CONTRIBUTORS

Mathijs Lamberigts
Donal O’Mahony
Luc Hoebeke
Paul Faller
ABSTRACT OF ST AUGUSTINE COLLEGE OF SOUTH AFRICA

The idea of founding a Catholic university in South Africa was first mooted in 1993 by a group of academics, clergy and business people. It culminated in the establishment of St Augustine College of South Africa in July 1999, when it was registered by the Minister of Education as a private higher education institution and started teaching students registered for the degree of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy.

It is situated in Victory Park, Johannesburg and operates as a university offering values-based education to students of any faith or denomination, to develop leaders in Africa for Africa.

The name ‘St Augustine’ was chosen in order to indicate the African identity of the College since St Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD) was one of the first great Christian scholars of Africa.

As a Catholic educational institution, St Augustine College is committed to making moral values the foundation and inspiration for all its teaching and research. In this way it offers a new and unique contribution to education, much needed in our South African society.

It aims to be a community that studies and teaches disciplines that are necessary for the true human development and flourishing of individuals and society in South Africa. The College’s engagement with questions of values is in no sense sectarian or dogmatic but is both critical and creative. It will explore the African contribution to Christian thought and vice versa. Ethical values will underpin all its educational programmes in order to produce leaders who remain sensitive to current moral issues.

The college is committed to academic freedom, to uncompromisingly high standards and to ensuring that its graduates are recognised and valued anywhere in the world. Through the international network of Catholic universities and the rich tradition of Catholic tertiary education, St Augustine College has access to a wide pool of eminent academics, both locally and abroad, and wishes to share these riches for the common good of South Africa.
Table of Contents

Augustine’s View of Liberty Revisited
Mathijs Lamberigts

A Spirituality to Accompany Sustainable Development
Donal O’Mahony

The Wisdom of the Book of Job and the Relation of Man to Nature
Luc Hoebke

The Integrity of Creation: Environment as a Social Issue
Paul Faller

List of Contributors
INTRODUCTION
Augustine’s view of liberty has been a highly debated issue. On the one hand, one can find scholars who, with excellent arguments, defend the idea that Augustine (especially after 396), over-emphasised the gift of grace in such a way that there was no or insufficient space for human freedom anymore. These scholars do find support for this view in tradition. Already Julian of Aeclanum, one of Augustine’s most vehement opponents, was of this opinion,¹ but also the so-called semi-pelagians, had their doubts about Augustine’s concept of freedom and free will.² The Council of Orange, in 529, decided not to follow Augustine’s positions with regard to grace, free will and predestination. The Council of Trent, although paying much attention to Augustine’s doctrine of grace, would be rather careful when dealing with the precise relation between grace, free will and predestination. It followed Augustine with regard to grace and free will or justification, but did not take over the consequences of Augustine’s predestinarian view.³

On the other hand – and here one might think of the protestant line in history – one can easily present an impressive bibliography of authors who, while claiming that “Augustinus totus noster est”,⁴ refer to him as the master of grace. According to them, Augustine made clear that, on the theