitution avoided, for all the glories that shine in the best of our civilization, the costs to the natural world, the costs to the glories of nature, have been huge and must be counted in the balance as tragic loss.

I am seated in my study as I write this, looking at a stack of books about two feet high. They share a common theme, and it is not a happy one to contemplate. One can see this theme immediately in their titles.

- By a conservative jurist: Richard A. Posner, *Catastrophe: Risk and Response.*
- By the president of the Royal Society in the United Kingdom: Martin Rees, *Our Final Hour: How Terror, Error and Environmental Disaster Threaten Humankind's Future.*
- By a leading United States scholar: Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed.*
- By a United Kingdom scientist: James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia: Why the Earth Is Fighting Back and How We Can Still Save Humanity.*
- By a United States expert: James Howard Kunstler, *The Long Emergency: Surviving the End of Oil, Climate Change, and Other Converging Catastrophes of the Twenty-first Century.*
- By an expert on co nflict: Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict.*

- By an Australian diplomat: Colin Mason, *The 2030 Spike: The Countdown to Global Catastrophe.*

That is but a sample of the collapse books now on the market. Each of these authors sees us on a path to some type of collapse, catastrophe, or breakdown, and they each see climate change and other environmental crises as leading ingredients of a devil's brew that also includes such stresses as population pressures, peak oil and other energy supply problems, economic and political instabilities, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, the risks of various twenty-first-century technologies, and similar threats. Some think a bright future is still possible if we change our ways in time; others see a new dark age as virtually inevitable. Sir Martin Rees thinks that "the odds are no better than fifty-fifty that our present civilization on Earth will survive to the end of the present century." Personally, I cannot imagine that the risks are so great, but Martin Rees is a smarter person than I.

In any case, it would be foolish to dismiss these authors. They provide a stark warning of what could happen.

Despite all the bad news, we can conclude with an affirmation. We can say with Wallace Stevens that "after the final no there comes a yes." Yes, we can save what is left. Yes, we can repair. We can reclaim and restore. This is the beginning of our wisdom: we can make amends.

But there is not much time. A great American once said:

> We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity. The "tide in the affairs of men" does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: "Too late."
>
> Martin Luther King, 4 April 1967, Riverside Church, New York City

We must not be too late. Nothing less than the creation is at stake.

Notes

1 William McLeish, *The Day Before America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994).
2 Stephen Kellert, *The Value of Life: Biological Diversity & Human Society* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press/ Shearwater Books, 1996).
3 Stephen Kellert, *The Value of Life: Biological Diversity & Human Society* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press/ Shearwater Books, 1996).
4 J.R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

James Gustave Speth *is Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. His books include* Red Sky at Morning: America and the Crisis of the Global Environment *and* Worlds Apart: Globalization and the Environment.

IT'S RAINING IN HONOLULU
by Joy Harjo

There is a small mist at the brow of the mountain,
each leaf of flower, of taro, tree and bush shivers with ecstasy.
And the rain songs of all the flowering ones who have called for the rain
can be found there, flourishing beneath the currents of singing.
Rain opens us, like flowers, or earth that has been thirsty for more than a season.
We stop all of our talking, quit thinking, or blowing sax to drink the mystery.
We listen to the breathing beneath our breathing.
This is how the rain became rain, how we became human.
The wetness saturates everything, including the perpetrators of the second overthrow.
We will plant songs where there were curses.

NCCC Eco-justice Sermon Award Winner

"From Apocalypse to Genesis"

By the Rev. Janet Parker

Today's service is in honor of Earth Day, and yesterday, the Rock Spring community came together in an extraordinary way to celebrate the goodness of God's creation and to highlight our role as stewards of creation in our first-ever Earth Day festival.

The Earth Day festival was a symphony of creative and inspiring activities that demonstrated our love for the Earth and various ways that we can care for creation and minimize our harmful impacts on the planet. Yet while the mood was celebratory and fun, close attention to the creative exhibits revealed some discordant notes. For example, one of the exhibits that generated interest was the "enviroscape," an ingenious model that demonstrated how different forms of pollution like pesticides, animal waste, construction materials, litter, agricultural runoff, and oily residue from cars get flushed into our local streams and rivers and run down into the Chesapeake Bay. Exhibits like this reminded us that Earth Day is more than a celebration of nature, though it is surely that. But Earth Day is also implicitly a recognition that something has gone wrong in our relationship with the natural world, something that needs fixing — something that we might describe in religious terms as a call to repentance, and even conversion.

Yet here we begin to tread on treacherous ground, because acknowledging the depth of the planetary crisis human beings have created is fraught with danger. I'm not speaking here of political danger, of the suppression of ecological truth by political leaders. I'm speaking of emotional and spiritual danger — the danger that recognition of the true magnitude of our ecological crisis will lead to paralysis and despair. If we are really paying attention, the drumbeat of news about ecological degradation and climate change not only evokes fear, but also a deep sadness. Because if we are tuned in, we sense on some level that the Earth that we know and enjoy right now will not be the Earth that our children and grandchildren inherit.

The signs are everywhere. Headlines scream at us: three-fourths of the rockfish in the Chesapeake Bay are diseased. The Shenandoah River is now listed as one of the top ten most endangered rivers in the nation. Glaciers and ice sheets in the Arctic and Antarctic are melting much faster than expected. Warming temperatures over the next century could turn rich agricultural land into desert, dry out the rainforests, raise sea levels, extinguish countless species, and cause disastrous storms. In fact, most scientists now say that climate change is not something facing us in the future, but is already here. The debate over *whether* global warming is happening is over. The only question is how bad will it get? Dr. Gustave Speth, dean of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale, was asked recently if environmental damage due to climate change could be prevented. No, he replied, it's too late for that. But we may still be able to prevent catastrophic damage. He concluded, "This is our last chance to get it right. We have run out of time."

Speth and many other scientists and theologians are speaking a language that sounds off-key to our modern ears. It's a language that biblical prophets like Ezekiel and John of Patmos would recognize, however. It is the language of apocalypse — the imagery of the end times and the mysteries of God. The environmental challenges that face us are beginning to look apocalyptic, except now the apocalypse is not a fantasy of fundamentalists, or the stuff of science fiction, but the edge of an abyss that clear-eyed scientists peer over and tremble at. And the

threats we face are not orchestrated by God but self-inflicted.

An Obsolete Faith?

It's hard to talk about these things, but we have to break the silence, especially within the churches, because here, above all else, we must speak the truth. As Daniel Maguire, a Catholic theologian, has said bluntly, "If current trends continue, we will not....If religion does not speak to [this], it is an obsolete distraction." And so we need to speak about it, and we need to weep about it, because it's only when we allow ourselves to actually *feel* what is going on that we will have the capacity to change it. As one ecofeminist theologian has said, "The capacity to weep and then do something is worth everything." This is the purpose of apocalyptic literature in the Bible and the purpose of the eco-apocalyptic warnings of scientists and environmentalists — not to paralyze us with fear, but to spur us to act, and even to invest us with hope.

Ezekiel, writing to exiles, whose homeland had been destroyed, offered a vision of a new day — a dream of the time when they would return to their land and dwell in peace, when the land itself would be restored from its former desolation and bloom as if it were the garden of Eden. And the people who would dwell there would be different than the people who went into exile, because they would be transformed by their experience. They will return, but not as the same people, for we are told that God has cleansed them from their idols... and so, "a new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh." Isn't this what we so desperately need today? To have our hearts of stone removed, and in their place to receive hearts of flesh that can hear the crying of theEarth? What we need, says Larry Rasmussen, is nothing less than conversion to theEarth, because even our religion needs reformation. For too long, Christianity has been prone toEarth-denying tendencies and nurtured fantasies of mastery and control over nature. The new reformation being called for means that "*all* religious and moral impulses of whatever sort must now be matters of unqualified earthbound loyalty and care. Faith is fidelity to Earth and full participation in its ecstasy and agony."

But the question remains, can Christianity be converted to the Earth? Can Christianity become what Rasmussen calls "an Earth faith"? It not only can, but it must. We search now for Earth faith and Earth ethics, because as Rasmussen explains, "Society and nature together...is a community, without an exit. Whether we like it or not, it's life together now or not at all."[4]

We have the chance to allow our consciousness to be converted to God and the Earth.

But there is good news. The good news is that we do have it *within* our faith to give us hope for the future and power to act and to change. The Bible itself is rich in resources, from its imagery of the garden of Eden to the new Jerusalem — a new kind of garden — in the book of Revelation, which holds out a vision of a different way to live. In fact, some people say that apocalyptic literature is more about Earth than it is about heaven. Because apocalyptic literature is written to people who are in crisis, who are struggling and desperate, people who need hope. Another meaning of the word "apocalypse" is revelation. Apocalypse reveals to us a new vision, not of heaven as pie in the sky but as heaven on Earth. In fact, in the book of Revelation, heaven is not something we are raptured up to, but heaven is raptured down to us! Heaven is on Earth, and God dwells on the new restored Earth, as poisoned rivers become the river of the water of life. In apocalypse, sometimes we're taken through hell, but we return to Eden.

Reading the Bible Backwards

So today, I would like to suggest that we have to start reading the Bible backwards. That's our starting point. We begin with Revelation, not with the pristine garden. But then, reading backwards with the saints of all times and places, we discern the possibility for a new beginning — we reach toward a new genesis, a new way of living in harmony with the Earth, a change of consciousness and a re-rooting of all of our religious traditions in eco-friendly soil. We have this capability to envision a new Earth, and that was in abundant view yesterday when we saw the next generation at the Earth Day festival — most of the people there were under twenty! They are going to be our teachers; they will lead us forward. And all of this is tied into what we're about to do, when we renew our baptismal vows in a few moments.

As we have this opportunity to touch the water — the water of life — which springs from the Earth and is a gift from God — we have the chance to allow our consciousness to be transformed, to be converted to God and the Earth. We have the opportunity to be born anew, not only as children of God but as children of the Earth — as the new Adam

and the new Eve who are committed to restoring creation, who are committed to serving the creation with nurturing love. And so as you come forward today, let this clean water wash away any indifference you have, any despair you feel, any fear which clouds your vision.

Let it symbolize the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon a transformed people.

Let it remind us of the thirst of the Earth and the thirst of the people in many parts of the world who live parched lives.

Let it remind us of the dream of children to dance and bathe and drink clean water.

And let it remind us of the promise of scripture that streams will break forth in the desert, and that the river of the water of death will be replaced by the river of the water of life.

Notes

1 Cited in Larry Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 10.
2 Greta Gaard, "Living Connections with Animals and Nature," in *Ecofeminism*, ed. Greta Gaard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), 3.
3 Rasmussen, 10.
4 Rasmussen, 19.

Janet Parker *is Pastor for Parish Life at Rock Spring Congregational United Church of Christ in Arlington, Virginia. Earlier this year, a version of this sermon was awarded the best entry in a new eco-sermon contest sponsored by the National Council of Churches. The sermon's title was borrowed from Anne Primavesi's book,* From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity *(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).*

A Sampling of Websites

www.theregenerationproject.org/
The Regeneration Project, home of the Interfaith Power & Light campaign, which connects congregations with ecological action

www.environment.harvard.edu/
Forum on Religion and Ecology at Harvard's Center for the Environment, the largest international multireligious project of its kind

www.creationcare.org/
The Evangelical Environmental Network, a group of organizations that promote "Creation Care"

www.christiansandclimate.org/
Evangelical Climate Initiative, which promotes "Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action" and other declarations

www.nrpe.org/
National Religious Partnership for the Environment, an association of Catholic, Protestant and Jewish groups.

www.nccecojustice.org/
National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Programs, which provides eco-opportunities for Protestant and Orthodox groups

www.amacad.org/publications/fall2001/fall2001.aspx
Online version of *Daedalus Journal* (Fall 2001) issue called "Religion and Ecology: Can the Climate Change?" Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim

www.earthcharter.org
The Earth Charter initiative, a global consensus statement on ethics and values of sustainability

www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign/about/index.asp
The United Nations Environment Programme and its Billion Tree Campaign

www.nature.org
The Nature Conservancy, which has a mission to preserve plants and animals by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive

www.tpl.org
The Trust for Public Land, a national non-profit organization that conserves land as parks, community gardens, historic sites and other natural places

Emmet Gowin: Golf Course under construction, Arizona, 1993

Environmental Justice and a New American Dream

By Jerome Ringo

After twenty years in the environmental movement, I have to say the most noticeable element continues to be the absence of the poor and people of color from its ranks.

In 1991, when I joined the largest conservation organization in my state, the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, the membership was 24,000. At that time I was the only black member. Today I am still its only black member.

Up to now, reasons for this lack of involvement are not hard to find. Poor people, and many people of color, simply have had too many other priorities to face — paying the rent, coping with inadequate health care. Environmental concerns were on the back burner.

But as the groundbreaking environmental justice study by the United Church of Christ made clear twenty years ago, people of color and the poor are disproportionately burdened by the world's environmental hazards. Disproportionately large numbers of people of color live near toxic dumps, waste treatment centers, and petrochemical plants. For the first time, that report gave environmental justice, the ecological vulnerability of lower-income people, a higher public profile.

But year after year the absence of voices from that community leaves a void, weakening the overall environmental movement's ambitious scope and political impact. The ecological threat to millions of people goes unheard.

People are waking up to that. Rising gas prices, Katrina, the war in Iraq — minority communities and poor neighborhoods are now realizing connections between poor environmental practices, health issues, national security, oil dependence, and falling economies.

People are starting to ask questions ... Why such intense hurricanes? Why are our communities more impacted? Why do our neighborhoods suffer health problems? Why is the government slow to respond? And, how do we fix it?

Questions are leading to actions. The galvanizing force now is climate change. Rising oceans will threaten coastal cities — and 70 percent of people of color in this country live within 200 miles of the coasts. With Hurricane Katrina, then Rita, then Wilma, the world got to see how people of color were hit again and again by disaster.

Five years ago, global warming wasn't a conversation. Now it's talked about at breakfast, at the grocery store — and in Congress. Last year, the environmental crisis was identified as a key issue by the Congressional Black Caucus at its annual Foundation Conference. The Caucus also hosts an annual Environmental Justice Braintrust assembly.

The great challenge now is to build an environmental coalition that represents and looks like America, a coalition that addresses the environmental crisis from a social, political, economic, and ecological perspective. In the 1960s Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led the nation in achieving its civil rights by bringing together people from all walks of life. He convinced labor, environmental groups, the faith community, educators, both private and public sectors to come together. Until then, civil rights had been a series of battles waged for a half century. Dr. King turned those battles into a movement.

That's what we need now, a coalition-building approach in the environment movement that will help us all find answers that make our country stronger, cleaner, safer, with a stimulated economy.

My work as chairman of the National Wildlife Federation and as president of the Apollo Alliance has focused on such coalition-building. The Apollo

JEANIE GRAUSTEIN

By Frank Brown

Jeanie Graustein, a lifelong Roman Catholic, is fond of using Quaker terms to describe the decades-long, organic process that saw her love of science gradually evolve into a career as a professional Catholic environmentalist.

"I always had the Quaker idea in mind: 'A way will open,'" says Graustein, who enrolled as a part-time student at Yale Divinity School in 1990.

"The more I thought about it, the more I was interested in the big picture. And, the big picture has a theological element ... I went with this interest in science and religion but I had no idea where it would lead."

Over the next five years at YDS, Graustein moved — through a series of small steps and modest revelations — to an understanding of where science and her spirituality could meet in a practical way. One key event was a journey in the spring of 1995 to the Holy Land.

"It brought scripture alive to me," Graustein says. "It was the reality of the land and thinking about the scriptural reality of the natural world."

At the very same time that Graustein was set to graduate from YDS with a masters of divinity degree, Roman Catholic dioceses across the United States were ramping up their commitment to the Church's social teaching on the environment. The increased emphasis nationwide on environmental issues came on the heels of Pope John Paul II's 1990 speech, "The Ecological Crisis, A Common Responsibility," in which the pontiff raised an alarm seldom stated in such stark terms from the Vatican.

"There is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts, and continued injustice among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature," the pope stated in a pronouncement for World Peace Day. "Moreover, a new ecological awareness is beginning to emerge which, rather than being downplayed, ought to be encouraged to develop into concrete programs and initiatives."

Initially, while still at YDS, Graustein held an environmental internship in the Archdiocese of Hartford's Office of Urban Affairs. But, following graduation, the job of Environmental Justice Coordinator became full-time and permanent. An important element of what she does as she encourages parishes statewide to explore this dimension of the faith is to emphasize the opportunities for practical, personal action.

"It's not just environmental doom and gloom," she says, referring to a series of conferences sponsored by her office and held across the state in regions. "We always try to say, 'Here's the situation. Here's the Catholic social teaching. Here's what you can do.'"

Responses range from skepticism that the subject is too political or too technical to an enthusiastic embrace of Graustein's suggestions. Much depends on an individual priest's reaction or the activism of a parishioner. One of the archdiocese's biggest success stories is the Saint Gabriel School, attached to a parish by the same name in Milford, Connecticut, where students and teachers cleaned up local woodlands and started composting the school's lunchroom leftovers.

It was as a schoolgirl herself in San Rafael, California, that, Graustein says, she first became aware of her own unique sensibility. "As a Girl Scout, I was the only one who did the wildflower badge, who did the seashore badge," she says, somewhat shyly.

"I always felt that when finding a certain shell or a certain fossil, that it was a gift for me."

Alliance (*apolloalliance.org*) believes in treating clean energy as a political and security mandate. The Alliance now represents 20 million people by bringing together labor unions, environmental groups, faith-based organizations, business partners, and foundation supporters, all with the aim of winning our independence from foreign oil in ten years — and creating millions of new jobs.

In 1961, John Kennedy challenged the nation to send a man to the moon within ten years. When he said that, the technology was not in place at the time. But the Apollo space program succeeded in less than a decade. We need an Apollo project for the twenty-first century that revitalizes cities, improves our national security, and fights environmental degradation.

The churches have a huge role to play. The poisoning of the atmosphere is a moral violation. In Genesis it says God gave us dominion over the Earth. That doesn't mean control only — it means taking care of Earth for generations to come. That's a message that should come uniquely from the churches, and they should lead by example.

Against the odds, Dr. King created a coalition that yielded positive results. There's no reason why it could not happen again.

Jerome Ringo, *a Visiting Fellow at Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, became an active environmentalist after twenty years in the petrochemical industry in South Louisiana. He is president of the Apollo Allliance.*

Uncommon Alliance: Connecting Faith and Environmentalism

By Christopher Glenn Sawyer

Excerpts from a 2006 address delivered to leaders of the Yale Divinity School and Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

As the person who sits on both the Divinity School Advisory Board and the Leadership Council of the Forestry School, I find connections between the two worlds. And I am eager for others to see them too.

The faith community and the environmental community have much to say to each other — a remarkable potential partnership that society profoundly needs them to seize and realize.

I have found, of course, that not everyone on both sides shares this sense of opportunity — perhaps especially on the environmental side. Raising the religious dimension sometimes causes eyes to roll and attention to wander.

Given this experience, let me cite columnist David Brooks. Despairing recently over how anyone could possibly receive a real education at Harvard today — an ageless question in this forum — Brooks identified several things in his *New York Times* column that a Harvard student could nevertheless do to assure an education even there. The first requirement, he said, was to read the work of my fellow Divinity School graduate Reinhold Niebuhr. By doing so,

> The devout would learn that public piety corrupts private faith and that faith must play a prophetic role in society. The atheists would learn that some people who believe in God are really, really smart. All of them would learn that good and evil really do exist — and that it is never as easy as it seems to know which is which. And none of them, so long as they absorbed what they were reading, could believe that the best way to divide opinion is between liberals on the one hand and conservatives on the other.

I quote this to remind us of the broad thoughtful core of the faith community — a core of millions upon millions of people in the United States and billions throughout the world.

Those in the environmental community who ignore the faith community, or dismiss it by assuming that the fringe faith groups and their leaders represent the whole, have cost themselves and their work an important partner.

A different but also important dimension of this issue is this: for whatever reason, a good number of us in the environmental movement are unable to use the G-word in public. There are sincere reasons that guide our conduct here — reasons relating to a sense of privacy, humility, or respect, as well as perhaps political correctness. But our inability to shape some of our conversation from this perspective of belief in God has clearly cost us.

When we refuse, or are unable, to talk about God and matters of faith when we talk about the environment, we alienate those who clearly see and live the connection, and we forfeit the clarity, passion, and courage that springs from one's faithful convictions. It is just this type of courage and clarity that we need to build upon in the environmental movement. Think of faith's impact upon the civil rights movement.

Consider how these important connections apply to the land conservation movement in the U.S.

There is no question that we have had some remarkable successes, especially given the limited number of people working on the issues. It is also clear that the vast majority of the people in the U.S. approves of land conservation and understands its importance to our future. Whether the poll is done by Yale, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), or The Nature Conservancy (TNC), they all report that 75 percent-plus of our nation mostly view themselves

as environmentalists. This is a huge building block for us and reflects real success in our education of the public.

Ominously Slow Progress

I could cite a long list of conservation accomplishments, but let me instead report several things that worry me greatly.

The first is, despite successes on the ground, they are neither on a scale nor on a pace necessary to protect America's natural infrastructure. During my seven years as chair of TPL, we hovered at the top of the conservation class in terms of the value of land protected — around $2 billion of land protected. Given that we are an organization of just 400 or so employees, we are justly proud of this achievement.

The problem, of course, is that I can look out my office window in Atlanta and see, without trying very hard, much more than $2 billion of real estate.

And when you add up the value of all the land conserved during that seven-year period by TPL, TNC, and the 1,300 or so other land trusts, the total value will still barely equal the real estate value that I see out my office window.

The faith community needs the best thinking, the best science, and the best practices from the environmental community to inspire its work.

So, what we are accomplishing is significant from the vantage point of a particular backyard, but not against the needs of this nation's natural infrastructure. Think of the seemingly inevitable megatropolis from Birmingham to Boston, the loss of habitat for the Yellowstone ecosystem, the scarcity of our water supply, the incredible density of Southern California, Florida, and the mid-Atlantic, the loss of our coast and farm lands — all issues of land conservation.

Think too of the population wave that is still quite before us: 100 million more throughout the nation in just the next forty years or so, and think what that will do to exacerbate these challenges.

And then look at Washington. For land conservation, we are now coming out of an especially miserable four-year period of poor policy and ever-declining dollars for conservation. How can this happen when the need is urgent and 75 percent of our population in survey after survey feels strongly about the importance of this work?

We could list all sorts of answers to this question, but the most important answer to weigh here is that we apparently do not know how to reach and motivate that 75 percent of America that purportedly supports what we are trying to do.

In fact, an argument can be made that we have plateaued with about three million to four million active environmentalists in this country, citizens who join our organizations and support our work. If this is correct, think of how wide the gap is between that three or four million and the 75 percent who declare their support in national polls. Think how powerful, if really activated, that additional community could be for us, whether the issue is land conservation, global warming, or energy policy. But how do we reach it and motivate it?

The question is urgent. To protect our natural infrastructure, we need an ambitious land effort for America in the next twenty-five years. If I am correctly interpreting what I read about global warming, we need a dramatically different course now that makes significant progress over that same twenty-five years. Whatever the answer might be, business as usual is not it.

As we think about that for a moment, let me report to my Divinity School friends that, in my fifteen years of land conservation work across the country, until very recently I have seen little if any involvement from the organized faith community. This has especially frustrated me.

If anyone should own the environmental issue, should it not be people of faith? We are talking about the gift of life and how we care for it: Is this not close to the core of faith and the responsibility of faith? How do we sustain a relationship with a Creator God while we, by acquiescence or complicity, abuse its creation?

These questions also clearly involve issues of social equity, justice, poverty, development, health, resource allocation — all central to the struggles of faith and ethics.

And from the Christian perspective of our Divinity School, we have a necessary emphasis on the revealed word of God as found in the Bible. Most of that was, of course, revealed and recorded some 2,000 years ago when the global population was about 300 million, making the Earth at that time a relative Garden of Eden compared to the stresses of our six billion today. What would the word of God, discerned today, say about our situation?

I believe that a significant portion would relate to our relationship with Creation and our responsibilities of care.

I also think we would recognize new prophetic voices, such as that heard in Gus Speth's *Red Sky*

RACHEL HOLMES

By Ray Waddle

Yale student Rachel Holmes keeps Aquinas on the nightstand and worms under the bed.

The Aquinas book is for school. The worms stay busy in a small vermicompost bin: they feed on food scraps and produce a useful plant fertilizer.

This ecological arrangement seems nicely emblematic of her life and calling. Holmes, 26, is at ease in two worlds that traditionally are wary of each other — church and environmentalism.

She is the only student who is jointly enrolled at Yale Divinity School and the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. She's determined to see cross-fertilization between the two disciplines. They need each other now, she says.

"Thinking about climate change, I have bouts of tremendous despair, but that's where faith really contributes to the environmental movement," she says.

"We all have access to the statistics. No one is spared: We're all going to have to rethink how we live in the natural world. We have two options. We can say there's nothing we can do, so let's party like there's no tomorrow. Or we can move forward with hope, the hope that humanity can change."

Some days, Holmes feels like an apologist for Christianity in an environmental movement suspicious of the faith's attitude toward the hard sciences (according to stereotypes, no Christian believes in evolution, and Pat Robertson speaks for all believers). Other days, as a Roman Catholic, she is a green ambassador inside the church walls.

But her emerging sense of vocation connects both faith and ecology. What bridges them is the theme of healing.

"It's not necessarily environmentalism I want to bring into the church but relationships with nature. Planting trees and restoring stream beds are ways of rehabilitating nature, but they are also ways of rehabilitating ourselves. I believe a person can heal — heal a wounded faith, a lack of hope — when you help heal nature," she says.

Her experience with healing is intimate. She was treated for Hodgkin's lymphoma as an undergraduate in 2003 and has been in remission since. (Her relationship with her horse, Twister, helped her through it.)

The illness intensified a deep-rooted passion for hope and activism. At Cook College of Rutgers as an undergraduate in her native New Jersey, she double-majored in religion and human ecology, served as student rep on the university's board of trustees, and also rode in the student mounted patrol, an auxiliary of the Rutgers police on the downtown streets of New Brunswick.

The Yale joint degree is a four-year program. She'll be immersed in Bible, theology, and ethics on the Divinity side, and statistics, economic policy, and natural science down the street at Forestry. Her Cook College experience paved the way: besides church history she did watershed research and studied manure management.

The church, she acknowledges, has been slow to grasp the environmental theme, but she has not given up.

"I have the same faith in the institutional church that I have in people. You have to look at what else the church has been grappling with in recent decades — economic justice, social justice, gender. We've only recently reinterpreted Genesis to mean stewardship instead of domination. Change is slow, but you know what? When it happens, it lasts. It lasts in hearts, minds and souls."

at Morning: America and the Crisis of the Global Environment or Jared Diamond's *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*.

What is a Jew's, a Christian's, a Muslim's duty in the face of that Word? What is our responsibility as leaders of these two great Schools?

The hopeful news is this: in recent months, the broad faith community's agenda has begun to move to a much sharper focus on the environment, for many of the reasons I have cited.

Surely the recent letter from eighty or so evangelical leaders calling for a stronger focus on global warming, and even some evangelical leaders' endorsement of significant land conservation legislation, are emblematic of a powerful trend. They are, after all, writing to forty-fifty million followers.

And the environmental community is beginning to appreciate this moment too. I have been with the presidents of three of our national environmental organizations in recent weeks and each independently wondered, how do we access the faith community, how do we understand its agendas and get it to understand ours?

So a door is opening across the land that is of enormous importance to all of us here.

The faith community, as it increasingly turns to environmental issues, needs the best thinking, the best science, engineering, and design, and the best practices and policies from the environmental community to inform and inspire its work. Only through the use of these tools and this knowledge will people of faith realize their best dreams for Creation.

Likewise, the environmental community needs to recognize that we do not have the time to build our political base and support internally. We must reach out to other rationally aligned organizations of people and encourage them to leverage and deploy our intellectual capital. Given the time at hand, this is the only way that we shall ultimately succeed. And there is no larger, stronger, or more rationally aligned group of people for us than the faith community. It is also a community with the potential to make us stronger morally, culturally, and strategically.

So I suggest that we have the responsibility to use the respected and singular pulpit of Yale and our two Schools to help bring these two national communities together. Perhaps more so than any other institution, we have the platform, the reputation, the resources, and the intellectual capital on both sides to credential and inspire this opportunity and help leverage it to the world's great benefit.

Christopher Glenn Sawyer, *a 1975 Yale Divinity School graduate, is an attorney with Alston & Bird in Atlanta, chair of the Divinity School's Advisory Board, and former chair of the Trust for Public Land.*

After Katrina: Searching the Ruins for Resurrection

By **Ray Waddle**

Many are the statistics that try to comprehend the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe of 2005, which killed 1,200 people and caused $100 billion in damage.

In New Orleans, 110,000 homes were flooded – 40,000 or more must eventually be demolished and hauled away somewhere. An estimated 145,000 cars in the city were ruined. They too must be dumped somewhere.

Along the coast, the storm produced twenty-two million tons of debris. That compares to nearly two million at Ground Zero in New York after 9/11. About four million tons of Katrina's debris ended up in coastal waterways.

In Louisiana and Mississippi, tons of hazardous waste were coughed up by the storm. It must be cleaned up and safely stored. The status of toxic soil that has been removed along the coast – Is it safe now for kids to play in the dirt? – is still debated.

The Rev. Cory Sparks of New Orleans puts it this way.

"The city was screaming," he says.

"We got a decade's worth of trash overnight. My whole idea of ministry had to change overnight too."

Some 900 houses of worship were destroyed in Louisiana and Mississippi by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Yet church leadership has emerged as pivotal in the recovery. Churches are rallying neighborhoods, serving as command centers for information, rebuilding houses, reaching out to new populations they ignored before. At the national level, notably through the National Council of Churches and the United Church of Christ, they're lending an assertive voice in the cause of environmental justice.

"Looking out at the vast waste land of Katrina, we all knew something's out of balance," says Sparks, minister at Carrollton United Methodist Church.

"Today we want to build a stronger New Orleans, with fewer blighted homes, a city more in keeping with God's will, a more just city, so nature and our people are more in harmony."

Ever since the storm hit in on August 29, 2005, the Katrina aftermath has defied government solutions, aggrieved environmentalists and tested the ingenuity of churches helping people recover on a ravaged coastline. The Katrina rebuild and cleanup have been called "the case study of all case studies," a forced experiment about whether public power and private hopes can overcome despair and defeat.

The anguish of New Orleans and the coast has had its redemptive moments. Every week, hundreds of out-of-state church missioners and volunteers working cleanup detail are exposed to new ways of doing church, born of crisis and necessity.

"We worked at a church that has become the neighborhood heartbeat," says Kat Banakis, a first-year Master's of Divinity candidate at YDS who got firsthand experience in New Orleans last spring.

"They took the opportunity to become a different church. The word is relevance – listening to the immediate community, asking what their needs are, then responding, then asking again, then again, in order to find out how the Holy Spirit can meet people's needs here. It's a model of church that could transfer elsewhere. It doesn't come without a lot of sweat equity, but it's incredibly transferable."

During spring break 2007, ten Yale Divinity students traveled to New Orleans and immersed themselves in hands-on neighborhood work, based at a small Episcopal parish, Free Church of the Annunciation, in the heavily damaged Broadmoor section of town.

Regularly canvassing the neighborhood with needs-assessment questions, the church has be-

Post-Katrina damage and cleanup in Louisiana and Mississippi: photos by Evan Silverstein, Presbyterian News Service

come a community center and municipal voice. The church is nurturing a new charter school in the neighborhood, initiated plans to erect a coffeehouse, and built dorm space for future volunteers and skilled laborers in order to continue the rebuilding for the next decade.

It's all under way despite a time of festering city frustration. Nearly two years after the storm, many businesses still have not returned. Many public schools have not reopened. Billions of dollars in governmental funds, tangled in bureaucracy, have not been distributed. Thousands of people face rebuilding their homes with no money or no prospect of affordable insurance.

"It's immensely frustrating to see," Banakis says.

The predicament is only worsened by New Orlean's pre-Katrina reputation as a political gumbo of factionalism, inefficiency, fatalism, and poverty. Many have simply refused to return. New Orleans' pre-Katrina population was 485,000. It's now about 200,000.

Yale students, though, report unusual resilience among people they met.

"One person told me: New Orleans was dead for years before Katrina, then Katrina was the city's hell, and now the recovery effort is the resurrection," says Marc Eames, '07 M.Div.

"What struck me was the hope that people have and yet the hopelessness of the situation they're stuck in. They say it took Katrina to force people to realize they now have to do something different. ... When they see volunteers and others coming to help, they feel they are not abandoned, and people are praying for them. But even the hopeful ones go through tough weeks."

Another Yale Divinity student, Gary Loyd, '07 M.Div., remembers the weariness of residents after so many months of rebuilding, and the fragility of the city itself in the face of any potential new big storm, but hopefulness too.

"This is a group of people which sacrificed for each other and formed tight bonds through a shared tragic experience," he recalls.

"Rather than becoming insular, however, they welcomed many others into the fellowship who were drawn by their giving spirit and sense of purpose. Their shared Christian community has been a rich, life-changing experience for many parishioners. Several members, who had lost everything in the flood, mentioned to us that, except for the loss of life, they would not change a thing that has happened. We left wondering how that same sense of community could be kindled in our own churches back home."

YDS student Malik Muhammed, a first-year Master of Arts in Religion candidate who is from New Orleans and survived the storm, said the ordeal was life-changing.

"For the first time in my life I saw who humanity is and how we suffer," he recalls. "I didn't see myself until I lost myself. I didn't see my culture until I saw it broken down. I pray to God that America after Katrina saw itself in New Orleans, saw its face staring back."

Muhammed, a senior at New Orleans' Xavier University at the time, joined the immense evacuation of New Orleans in the days before the hurricane hit. He embarked on weeks of uncertain housing in South Louisiana and Texas, anxious about his family's home and the neighborhood. He did not return until months later. His family was intact, and the damaged house was fixable.

"When you have everything taken away so quickly, all you have is anger," he says.

"But there are lessons: we are all vulnerable, vulnerable to nature, and to our own illusions of power. I cannot forget how people struggled. And if I don't forget that, then I can talk about a God who suffers too."

At Carrollton United Methodist Church, the storm dramatically forced Rev. Sparks and his tiny congregation to reposition their role in the Carrollton neighborhood.

The church has become a meeting place for action groups and grassroots organizers – a place to go to for information about flood-protection planning, government assistance, and coalition-building. The church has hosted some 2,200 volunteers who arrive to rebuild homes, clean mold from household walls, and perform other laborious clean-up tasks.

"In the immediate aftermath, in the absence of government, the people needed a place to organize and ask questions and find solutions," Sparks says.

"There are secular nonprofits that certainly do advocacy, but what the church has is people in the neighborhoods with the power to push forward."

Much of the church's new mission has focused on the theme of environmental justice and climate change. There is now a surge of neighborhood awareness about green rebuilding with less hazardous materials and more energy efficiency.

The church works with the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, a watchdog group along South Louisiana's petrochemical corridor. Recently a coalition of churches helped spearhead protests against contaminated sites that the city had neglected in their neighborhoods for years before Katrina — old abandoned industrial pits or "brownfields" filled with lead or other toxins. The effort, so far, has netted new chained-link fences and warning signs to keep children at bay. That's a start.

"Government is not going to prioritize these sites unless they are pushed to do so," Sparks says.

"These efforts are part of what we do as a church now. One motto we use is 'preserving the beauty, confronting the tragedy and transforming the city.' We don't want to go back to the New Orleans of August 28, 2005. We know God wants us to be more pleasing in God's sight."

Katrina was one of the worst natural disasters in American history – one of the worst environmental disasters, too. The storm tore the lid off long-festering questions of environmental justice along the coast, the persistent claims by lower-income residents that they have been exposed for decades to unreasonably high levels of poison in the ground, the air and the water.

The environmental dimension of the catastrophe has caught the attention and passion of several notable national denominational entities.

"The billion-dollar question facing New Orleans is which neighborhoods will get cleaned up, which ones will be left contaminated, and which ones will be targeted as new sites to dump storm debris and waste from flooded homes," declared a new study by the United Church of Christ called "Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty 1987-2007," released in spring 2007.

The storm damage and aftermath have also received the scrutiny of the National Council of Churches, which created a Special Commission on the Just Rebuilding of the Gulf Coast to monitor government responses to the hurricane victims, focus-

ing on transportation, health care, housing, schools, insurance, and environmental justice.

In spring 2007, the NCC commission released a "report card" highlighting post-Katrina triumphs and defeats.

After several trips to the region, commissioners praised churches for reaching out "across the nation to supply food, clothing, and shelter for those displaced by the hurricanes" but criticized federal, state, and local government for adding to the suffering.

"The Commissioners have discovered an atmosphere of neglect and injustice that is unacceptable," said the Reverend Michael Livingston, NCC president.

An example of criticism: The enormous debris and levels of post-flood mold within New Orleans have stirred worries that low-income and African American residents may be especially exposed to adverse environmental side effects.

A private professional study, conducted in various New Orleans neighborhoods, found arsenic, a carcinogenic agent, at levels that exceeded both Louisiana's Department of Environmental Quality and EPA standards, the NCC reports.

One of the few triumphs featured a Catholic church in the Vietnamese-American neighborhood of Versailles, which last year led a fight to close a potentially disastrous open-pit landfill site.

The pit had been opened to speed the storm-recovery clean-up, but it was not designed to be a landfill, and neighbors worried that hazardous waste (including household waste such as bleach, batteries and motor oil) could leak into the soil and water table, the NCC reports.

"After protests were made by the Vietnamese Versailles community, Mayor Nagin signed an order to halt the dumping of debris in the landfill. In August 2006, the federal government upheld the Mayor's decision (and blocked further dumping). The landfill site will be closed indefinitely," the NCC reports.

The Versailles drama symbolized a larger national issue – the amount of trash Americans produce, including hazardous waste, and the fate of lower-income neighborhoods who bear the brunt of it because of not-in-my-neighborhood political attitude.

After organizing an environmental justice conference in New Orleans last year, United Methodist activists citied their denomination's Book of Resolutions: "Our society's attitude towards the production and disposal of hazardous products remains one of 'out of sight, out of mind.' But 'out of sight, out of mind' is most often where the poor and powerless live and work. These communities have thus become toxic 'sacrifice zones.' We must be persistent and consistent in exposing these atrocities with a commitment that all communities have a right to safe and healthy environments."

Back at Carrollton United Methodist Church, Rev. Sparks pushes for a greener faith and a sense of humility too, values applicable everywhere, not just a Southern coast traumatized by hurricane.

"Trust me, the worst-case scenario can happen," he says.

His advice: "I'd urge everyone to have a plan in case disaster strikes, including the need to shelter folks. So consider that when you plan to build new facilities – how many people can you hold? And consider the effect of that facility on the environment. What is my carbon footprint and how can I reduce it? Think about the life cycle of the building. Be aware of potential toxic brownfields in your neighborhood. Get information. I believe in being proactive. I'm in the hope business."

PSALM AT HIGH TIDE

Rain on the river's vinyl surface:
water that glitters,
water that hardly moves,
its branches witness to trees,
to fronds, leaves, crab floats, pilings,
shopping carts, appliances —
the divine earth takes everything
in its wounded side
and gives back wholeness.
It bears the huddled profane
and endures the soaking
venerated in its wild swirls —
this river fixed with wooden weirs,
radiant in misshapen glory.

POEM FOUND

New Orleans, September 2005

...And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst
of the waters" and into the dome God put

the poor, the addicts, the blind, and the oppressed.
God put the unsightly sick and the crying young

into the dome and the dry land did not appear.
And God allowed those who favored themselves

born in God's image to take dominion over
the dome and everything that creeped within it

and made them to walk to and fro above it
in their jumbo planes and in their copy rooms

and in their conference halls. And then
God brooded over the dome and its multitudes

and God saw God's own likeness in the shattered
tiles and the sweltering heat and the polluted rain.

God saw everything and chose to make it very good.
God held the dome up to the light

like an open locket and in every manner called
the others to look inside and those who saw

rested on that day and those who didn't
went to and fro and walked up and down

the marsh until the loosened silt gave way
to a void, and darkness covered the faces with deep sleep.

"Everything that Breathes Praises God"

His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Responses to questions submitted by Reflections *to Bartholomew, the Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Orthodox Christian Church*

1. Over the next decade, what will be your top priority in relation to the environment?

The protection of the natural environment has long been on the top of our pastoral concern and agenda over at least the last two decades. The Ecumenical Patriarchate believes that the burning issue of the environment must be addressed at its root. And the root of this problem, just as the root of so many other problems, is humanity; it lies in the choices that we make on a daily basis in our personal lives, whether as individuals, as societies, or as nations. Human beings exploit their identity as the only rational beings and externalize their selfish attitudes, thereby inflicting significant and incorrigible damage on nature. The plain truth is that we are given the opportunity to enjoy and use God's creation, but instead we have chosen to exploit and abuse it.

As the spiritual leader of the Orthodox Christian Church, then, we have assumed the responsibility to sound the alarm of danger. We feel that we must work and walk with all those persons who see the great risk and contribute to the restraint of this evil. Moreover, we must contribute as a Church by raising the awareness and awakening the conscience of all those who remain indifferent. We are certain that when humanity in its entirety becomes truly conscious of the fact that its very existence and survival depend on the environment, then the ecological problem will diminish, if not disappear. However, the world must be mobilized; and this mobilization must occur with a sense of critical urgency. Appropriate measures must be taken in timely fashion, because we have already delayed. Should we delay still further, then the dangers for humanity will become greater and we shall no longer be able to turn around or hold back the current of events.

Nevertheless, at the same time, we are obliged to underline the fact that we cannot expect to save the natural environment with the same methodology or "philosophy" concerning nature with which we have destroyed it. The sad reality is that many of us, especially in more affluent Western societies, have become accustomed to lifestyles of waste and greed. Thus, we are not always willing to undergo the sacrifice required of us in order to respond to the ecological crisis, and so we prefer either to ignore it deliberately or else dismiss it indifferently. What we need is another, different worldview, a fresh perception of matter and the world. And in this discernment of a new perception and meaning, it is our conviction that religious traditions have an active role to play and that the Orthodox Church has a unique contribution to make.

2. Why have churches (with a few exceptions) been slow to grasp the ecological crisis?

Churches and faith communities can be the greatest allies in the struggle to prevent environmental degradation. Yet, at the same time, these institutions are sometimes the slowest to convince and the hardest to change inasmuch as they are entrenched in ancient traditions, which over time have unfortunately neglected the innate and intimate connection between humanity and nature.

Yet, there is a binding unity and continuity that we share with all of God's creation. In recent years, we have been reminded of this truth with flora and fauna extinction, with soil and forest clearance, and with noise, air, and water pollution. Concern for the environment is not merely an emotional expression of superficial or sentimental love. It is a way of honoring and dignifying our creation by the hand and word of God. It is a way of listening to "the groaning of creation" (Rom. 8.22).

Unfortunately, we have been alienated from the natural world by the way we live and the priorities we

pursue; at the same time, we have theologized and worshiped in a way that "spiritualized" or "de-materialized" nature. As a result, the natural world, just as our notion of the sacred, is no longer associated with the meaning of life and the wonder of creation. Yet, theology and liturgy are vital; indeed, they are profoundly related to our world and the natural environment. Of course, in order to understand this, our ecological prayer must gradually move from the distant periphery of some abstract theology or religious institutionalism to the center stage of our practical spirituality and pastoral ministry. In brief, our theology and spirituality must once again assume flesh; they must become "incarnate." They must be closely connected to our fellow human beings as well as to the natural environment.

Thus, as religious communities gradually awaken to the wisdom of their traditional beliefs, they will also begin to recognize that the environment is not only a political or a technological issue. For, it is in fact primarily a religious and spiritual issue. Any form of religiosity or spirituality that remains disconnected from outward creation is ultimately also uninvolved with the inward mystery of all things.

3. How does Orthodox theology speak to the crisis?

Responding to the environmental crisis is a matter of truthfulness to God, humanity, and the created order. In fact, it is not too far-fetched to speak of environmental damage as being a contemporary heresy or natural terrorism. We have repeatedly condemned this behavior as nothing less than sinful. For human beings to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the Earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or by destroying its wetlands; for human beings to injure other human beings with disease by contaminating the Earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances — all of these are sins before God, humanity, and the world.

Unfortunately, we have tended to restrict the notion of sin to the individual sense of guilt or the social sense of wrongdoing. Yet, sin also contains a cosmic dimension; and repentance from environmental sin demands a radical transformation of the way that we perceive the natural world and a tangible change in the way that we choose to live.

In short, the Orthodox Church speaks of an asceticism that is required of all people, and not only of monastics. Admittedly, asceticism carries with it the baggage of dualism and denial, developed over many centuries. Yet this is not the vision of wholeness that Orthodox spirituality understands by the notion of asceticism. For, the ascetic discipline reminds us of the reality of human failure and of the need for cosmic repentance. What is required from us is nothing less than an honest reflection on and a radical reversal of our attitudes and practices. There is a price to pay for our wasting the Earth's resources. This is what is meant by the cost of self-discipline. In Christian terms, it is the sacrifice of bearing the cross. The environmental crisis will not be solved by sentimental expressions of regret or political slogans of change. The solution to our ecological impasse lies in the denial of selfishness or self-centeredness. In this regard, the spirit of asceticism leads to a sense of gratitude and the rediscovery of beauty.

Our original sin lies in our prideful refusal to receive the world as a gift of reconciliation, in our unwillingness to regard the world as a sacrament of communion.

The ascetic way is ultimately a way of liberation; and the ascetic is the one who is free, uncontrolled by attitudes that abuse the world, uncompelled by ways that use the world, characterized by self-control and by the ability to say "no" or "enough." It is moving away from what we want as individuals to what the world needs as a whole. It is valuing everything for itself, and not simply for ourselves. It is regaining a sense of wonder and being filled with a sense of goodness. Therefore, the ascetic dimension is the necessary corrective for our culture of wasting. In the final analysis, it teaches us to share and not simply to consume.

4. How did you personally come to see the urgency of the issue years ago? Do you remember the moment? Did a phrase from the liturgy, or Scripture, trigger an awakening?

Our deep appreciation for the natural environment is directly related to the Orthodox sacramental dimension of life and the world. We have always respected the natural environment as a place of encounter and communion with the Creator. As a young boy, accompanying the priest of my local village to services in remote chapels on my native is-

land of Imvros, we would readily connect the beauty of the magnificent mountainside to the splendor of the sacred liturgy. The natural environment seemed to provide a broader, panoramic vision of the world. Nature's beauty leads us to a more open view of the life and created world, somewhat resembling a wide-angle focus from a camera; this worldview is what ultimately prevents us human beings from using or abusing its natural resources. For, it is through this spiritual lens that we can better appreciate the broader implications of such problems as the threat to ocean fisheries, the disappearance of wetlands, the damage to coral reefs, or the destruction of animal and plant life.

It is difficult to isolate one individual moment which may have triggered our interest and concern for ecological issues. The recent environmental initiatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate date back to the mid-1980s with the third session of the Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Conference held in Chambésy (1986). Representatives at this meeting expressed their concern for the abuse of the natural environment, especially in affluent Western societies. This was followed by a series of consultations and conferences, either organized or sponsored by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, one of which was held on the island of Patmos (Greece) in 1988 to mark the 900th anniversary of the historic Monastery of St. John the Theologian. That conference proved a catalyst for subsequent Patriarchal initiatives on the environment. For we realized that, whereas the Orthodox Church has always enjoyed a close connection to the natural creation — with numerous references and diverse prayers to animals and nature in our liturgical books and rites — nevertheless we were now obliged for the first time in history to pray not so much for the protection of humanity against natural disasters, but rather for the preservation of the environment against its abuse by human beings. Thus, in 1989, my immediate predecessor, the late Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios, published the first encyclical letter on the environment, formally establishing September 1 as the day of prayer for the natural environment for churches within our jurisdiction throughout the Orthodox world. Patriarch Demetrios was well known for his meekness, and so it was fitting that during his tenure the worldwide Orthodox Church was invited to dedicate a day of prayer for the protection of the environment, which human beings have mistreated so harshly.

It was a natural consequence, then, that just one month after being elected to the ecclesiastical throne of Constantinople, in November of 1991, we also initiated and convened an ecological meeting, on the island of Crete, entitled "Living in the Creation of the Lord." That convention was attended and officially opened by HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and International Chairman of the WWF. It was the seed and starting point for many initiatives in years to come.

5. You have spoken about the power of the "spirit of the liturgy." How does the liturgy speak to daily practical environmental concerns?

We tend to call this crisis an "ecological" crisis, which is a fair description insofar as its results are manifested in the ecological sphere. The message is clear: our way of life is humanly and environmentally suicidal. Unless we change it drastically, we cannot hope to avoid or reverse cosmic catastrophe. Yet, the crisis is not first of all ecological. It is a crisis concerning the way we perceive reality and relate to our world. And it is our conviction that the liturgy in fact offers a refreshing, alternative way of seeing ourselves in relation to the natural world.

Humanity has lost the liturgical relationship between the Creator God and the creation. Instead of priests and stewards, human beings have been reduced to tyrants and abusers of nature.

For a liturgical worldview signifies that everything that lives is holy, that everything that breathes praises God (Ps. 150.6), that the entire world is a "burning bush of God's energies," as St. Maximus the Confessor put it in the seventh century. It also elicits a sacred response before the gift of creation, which we are called to return in thanksgiving to God as a gift for future generations. The same great theologian and saint of the early Church also observed that "we should wage war not against the natural world, which has been created by God, but against those movements and energies of the essential powers within each of us that are disordered and unnatural and hostile to the natural world."

This is precisely the liturgical worldview preserved in the Orthodox Church, which proclaims a world imbued by God and a God involved in this world. Our original sin, so it seems, lies in our prideful refusal to receive the world as a gift of reconciliation, in our unwillingness humbly to regard the world as a sacrament of communion. So at a time

when we have polluted the air that we breathe and the water that we drink, we are called to restore within ourselves the sense of awe and delight, to respond to matter as to a mystery of ever-increasing connections. Such is the powerful message of the liturgy. And if we are guilty of relentless waste, it is perhaps because we have lost the spirit of worship. We are no longer respectful pilgrims on this Earth; we have been reduced to mere consumers.

6. What, in your opinion, would make the September 2007 Religion, Science & the Environment Symposium in the Arctic a success?

With our last symposium, held in Brazil on the Amazon River (2006), our goal was to concentrate on the global dimension of problems stemming directly from this magnificent river system, problems which have, perhaps, dropped out of view for many decision makers. We also engaged with the ancient wisdom of the indigenous people for whom these waters have always been sacred. We focused on the Amazon's 42 billion trees and the risk inherent in their systematic destruction. As the source of two-thirds of all the greenhouse gas emissions from Brazil, the cutting and burning of the wonderful rainforest also contributes significantly to global warming.

Therefore, recognizing that we live in a pivotal moment of history, the next symposium will take place in the Arctic Ocean. The silent majesty of the Arctic will render our journey a polar pilgrimage to be conducted in awe and humility. Given the sensitivity of their ecosystems, both poles have been called an early warning system for our planet inasmuch as that is where the environmental sins perpetrated by a greedy humanity impact most severely. However, in the North Pole, there are indigenous populations which have already suffered tremendous upheavals; the sea-ice is fragile and rapidly retreating, while oil exploration continues to exploit the natural resources of the region without any international treaty offering enforceable protection. The Arctic is no longer a pristine wilderness; it is one of the first victims of human-induced climate change.

We plan to visit areas where the impacts of melting ice are already manifest, the northernmost communities in the world which have demonstrated extraordinary resilience in the face of change, and finally the towering edge of the ice mass, where leaders of different faiths and disciplines will join us in a fervent prayer for the future of our planet.

7. Is there something inherent to Western Christianity that makes it more difficult to come to terms with the crisis than Orthodox Christians?

Behind the ecological problem, just as behind many other contemporary issues, there lies concealed a theological stance and attitude. The alienation of the humanity in Western society from God, neighbor, and natural environment, as well as the emphasis on individualism and utilitarianism, have in many ways undoubtedly led to the abuse of sacred creation and to our modern ecological impasse. Unfortunately, humanity has lost the liturgical relationship between the Creator God and the creation; instead of priests and stewards, human beings have been reduced to tyrants and abusers of nature. Therefore, in response to your question, there are inherent impediments within Western Christianity that render it more resistant to environmental action. However, we have always considered it both inappropriate and escapist to blame one culture, religion, or society for the damage wrought on the natural world. As we observed during the closing ceremony of the Amazon Symposium (2006): "As creatures of God, we are all in the same boat, *estamos ne mesmo barco*!" We are, all of us, in this predicament together; and we must assume responsibility collectively if we are to resolve this crisis favorably.

It is crucial that we recognize the interconnection between caring for the poor and caring for the Earth. The way we treat the suffering is reflected in the way we approach the ecological crisis.

We are obliged in the name of our faith and of truth to proclaim the need to change people's lifestyles and attitudes, to preach that which in spiritual terms is called *metanoia* (or repentance), in order for human and environmental conditions to improve. The word "repentance" is often misunderstood today, evoking a sense of guilt for sins that some people consider insignificant or inessential. By "repentance," however, we imply those things that are more important than the transgression of law: namely, discernment and mercy, or justice and compassion.

The lack of a sense of justice leads to greed, domination, exploitation of the weaker by the more powerful, an abundance of wealth for the strong and extreme poverty for the weak. The lack of a spirit of compassion renders the soul indifferent to other people's pain and prevents the development of

those things that kindle a sense of justice. Therefore, in proclaiming a change of attitude, we are offering a kindly service to humanity and indicating a way of solving global problems of poverty and hunger.

Of course, all is not hopeless; there are numerous signs that a significant — and, it is our hope, a growing — portion of human societies throughout the world is becoming conscious of this necessary direction, although we are not ignorant of the fact that the abundantly wealthy minority continue to increase in wealth. At the same time, then, we are not naively optimistic; we recognize the resistance of the few, as well as the ongoing struggle involved in bringing about any change. However, as a religious leader, and especially as a leader of the Orthodox Church — the Church of martyrs and not of power, the Church of humility and not of wealth — we have no other way but that of proclamation and persuasion.

Our efforts for the protection of the natural environment must, therefore, be intensified. And we must broaden our notion of the environment to include the human and cultural environment. For it would be a paradox to be concerned solely for the natural environment, and yet be lacking in interest and concern for humanity and our cultural heritage. The human environment also deserves our attention and love, just as the natural environment deserves our respect and protection. It is crucial, then, that we recognize and respond to the interconnection and interdependence between caring for the poor and caring for the Earth. They are two sides of one and the same coin. Indeed, the way that we treat those who are suffering is reflected in the way that we approach the ecological crisis. And both of these in turn mirror the way that we perceive the divine mystery in all people and things, the way that we kneel in prayer before the living God.

As we stated in a common declaration with the late Pope John Paul II in Venice (2002): "It is not too late. God's world has incredible healing powers. Within a single generation, we could steer the Earth toward our children's future. Let that generation start now, with God's help and blessing."

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, *residing in Istanbul, Turkey, occupies the First Throne of the Orthodox Christian Church worldwide. Elected in 1991, he is known for his perspectives on ecumenical relations and environmental issues, which has earned him the affectionate title of "Green Patriarch."*

THE TEACHERS
by Mary Oliver

Owl in the black morning,
mockingbird in the burning
slants of the sunny afternoon
declare so simply

to the world
everything I have tried but still
haven't been able
to put into words,

so I do not go
far from that school
with its star-bright
or blue ceiling,

and I listen to those old teachers,
and others too —
the wind in the trees
or the water waves —

for they are what lead me
from the dryness of self
where I labor
with the mind-steps of language.

Lonely, as we all are
in the singular,
I listen
to the shouted exuberances

of the mockingbird and the owl,
the waves, and the wind,
and then, like peace after perfect speech,
such stillness.

New Moral Awakening, or How I Changed My Mind

By Richard Cizik

Ezekiel 37:3–5 — "He said to me, 'Mortal, can these dry bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you alone know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.'"

Should caring for the environment be a major priority for people of faith? Only a few years ago, I would have blithely answered this question "No." Care for the natural world was not a priority of our governmental affairs work. Nor was it a priority in my personal and family life.

What changed? I changed.

I realized I was violating the biblical commands "to serve and to protect" creation (Genesis 2:15). The Hebrew words to serve, *avad,* and to protect, *shamar,* mean we must be caretakers, not just takers.

I had to turn about and go in another direction. That's what the biblical word for repentance, *metanoia* means.

What got my attention, and keeps it, is the impact of climate change, habitat destruction, and species extinction on Earth. Sir John Houghton, the first chair of the Scientific Assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change — and an evangelical Christian — made a presentation on the impacts of global warming to the Oxford Conference of 2002.

Among those sitting in the audience was a skeptic; that person was me. It was my reasoning that the science was disputable. "No dog in that fight," was my judgment at the time, referring to the debate over global warming. It took the unequivocal evidence of climate change — significantly caused by humans and irreversible in its nature — to shake me out of my own lethargy.

It's been said that if you don't now and then change your opinion about something, check your pulse — you may be dead. Millions of my fellow evangelical believers need to examine themselves. Too often we've bought into questionable science or simply given too much weight to our political views — namely, that the environment is for latte-sipping, East Coast liberals.

With regard to this Earth, our assumption has been, well, things will always be the same way. And that there is nothing we can do about it. And, if not, God will take care of this Earth anyway. No need for us to do so.

Are we as a nation in trouble? You betcha. Entering into the twenty-first century, more than ever before, America is experiencing a deficit in moral leadership. The issues that we face — the degrading of human dignity, climate change, civilization conflict, war, and violence — will require not just leadership that has been desperately lacking — but moral imagination of a kind previously unheard of.

What is leadership with moral imagination? It's the capacity to see leadership, first of all, as service to others. According to Jim Collins, author of the book *Good to Great*, "These leaders blend extreme personal humility with intense personal will." They are studies in duality — modest and willing, shy and fearless.

To my mind, it requires people who realize they have an obligation that goes far beyond their own personal interests. It necessitates a willingness to say, "This is where I draw the line."

I'm reminded of the story in the Bible of a leader who knew triumph and defeat. His career started at age seventeen. He was almost killed by his brothers

but rose to prominence in one of the major countries of the world. I am talking about Joseph, a patriarch of Israel — a man who knew despair and despondency, served prison time, yet survived to become a powerful leader, second only to the king.

In his case, he was able to interpret Pharoah's dream, but he sketched out a plan to address the seven years of famine the dream predicted. Because of his planning and leadership, there was adequate grain to feed the hungry and poor. Joseph met the test for being a man of moral imagination in the midst of a human predicament. He gave credit, respect, and affirmation to God in the tough places. And he brought reassurance, comfort, and hope to those who were troubled.

The Earth Is the Lord's, Not Ours

We need Josephs today — young people who are willing to go against the grain to do what is right. In the evangelical community, it requires going against the prevailing attitude that caring for creation, particularly global warming, is, as Jerry Falwell put it, "a satanic distraction." We need Earth protectors whose moral imagination turns into all-consuming passion that changes the world.

We do not own this Earth. Indeed, the phrase "the Earth is the Lord's" (Psalm 24:1) was first used by Moses as part of a dire warning to the arrogant, oppressive, and possessive Pharaoh of Egypt (Exodus 9:29).

The Pharaoh learned the hard way that the Lord did not turn the ownership of Earth over to people. It is a sin to ignore this eternal principle — with consequences to people of faith who deny it.

For whatever reason, the Lord seems more patient with us in the twenty-first century, but how long will that last? Time is running out. The natural world is imperiled by human activity, especially by our unsustainable burning of fossil fuels and our degradation of living systems.

Dr. E. O. Wilson, author of the recent book *Creation*, says: "If current deterioration of the environment by human activity continues unabated, half of Earth's surviving species, plants, and animals will be extinguished or critically endangered by the end of the century. One quarter, it's been estimated, could leave us in the next 50 years due to climate change alone."

Human health and life are particularly endangered, with the poor and disadvantaged among us at the greatest risk. James Hanson, a top scientist at NASA, states, "One quarter of carbon dioxide that we put in the air by burning fossil fuel will stay there forever — more than 500 years. If we burn all fossil fuels without capturing and sequestering the CO_2, we will create a different planet."

Historic Pledge

To address these threats, the National Association of Evangelicals convened thirty leading scientists and theologians to begin a dialogue abut how we could work together.

At our meeting in Georgia in December 2006, we discovered that we agreed far more than we disagreed, that we shared a deep reverence for life on Earth, and that we felt a sense of urgency about what human beings are doing to creation. We pledged to do everything in our power to preserve this precious gift the Creator has given us, and to invite our colleagues, including some who may not fully agree with us, to join us in these efforts.

A signed statement entitled "An Urgent Call to Action: Scientists and Evangelicals Unite to Protect Creation" proclaimed the following: We believe that the protection of life on Earth is a profound moral imperative. It addresses without discrimination the interests of all humanity as well as the value of the non-human world. It requires a new moral awakening to a compelling demand, clearly articulated in Scripture and supported by science, that we must steward the natural world in order to preserve for ourselves and future generations a beautiful, rich, and healthy environment. For many of us, this is a religious obligation, rooted in our sense of gratitude for creation and reverence for its Creator.

This is neither a "red" nor a "blue" nor even a "green" issue. It's a moral issue.

Can we hear the voice of the biblical prophet Ezekiel: "Is it not enough for you to drink the water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?" One of my mentors, Cal DeWitt, echoes this in our day: Is it not enough for you to enjoy a pleasant climate? Must you destroy it? Is it not enough for you to enjoy the myriad of creatures? Must you extinguish them?

Major segments of the Earth are dying, and we are responsible. Ezekiel's imagery of the valley of dry bones is dramatic — physical imagery relating death and life. Only a divine re-creation can resuscitate the dry bones. It has been said that we must die to ourselves. Lose our life in order to gain it. But it's not something we want. Self-denial is hard. Limitation of the old life is necessary: "For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their soul?" (Mt. 16:26)

Theologian Sallie McFague says that

> while I am not suggesting that the Matthean passage is about ecological selfishness and the need for consumer self-denial and limitation, I am suggesting that its basic premise of the Christian life as cruciform makes the passage open to that interpretation.
>
> In terms of the health and well-being of the planet, we need to lose one kind of life and gain another, and the other one, the new life, will continue to be cruciform in shape. It involves limitation, emptiness, loss. Abundant life, cruciform-style, means sharing and giving — dare we say, sacrificing? — for others, for the health of other life-forms and the well-bring of other people.

Is this the abundant life, as John 10:10 puts it: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"? Who wants it? Maybe none of us do.

But it is realistic. It is ecological; it is what the good life must mean in nature's terms, because it is in line with the way our planet works. Thus, the way of the cross is realistic. It is the way of life for humans to live with other human beings and with nature.

Can this happen? Can the dry bones live? Can our planet become healthy? Ezekiel says that with God all things are possible, even the reconstitution of dry bones.

In his book *Serve God, Save the Planet*, J. Matthew Sleeth writes, "We have a problem, one as meaningful and real as a sinking ship with billions of passengers aboard. The Earth is our ship, an ark for everything that lives. It is the only vessel available to carry humans through the ocean of space, and it is rapidly becoming unseaworthy."

As people of faith, we have no option but to act. Why not take the lead in making our nation an example of biblical stewardship? Not everyone will come to the same public-policy solutions, but the following simple actions can make a huge difference:

Replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents. Though initially more expensive, an energy-efficient fluorescent bulb will save you $28 to $58 in your electric bill during its life, and burn 500 pounds less coal to pollute the air. Recycle. C'mon, how hard can it be?

Drive the speed limit with properly inflated tires and a tuned engine. And, why not consider a hybrid car? Ask for your energy company to do an energy audit of your house or church. You'll make money and be giving to others at the same time.

Support businesses that are creation-friendly. Vote and voice your concern to local and national government officials. Pray that our fellow citizens, congregations, and lawmakers will do what is wise to care for creation.

We owe it to our children and grandchildren that they may enjoy what we have too long taken for granted. Protecting the environment must be a priority; it's called biblical stewardship.

This doesn't get anyone into the "political thicket." This is neither a "red" (Republican Party), "blue" (Democratic Party) or even a "green" (Green Party) issue; it's a moral issue. Jesus' first commandment — to love God with all our heart and soul and strength — means that we honor and care for all of His creation.

After all, when we die, God won't ask us how He made this Earth — but rather, what we did with what He made.

A young man and woman were tired of the leadership offered by the old man who sat in the public square dispensing advice. So they devised a plan to discredit him. Putting a bird in their hands, they would go to the sage and ask "Is this bird alive or dead?" If the old man said the bird was "alive," they would use their thumb to break the bird's neck, killing him, proving their elder wrong. If the old man said the bird was dead, they would open their hand revealing the bird very much alive. And so they went confident of their plan and asked him, "Is the bird alive or dead?" He wisely responded, "My children, the answer is in your hands."

John Wesley's "A Charge to Keep" puts it this way: "To serve the present age, / My calling to fulfill; / Oh, may it all my powers engage, / To do my Master's will; / Arm me with jealous care, / As in thy sight to live; / And, oh thy servant lead, / Prepare a strict account to give."

My friends, the answer is in our hands. We live to serve the present age. May this task all our powers engage. Living in His sight. And prepare an account to give.

Richard Cizik *is Vice President for Governmental Affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals, which has a membership*

Emmet Gowin: Waterfowl Nesting Site and Wetland Area Restoration near Sutter Buttes, California, 1993

Eco-ethics and Global Citizenship: A View from Central America

By Roy May and Carlos Tamez

Some time ago we found ourselves in the densely populated and poor neighborhood of El Alto, the working-class satellite city that surrounds the valley of La Paz. El Alto is a young community inhabited by thousands upon thousands of people who are mostly recent arrivals from the countryside, victims of land eviction or failed industry.

These people have fled small farmsteads, where soils are exhausted, eroded, and parched. Life cannot be sustained there. They are all poor and in search of a better life, but every day they are barely surviving. In the city, there is no green; everything is dry and dusty. The streets are not paved, and many households lack basic services. Work is poorly paid and hard to come by.

Surrounded by this misery, we looked up toward a green mountain, a hill that reaches 7,000 meters above sea level. It dominates the landscape to the northwest of the city. It was a beautiful mountain. Years before, when we lived in the city at the foot of the mountain, how we loved walking along its slopes! There, everything embodies tranquility, and below everything reflects this beauty. In the evening, the city lights and the stars become one, and it seems that the Earth and the heavens meet in a kiss.

At the foot of the mountain, we always felt close to the creator and we always resolved to defend the environment, the *oikos* of creation. From atop the mountain we always felt like ecologists. That day, looking up at the mountain, we realized that environmental ethics is almost always envisioned from "atop the mountain" where everything is beautiful. From below, however, surrounded by the misery of the city, the view is different. It is not beautiful.

If we are to have a liberating environmental ethic, one that sustains life, it cannot be delivered from atop the mountain; it must also come from the shanty. It cannot be an ethic "from above," but rather one "from below." We have to come down from the mountain and construct this environmental ethic — this struggle — from the misery below. The environmental ethic must be forged from both the beauty of the mountain and the misery of the city.

Ecology is a discipline within the biological sciences that studies the relationship between living organisms and their habitat. As a specialized discipline, it focuses on complex interactions and interdependencies of systems that sustain diverse forms of life. Although ecology is not new as a science, the growing public perception of the environmental crisis has transformed this little-known discipline, to use the words of Chilean political scientist Fernando Mires, "into one of the dominant themes of contemporary politics... a new line of thought within the framework of a cultural transformation, which ... is now a central component of the collective discussion."[1]

According to Mires, "Ecology is no longer a science reserved for specialists but rather a world vision, a culture that is beginning to generate new ideas and hierarchies of values, new customs inspired by respect for the environment."

These new hierarchies of values and customs give privilege to interrelation, in contrast to isolation and individualism that until now have characterized the ethics and culture of the capitalist model. In this sense, by creating new customs and values, the science of ecology has evolved into a system of ethics.

An environmental ethic for Latin America and the Caribbean must be situated within Latin American and Caribbean critical theory, with an emphasis on human history and praxis, centered on the poor as a subject of historical debate, and within the difficult realities of the social order, realities formed in large part by globalization and neoliberal models.

The Politics of Sustainability

Since the United Nations' Earth Summit of 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, a new vision of the relationship between humanity and the environment has emerged. The previous perspective of domination and exploitation of the environment in pursuit of unlimited economic growth has given way, in the minds of many, to a realization of the ecological limits of industrial society and the excesses of the market.

By contrast, the construction of a culture based on ecological and social responsibility should entail diverse perspectives from distinct social networks that shape values and trends within civil society.

During the '92 Earth Summit, the represented nations there adopted sustainable development as the principle that must govern economic activity around the world, a philosophy with the mutually reinforcing goals of social and ecological responsibility. From this perspective, a sustainable economy is that which finds a balance between current human needs and limited natural resources in such a way that future generations can meet their needs without facing a dire depletion of resources.

In our opinion, these demands can only be addressed within the structure of participatory democracy. That is, they must emerge from a practical philosophy that allows us to act within the framework of justice without overlooking the protection of natural resources. In participatory democracy, citizens act in alliance with private and state institutions to influence not only the approaches and solutions to environmental problems but also social objectives, where the utopia of equal participation of all people in all political questions remains the ultimate goal. Only through justice and conservation will it be possible to include all of humanity — present and future — in our decisions. Only by these means will we be able to address social and ecological issues without contradicting a system that is based on values of equality, justice, solidarity, and mutual respect.

This ethical model underpinning the environmental crisis places social justice at the center. Justice involves the equitable distribution of goods and power in social organization and administration. Without justice, coexistence of humanity and nature will not function as the "natural circuit of all life" but rather remain an obstacle to both natural and human life. As Brazilian theologian Ivone Gerbara says, "The struggle for justice in the concrete terms of human relationships implies the practice of justice in regards to the ecosystem. There will not be human life without the integrity of the health of the planet in its numerous expressions."[2]

Christian Faith and Material Weath

In truth, only in recent years has "social justice" been incorporated into the struggle for a healthy environment, as a means to promote both the proper functioning of ecosystems and human development. On the world stage, it was the findings of the World Commission on Environment and Development, known also as the Bruntland Report,[3] which brought social justice into the environmental debate, stating that inequality and poverty were fundamental causes of the environmental crisis.

We must all learn to share the same sun, the same Earth, the same life.

In the defense of life and its survival, we consider it necessary to energize the notion of a global citizenship that is conscious of its obligations to the environment, strengthens links between environmental ethics, human rights, and the fight against poverty – and awakens society to values of brotherhood and solidarity. A convergence of ecology, ethics, and values in the environmental crisis demonstrates the necessity of healthy relationships of communal life. Deep down, the fundamental concept of community ethics embodies the Greek concept of *koinonia*, which means communion — collaboration, participation, solidarity, sharing, unity.

We must all learn to share the same sun, the same Earth, the same life. This concerns the rational use of natural resources, which requires more moderate, sustainable lifestyles. Material wealth cannot be constructed on a foundation of poverty and exploitation of others and their resources. In effect, the local and global communities must awaken to a return to lifestyles that reject excessive comforts of contemporary consumer society. Austerity, science, art, justice, the conservation of nonrenewable goods — these emerging habits of thought and feeling could create a profound, artistic motivation for a new spirituality and a new humanity.

For Christian faith, we all know that irresponsible lifestyles and comfortable ignorance are attitudes condemned by the Bible. Scripture emphatically af-

By Lisbeth Barahona

Sometimes, when talking about the environment, I imagine when our ancestors ruled this land. It's like an image from our history books — the forests, jungles, precious metals and minerals, exotic animals, seeds and plants, and I associate that feeling with time spent in nature, a feeling of richness and peace, the way it feels at the very beautiful beaches in El Litoral and in La Costa del Sol, or at the top of the highest pyramid in Tikal, Peten Jungle in Guatemala.

Then I think of the differences between now and then.

In my nation — a small, highly populated developing country which has gone through so much — it is urgent to advocate for sound and coherent environmental practices.

We need to worry about air quality, water access, deforestation, solid waste management, and infrastructure risk prevention, considering El Salvador's vulnerability to earthquakes.

The major source of emissions is vehicular traffic. An estimated 75 percent of autos are more than ten years old, generally carrying very deficient gas emission control systems.

The country is proving vulnerable to global climate change. Our winter season, normally characterized by rain, is slowly changing. Sometimes rain is delayed, and the summer or dry season may be longer than expected, or injuring crops and agriculture. There is the feeling of having no voice on the world stage regarding global warming.

But we are taking control of our own problems. After many years of war, a peace treaty was signed in 1992. Five years later the office of Ministry of Environment was created.

We had a previous history of environmental plagues — the widespread use of pesticides in cotton fields, health problems of workers in these fields, the devastation of lands during the armed conflict, and the loss of many lives to war. But after the peace treaty, our country started a new chapter in the restoration and care of the environment, a new struggle to achieve sustainable practices and environmental improvements.

The nation has taken a few small steps in approaching global warming, considering El Salvador is only 8,100 square miles (smaller than New Hampshire). It has adopted the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, the Protocol of Kyoto, the Vienna Convention regarding the Protection of Ozone Layer, the Montreal Convention on Ozone Depleting Substances, and a Regional Convention on Climate Change.

The challenge for a small country is to move from developing to developed, seeking a balance between economic growth and environmental sustainability, remembering the "environment" is not limited to natural resources, air, and water, but includes reducing poverty, increasing education.

The solution must include finding the will and conviction, a new sense of environmental commitment, a sense of world responsibility. We could lose the precious things God has given us on this earth to share responsibly.

Even though nature itself is diverse, nature's cycles keep earth perfectly in balance. Shifts in temperature, outbreaks of epidemic disease, the loss of species and so many other familiar trends offer clear objective indicators that human beings have altered in many ways earth's wise natural cycles.

If it continues, it is because our own misuse of power as human beings for all the wrong purposes, a lack of humility in realizing that we are in God's creation, which in essence is rich and healthy, not poor and deteriorating.

Still there is hope – the will to do good things, new technology worldwide, new policies. God has provided the resources we need to have dignified and fulfilling lives. Surely God wants these resources to be more equally distributed between countries and their people.

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firms that we will be held accountable for what we have done to nature and to the human beings with whom we have lived. For Christian faith, the "collective well-being" of a community forms part of the well-being of each person.

The deterioration of nature is alarming, and the questions are burdensome: How can nature and humanity be resurrected from the ruins in this century? What does this irrational violence against God's created world mean to Christian men and women? Have we become accomplices to this crime, this depredation and death? Are we active participants in this depredation and death?

All of us have been called to be caretakers of creation, not as arrogant and despotic people but rather as simple administrators to the world. This task is not an authorization to plunder and destroy but to transform ourselves into the seeds of highest hope, with the promise to carry out the actions necessary for the salvation of our only environment, the home we all share.

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Roy May *is professor in the School of Theological Sciences at La Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana de Costa Rica in the area of Ethics and Theology.*
Translator **Nicholas Goodbody** *is a Ph.D. candidate in the Yale Department of Spanish and Portuguese.*

Notes

1 Translator's note: Chilean Fernando Mires is a professor at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Oldenburg in Germany. Among his numerous books published in Spain and Latin America are: *La rebelión permanente: Historia de las revoluciones sociales en América Latina [Permanent Rebellion: The History of Social Revolutions in Latin America]* (1989), *El discurso de la naturaleza [The Discourse of Nature]* (1991), *El discurso de la indianidad* (1992), *El discurso de la miseria [The Discourse of Misery]* (1994), *El orden del caos: ¿Existe el tercer mundo? [The Order of Chaos: Does the Third World Exist?]* (1995).

2 Translator's note: Ivone Gebara is a Brazilian theologian and ecofeminist, whose works translated into English include *Out of the Depths: Women's Experience of Evil and Salvation* (2002) and *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (1999).

3 Translator's note: The Bruntland Report, U.N. General Assembly document A/42/427, was published by Oxford University Press in 1987.

How Green Was Our Valley: The Garrison Institute

By Jonathan F. P. Rose

At its core, the environmental movement is about values. Certainly the environmental movement's earliest thinkers, such as Aldo Leopold, combined science with values.

However, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970 placed environmental actions solely in the framework of science and regulation. Over time, the movement has cloaked its core values in science and law in order to have an effective voice.

These regulatory ways of working are certainly important, but they are no longer sufficient to face the enormity of the issues before us. These times call for prophetic voices that can articulate larger frameworks of understanding and move people to action. It is time to reintegrate the language of values, religion, and faith into the environmental dialogue. The formidable power of faith communities to influence public policy concerning global climate change, the protection of species, the conservation of land, and other environmental issues is now becoming widely appreciated.

The Garrison Institute was formed to nurture contemplative practices of all faith traditions and apply contemplative wisdom to global environmental issues. And for the past three years, the Institute has been developing a multi-faith model of collaboration between religious and environmental leaders in the Hudson River Valley. (The Hudson River Valley bioregion is defined here as an expanse reaching from Albany, New York, to Newark, New Jersey, and including urban and rural, rich and poor, historic villages and suburban sprawl, farmer and fisherman, commuter and communer.)

Why here, why now? The Hudson River Valley has long been subject to the twin forces of conservation and exploitation. On one hand, the region is the home of the vast New York City watershed, as well as the magnificent lands preserved first by the great families such as the Rockefellers, Osbourns, and Harrimans, and more recently by the concentrated efforts of the Wallace Funds. But at the same time, the region has been also subject to extensive industrialization that left a legacy of PCBs, a nuclear power plant, the increasing pressures of sprawl, casino gambling proposals, and continued industrial development. The region is at a crossroads — will its future grow from the base of conservation or of exploitation?

Many consider the Hudson River Valley to be the birthplace of the modern environmental movement, arising from the 1965 effort to save Storm King Mountain, which resulted in a landmark decision that granted citizens groups standing in environmental lawsuits. It is home to dozens of environmental and conservation organizations — among them the Hudson Riverkeeper, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Scenic Hudson, the Open Space Institute, and, nearby, the birthplace of The Nature Conservancy. Though environmental initiatives — and successes — are numerous, the region's communities of faith have not generally joined the dialogue about the state of the watershed's health. In 2003, the Garrison Institute set out to create a model of integration of religious and environmental viewpoints and institutions.

Albert Einstein noted that one cannot solve a problem with the state of mind that created the problem. The Garrison Institute uses contemplative practices to give rise to fresh approaches to perennial issues and develop holistic solutions that are often not apparent from a linear thinking process. Housed in a 77,000-square-foot former monastery, the Institute offers a year-round calendar of residential initiatives and retreats that bring

together spiritual leaders, social service providers, policy makers, scientists, and scholars to explore the intersection of contemplative experience and engaged action in the world.

The Institute's environmental work began by hosting a series of twelve monthly dialogues at the Institute. The dialogues featured approximately fifty notable religious and environmental leaders and thinkers from around the region, who spoke both to and with an audience of regional clergy, residents, and environmental activists. Guiding the conversations were the stated objectives of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Hudson River Estuary plan.

The dialogues were informed by ecologic science, but the science was framed in a way that touched the heart.

The first dialogue, in the early fall of 2005, was quite chaotic — everyone wanted to be heard, but did not speak in a hearable way. The Institute thus began to bring contemplative practices, such as the use of silence and guided meditation, along with music and art, to create the mental and social space for transformative thinking. The dialogues soon incorporated deep listening, a practice that was not only more productive, but more satisfying to the participants.

In the middle of winter 2006, a large snowstorm hit the region just before the evening of the sixth dialogue, and yet the monastery was full. Why did so many people from so far away brave the snow to come? Because, they told the Institute, they hungered for the experience. Like so many people, they feel their deepest spiritual connection in nature, and they are not able to find that experience in either their houses of worship or in community. The Garrison Institute's dialogues were calling forth the union of the inner and the outer, and touching them in the way that they cared for nature.

As the spring approached, the dialogues led to a call for a written statement articulating the views and values emerging from the conversations. A steering committee was formed to complete the assignment, and, with the input of many, a beautiful statement was composed that brought together some core shared environmental values, along with a call to action.

The Statement begins:

> We believe the land and waters of the Hudson River Estuary Bioregion are unique, precious and irreplaceable. We are actively committed to preserving, protecting and restoring this region.
>
> As members of the diverse religious and environmental communities of the Hudson River Valley, we are united in our awe of creation and accept that our very survival depends on a new understanding of stewardship, based on our interdependence with the natural world. We recognize that we must change our human behavior or lose our precious earthly home.
>
> This is an urgent call for visionary sustainability from the precipice of potential extinction. Even as we grieve the loss of our fragile environment to human acts of devastation, over-consumption, pollution and global warming, we choose to have a new vision of hope. We believe our destructive human behaviors can be transformed on behalf of our shared humanity, nature and future generations.
>
> Based on a year-long exploration of our shared values, we aspire to reconcile our destructive human existence with the natural systems of the Hudson River Bioregion as set forth in this Statement.
>
> (The entire statement is available at *http://www.garrisoninstitute.org/programs/HRP_Statement_Action.pdf*)

The statement goes on to articulate principles, agreements to undertake specific actions, and practical resources to help implement them.

The process leading to the creation of the statement, and the power of the statement itself, have had a remarkable, transforming effect. The day the statement was completed, the Town of Woodstock, New York, signed it, and soon pledged to become carbon-neutral. A minister in Ridgefield, Connecticut, was inspired to organize a retreat for that community's planning, zoning, and town boards to rethink the environmental principles of the town. Clergy across the region are joining planning and zoning boards, and calling for community-values impact statements as part of environmental impact statements. Clergy are learning to give environmental sermons. Houses of worship are screening *An Inconvenient Truth* and then holding conversations on how to green their own facilities and apply a new conservation ethic personally and communally.

Amid growing faith-based environmental efforts around the country, a distinguishing feature of the Hudson River Project is its multi-faith constituency. Ministers are learning of biblical environmental resources from rabbis, and rabbis are learning how to green their synagogues from ministers. Catholic nuns developed a land ethic for the conservation of their lands along the Hudson both to guide their own land stewardship and share with all.

One of the key lessons of the Garrison Institute's Hudson River program is that the most effective way to bring together religion and environment is to fully engage the power of each. The goal is not to find a middle ground, but rather, through deep spiritual engagement, find a new view that underlies both fields. The Institute's dialogues were informed by ecologic science, but the science was framed in a way that touched the heart.

In a world oversaturated with media and messages, humans are very hungry for silence — and for a contemplative setting in which to settle deeply into their true connection to nature. The contemplative wisdom of our faiths provides a window into a transformative ecology. And that transformed understanding impels change in the world.

Jonathan Rose, *a 1974 Yale graduate, is Chair of the Board of the Garrison Institute and President of Jonathan Rose Companies LLC, a network of community and land-use planning firms that focus on green city and nonprofit development.*

ACROSS THE LAWN
by Paul Willis

The clean white trunk sways upward
in come-hither fashion, lithe to the eye
and limbing gently to the air.

When we climbed the bigleaf
maple in the empty lot next door,
or the Douglas fir by the driveway,
it was but practice in embracing
the human form. Getting to that
first branch was always the problem,
but once there, courtesy of a running start
or a heave of interlocking hands,
we soon found grip and sap in plenty.

There was something in us
that wanted to go all the way,
to take the slender arms of sky —
but something too that kept us modest
in our affections, cradle and all.

And who is to say it was not love —
love in its first and purest form?
And now this whitening tree that beckons —
foot to crevice, palm to pitch,
knees still shaking above the ground.

Green Discipleship

By Larry Rasmussen

Better than a year ago, the New York Times *published a letter to the editor in response to an article entitled "Glaciers Flow to Sea at a Faster Pace, Study Says." The letter's author was James Gustave Speth, dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.*

Speth wrote:

> The world we have known is history. A mere 1 degree Fahrenheit global average warming is already raising sea levels, strengthening hurricanes, disrupting ecosystems, threatening parks and protected areas, causing droughts and heat waves, melting the Arctic and glaciers everywhere and killing thousands of people a year....Yet there are several more degrees coming in our grandchildren's lifetimes....It is easy to feel like a character in a bad science fiction novel running down the street shouting, "Don't you see it!" while life goes on, business as usual....Climate change is the biggest thing to happen here on earth in thousands of years, with incalculable environmental, social and economic costs. But there is no march on Washington; students are not in the streets; consumers are not rejecting their destructive lifestyles; Congress is not passing far-reaching legislation; the president is not on television explaining the threat to the country; Exxon is not quaking in its boots; and entire segments of evening news pass without mention of the climate emergency...Instead, 129 new coal-fired plants are being developed in the United States alone, and so on.... There are many of us caught in this story. We must find another soon."[1]

What is "this story" we're "caught in?" And how do we get to the other story we "must find... soon?"

The alarm of scientists whose context is the misery of the poor supplements Speth with environmental realities well in place before accelerated climate change symptoms got some traction. Ricardo Navarro is one such scientist. A Salvadoran scientist who founded a large grassroots conservation effort in Central America, his documentation concludes that the three most dangerous things you can do in El Salvador are breathe the air, drink the water, and eat the food, in that order. In nearby Mexico, a full 50 percent of the water — to pick one critical resource — is unsafe for daily use. Globally, and to stay with the example of water, half of humanity lacks proper sanitation facilities even though we presently use fresh water at double the rate of aquifer replenishment. Navarro spells out the details of this and other resource use and then lists the debts and the toll.

> There is an ecological debt from the people who consume to the people who do not consume, or consume less. If we talk geographically we will say an ecological debt from the countries of the north to the countries of the south. If we talk historically, we will say an ecological debt from white people to people of colour or indigenous people. We can also say an ecological debt from men to women. We can also say an ecological debt from urban areas to rural areas. An ecological debt also from our generation to future generations, and the same ecological debt we ought to acknowledge from human beings to the rest of creation, because we are not only destroying ourselves, but we are also destroying other species on the planet. Besides that, socially speaking, half of the world lives with less than $2 a day. We talk about terrorism. We think about September

> 11th, 3,000 people killed — that is terrorism of course. The same day there were in the world 15,000 people killed because of diseases related to pollution of air, pollution of water and pollution of food. It was not only September 11, it was September 12, September 13, September 14, every day — and that happens day after day. If we dare to say that killing 3,000 in New York is terrorism, what is killing 15,000 people every day because of this system? Who is the terrorist here? It is the economic system. We have to think about that."[2]

So Speth urges "another story...soon" and Navarro says, "[It's] the economic system. We have to think about that.

The story we're captured by, now on a global scale, is the same as the economic system we have to think about — capitalism.

Is Capitalism Sustainable?

There are very good reasons why we're happily captured by it. No other economic system has approximated its capacity to generate wealth and lift the masses from their misery. Capitalism in fact solved one of the three perennial problems every economy addresses but few solve; namely, the problem of production. Capitalism generates "stuff" on a mass scale. It solves the problem of "enough" goods and services to meet human needs. Nothing approaches capitalism as an engine of wealth-generation, now for billions of people.

Capitalism has not, however, solved the other ancient problems of a viable economy: distribution and sustainability. You can join them and say that capitalism has not solved the problem of injustice, if the rubric of injustice includes both harm to peoples as well as the rest of nature. Left to themselves, unfettered capitalist markets tend to generate wealth at one pole and poverty at another. Present inequalities and inequities between rich and poor are obscene: in the United States, the CEOs of major corporations took home on average $10 million each in 2004 alone while workers' wages stagnated or actually fell, along with their health care and pension benefits. The federal minimum wage is not even a livable wage for most families; that is, working full-time at that wage does not put one safely above the poverty line. On a global scale — and ours is a global economy of corporate capitalism — we have "The Champagne Glass Economy." If you are holding the kind of champagne glass that has the broad, shallow top and long stem, the image works. The top 20 percent of the world population (the broad, shallow, upper portion of the glass) hold 83 percent of the world's wealth. The next 20 percent (the V-shaped portion connecting the broad bowl and the long stem) holds 11 percent of the world's wealth. And the bottom 60 percent of the world's population (the long stem) holds 6 percent of the world's wealth. Capitalism, left to its own logic of "buy cheap, sell dear" in a profit-driven, growth-driven economy, has never solved the problem of distributive justice. This has pushed governments to address the plight of the poor and forgotten (Scandinavian and lowland countries have done this extensively, as did FDR's New Deal and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs). Or capitalist injustice has led to economy-based reforms of the capitalist system itself (labor organizing, varieties of socialisms, efforts at sustainable local communities).

How do we make capitalist markets work to help creation? In a word, how do we do "green discipleship?"

But solving the distribution problem does not automatically solve the problem of unsustainability. Addressing present human inequality and inequity doesn't of itself ensure that future generations won't sink under the ecological debt Navarro spoke of; future generations may find themselves scrambling in a degraded, depleted world where eating the food, drinking the water, and breathing the air are life-threatening activities.

Our Economy vs. Earth's Economy

Here is the crunch: modern industrial and post-industrial economies have yet to find a way to grow and be ecologically sustainable at the same time. The crunch is that Earth's regeneration and renewal on its own non-negotiable terms and timelines collides with global capitalism and its short-haul dynamism. If you assume what most do — namely, that capitalist economics grow about 3 percent per year — then the world economy will grow 16 times in one century, 250 times in two, and 4,000 times in three. In any such scenario, planetary metabolic processes are soon overwhelmed by cumulative economic processes that negatively affect both biosphere and atmosphere. Exactly that is what accelerated climate change portends, and what Speth warns of, though climate change is only one consequence of a "taking" economy, rather than a sustaining, reciprocating one. All this happens while history and science document that each and every human economy is always and only a dependent subset of Earth's

economy and that fragile ecosystems and biospheric and atmospheric limits are flouted by the high and rising levels of extraction, consumption, and waste of what now can only be called global "turbo-capitalism." The global economy's orientation is short-haul wealth and profit, while Earth's economy demands upon long-haul reciprocity.

Here are the questions we must address. How do we ecologize capitalism at the same time we address its social injustice? How do we make capitalist markets work to help heal creation (peoples and "environment" together)? In a word, how do we do "green discipleship?"

It's not easy being green and, for discipleship, "green" has three meanings. It's "green" discipleship because, at least in the United States, that's the color of money. What kind of discipleship takes seriously our economic stewardship? How do we address the obscene inequities and inequalities of the present economy?

Addressing Earth and its distress is the moral assignment of our time.

It's "green," secondly, because that's a prime color of healthy nature. What is environmentally savvy discipleship, discipleship that yields sustainable communities, communities that are economically and environmentally sustainable at one and the same time?

It's also "green" because we're not very good at it. Our discipleship hasn't solved either the social injustice or the eco-injustice problems. Yet it must help do so now, since these threaten to overwhelm us and the generations that follow. The planet is in jeopardy at human hands. We must strive for discipleship that is not so amateurish, so "green," so casual about the crises Speth and Navarro say are hardly stirring us at all.

More needs to be said about discipleship in our time. It's an aside, but the kind of aside appropriate for committed people of faith doing advocacy work. Thereafter we can turn to Jewish and Christian guidelines for green discipleship.

Four questions, largely rhetorical, are appropriate for thinking about a discipleship viable for the challenges before us.

1. Is there a non-imperial or an anti-imperial discipleship for us today? Christian discipleship was not only forged in the context of empire, it was forged as a way of life alternative to the empire's. What does discipleship as an alternative to empire and as an expression of evangelical obedience mean for Christians, especially Christians carrying U.S. passports at a time when this nation is "noisy with believers" at home and feared and loathed abroad? What kind of theological malpractice made it even remotely possible for U.S. Christians to render Jesus pro-rich, pro-American, and pro-war?

2. Is there a discipleship of the Spirit? Discipleship is always associated, rightly, with following Jesus. But is this a proper reading if what Jesus himself does he does "in the power of the Spirit," or, alternatively, "full of the Holy Spirit"; if his own testimony about his own mission in Luke 4 begins, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor"; and if he says he must depart so that the Spirit might dwell among his disciples, guide them, and produce in them the fruits of the Spirit as the fruits of discipleship itself? Or if Jesus dares to say his followers will, in the power of the Spirit, do even greater things than he? And please note: Paul speaks of the first Jewish-Christian discipleship communities as those who "were all made to drink of one Spirit" (I Corinth. 12:13). Are we sufficiently Trinitarian in our discipleship? Have we inadvertently been reductionist about following Jesus? Jesus is utterly God-centered and Spirit-inspired and Spirit-led, and not, as Joseph Sittler once remarked, Christ-centered at all. So should our discipleship be more Christocentric than Jesus' discipleship? And what about a vast number of our Christian neighbors? In no time at all, the modern Pentecostal movement has grown to nearly one-quarter of the global Christian flock. How will we be disciples together if *Spirit* discipleship is foreign to many of us? These are times of tumultuous change, times that call out for a shared sense of Holy Spirit dynamism as well as a shared sense of common Earth citizenship. That leads to the third question.

3. Is there a "green" discipleship for a planet in jeopardy at human hands? Addressing Earth and its distress is *the* moral assignment of our time. What has discipleship to do with it? What kind of discipleship honors the covenant explicitly deemed "everlasting," the covenant between God and Earth and every living creature of all flesh (Gen. 9)? And linking this to discipleship and the Spirit, have we forgotten the ecological perspective of patristic theology? There the Holy Spirit is the liberating power that sets all creation free, the peoples and the land, sea, and sky together.

4. Is there a worldly discipleship savvy about the play of power and human responsibility when privilege continues to reign, as it does, instead of rightly ordered relationships of mutuality? What kind of *power-savvy* discipleship is wise as a snake while pure as lambs and doves? Discipleship lives from utterly free grace. But its moral wisdom in a corrupt and crabby world does not come easily. We desperately need moral substance and moral weight in our

politics, and that means a gracious discipleship that is power-savvy at the same time it calls us to act in accord with our better angels.

Four Green Guidelines

With this discipleship in view — non-imperial, Spirit-led, "green," and power-savvy — we turn to four guidelines with real tenure in biblical, Jewish, and Christian traditions. They provide a moral framework and guidance system.

All four are introduced by St. Ambrose, together with two verses from Proverbs.

Here is Ambrose: "The world has been created for all, while you rich are trying to keep it for yourselves. Not merely the possession of the Earth, but the very sky, air and the sea are claimed for the use of the rich few....Not from your own do you bestow on the poor man, but you make return from what is his. For what has been given as common for the use of all, you appropriate for yourself alone. The Earth belongs to all, not to the rich."

And here is the voice of Sophia wisdom in Proverbs 30:8–9: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full, and deny you, and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God."

Enough is best. Christianity, together with most every religious tradition, teaches that the truly abundant life is one of self-discipline and a restraint upon the multiplication of material desires. Indeed, a joyful existence is frustrated by unrestricted material indulgence and consumerism as a way of life. "Enough is best," rather than "more is better," is wise on all counts, material, moral, and spiritual. But what is enough? Real poverty is not enough. It debilitates body and kills spirit. It beats people down before they can stand tall. It brutalizes cell and soul alike. An economy that has the resources to meet basic human needs and the needs of Earth's economy, and does not do so, fails the test of discipleship.

The neighbor's claim. In the mid-1950s, H. Richard Niebuhr and a couple friends wrote a little treatise on *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry.* It includes this passage: "Who, finally, is my neighbor, the companion whom I have been commanded to love as myself?...He is the near one and the far one; the one removed from me by distances in time and space, in conviction and loyalties....The neighbor is in past and present and future, yet he is not simply mankind in its totality but rather in its articulation, the community of individuals in community. He is Augustine in the Roman Catholic Church and Socrates in Athens, and the Russian people, and the unborn generations who will bear the consequences of our failures, future persons for whom we are adminstering the entrusted wealth of nature and other greater common gifts. [The neighbor] is man and...angel and...animal and inorganic being, all that participates in being."

In the economy of "the world house" (Martin Luther King's image of our interdependent world), human householders are trustees of creation in a community that we have inherited and that is entrusted to us for present and future generations. For green discipleship, the neighbor is "all that participates in being." Our responsibilities extend that far.

Universality and equality. "In that which is most basic...the value of each life, we are all equal." That root moral conviction follows from the faith conviction that God's love is unbounded. For economy, equity, and environment, it means the following. No human group should be excluded from a reasonable share of the benefits of any human economy and nature's, nor should any be exempted from shouldering a reasonable share of the burdens. One begins thinking about restructuring with the idea of an *equal* sharing of benefits and burdens, and then goes on to say that economic inequalities *may be* justified if and only if they can be shown to serve the common good (instead of private interests only). The common good now is inclusive of both biosphere and atmosphere.

Checks and balances. As a species, humans are quite "bratty." We have probably been so since Cain, and certainly since Homer. Green discipleship argues that a wise economic order guards against any unchecked concentrations of power and minimizes opportunities for the selfish uses of power. Evil and injustice always flow from maldistributions of power. So, while we cannot ipso facto rule out high concentrations of economic power — to build a public transportation network, to provide a needed dam and irrigation system, to keep postal and communications systems working, to address large-scale emergency needs, to provide public education for masses of people, and so on — such concentrations, whether in public or private hands, require built-in checks upon even the necessary amassing of economic and other power.[6] Green discipleship's nod to democracy is precisely because genuine democracy democratizes political, social,

and economic power.

Economy, equity, ecology — rightly relating these is the substance of "green" discipleship for the years ahead. A daunting task, Christian faith bears some wisdom for it.

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Notes

1 James Gustave Speth, "Letter to the Editor," *New York Times*, 24 February 2006, p.A22.

2 Excerpted from "Environment and Humanity: Friends or Foes?," a symposium at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, 21 September 2004, with the transcript made available on the following web page: *www.stpauls.co.uk/image/1316055RCId4jSrqPkHAGj8Z4PLDM3i.pdf*. I am grateful to Nelson Rivera, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, for pointing me to this symposium.

3 St. Ambrose of Milan, *De Nabuthe Jezraelita 3, 11,* as cited by Rosemary Radford Reuther in "Sisters of Earth: Religious Women and Ecological Spirituality," *The Witness* (May 2000): 14.

4 H. Richard Niebuhr et al., *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry: Reflections on the Aims of Theological Education* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1956), 38.

5 J. Philip Wogaman, *The Great Economic Debate: An Ethical Analysis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 53.

6 This text about priniciples is taken from Larry Rasmussen, "Gaining a Christian Perspective," ch. 8 of *Economic Anxiety & Christian Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1981).

Two poems by Mary Oliver

WATCHING A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT POLAR BEARS TRYING TO SURVIVE ON THE MELTING ICE FLOES

That God had a plan, I do not doubt.
But what if His plan was, that we would do better?

BLACK BEAR

Now comes black bear into the field.
His mouth hangs open just a little.
His bulk twitches in the long grass.

Listen, black bear, I say:
Do you get it?
We have created cities!
We have weapons you will not ever imagine,
or understand.
We build machines that fly, that
plough the great waters.

Bear's eyes flicker. His nose pinches the air.
He does not care what I say.
He does not hear even a scrap of it.
He is listening only to the perfection of his own life.

Oh, black bear, soften me with your immutable disdain.

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From the Editor: The Great Economy

By Ray Waddle

Looking at the aerial photography of Emmet Gowin featured in this *Reflections*, I recall his words, "All important pictures embody something we do not yet understand."

Gowin has photographed bomb test craters in Nevada, acid rain fields in Northern Bohemia, and dozens of other places of "ugly duress." His environmental photos often suggest earthly wounds silently borne, as if the planet were waiting for remedy or at least acknowledgment, or poised to connect with the viewer and change us.

Change might come as a moment of spiritual catharsis or a breakthrough in public policy. In any case, the photographer's job is to bear witness.

Gowin, a preacher's son with roots in rural Virginia, says he is drawn to the "light that fills a terrible place." His work ponders a troubling paradox: "Our fascination for what is terrible is great. Our need for beauty is great," he says in *Changing the Earth*, his catalogue of aerial photos (Yale University Press, 2002).

That paradox might be a handy summary of the human condition itself — impulsive, self-defeating, baffling as ever, an estate "we do not yet understand."

The Katrina photos featured here by journalist Evan Silverstein move in an opposite direction — snapshots close to the ground, chronicling the dazed aftermath of the Gulf Coast hurricane's catastrophic blast, with the consequent flooding of New Orleans after the levees failed.

Both kinds of photos catalogue devastation and heartbreak and something else too — the news that there's nowhere to hide. Everybody knowingly or not bears some relation to the destruction. The photos assert everyone's vulnerability to weather, war, profit motive, and pollution. And they indict human practice everywhere: All taxpayers fund the steady manufacture and testing of new weapons. All of us use fossil fuels, which are refined extensively in South Louisiana and which aggravated the poisonous local conditions after Katrina.

Arguably, too, Katrina's fierceness was evidence of climate instability caused by global warming, which scientists now blame with near certainty on the human production of greenhouse gases, everybody's problem.

Directly or indirectly, the words and images in this *Reflections* issue point to something strange and urgent about the new century. Despite our civilization's dazzling tonnage of data, we labor with a deficit. We claim a paucity of convincing metaphors that can explain this world, its damage and pain, its yearnings and interconnectedness, in ways that mobilize consensus and healing.

As a nation, it seems obvious we're casting about for a new story, a defining image. In the past they've always been nearby, giving shape to historical experience or making a case for a point of view — the Puritans' City on a Hill, Lincoln's House Divided, Falwell's Christian Nation, the Age of Aquarius — phrases designed to energize and otherwise explain a dawning reality.

Now we're tangled in a new rough patch (to use another metaphor) — a war that forces us to clarify our values and mission. At the same moment, scientific evidence says human civilization is dangerously altering the climate. And a hot-burning economy redefines extremities of wealth and poverty, while slow-burning fears of terrorism and other geo-political dreads taint the emotional landscape. Is there a metaphor that covers it all?

The photographs here connect in my mind to another artist featured in these pages, a poet who is also an essayist, novelist, Kentucky farmer, and contrarian — Wendell Berry. He has written elsewhere of a metaphor that, to his reckoning, encompasses the very truth of the world. He calls it the Great Economy.

We're all part of the Great Economy, Berry argues — the God-created cosmos where everything is connected and even the fall of a sparrow is noticed. But humans reside in it uneasily. It's a real economy, with principles and patterns and laws, but an economy we can understand only in part. And it requires humility, because it exacts harsh ecological penalties if we refuse to live in harmony with it. It is far bigger than we are.

Then there's the little economy — that is, the industrial economy. Berry says the industrial economy thinks it is the only economy. That's the problem: it values only what it can see and use today.

"What it cannot use, it characteristically describes as 'useless,' 'worthless,' 'random' or 'wild,' and gives it some such name as 'chaos,' 'disorder' or 'waste' — and thus ruins it or cheapens it ," Berry writes in his essay "Two Economies."

> That western deserts or eastern mountains were once perceived as 'useless' made it easy to dignify them by the 'use' of strip mining. Once we acknowledge the existence of the Great Economy, however, we are astonished and frightened to see how much modern enterprise is the work of hubris, occurring outside the human boundary established by ancient tradition. The industrial economy is based on invasion and pillage of the Great Economy.

The Great Economy is a metaphor, yet no "mere" metaphor. It is a practical reality we must heed. In some precincts, it goes by another name — the Kingdom of God.

In *Changing the Earth*, Emmet Gowin declares, "I believe difficult images bring us all closer to a shared experience." Despite all odds, perhaps difficult questions can too. That's the hope of this *Reflections*.

THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS
By Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

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Evan Silverstein
pages 48–51 and back cover, courtesy Presbyterian News Service

Poetry

Wendell Berry, poet, novelist, essayist, economics critic, and author of some forty books, has also farmed his family's Kentucky land for forty years.
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"Tree of Heaven" by Naomi Long Madgett,
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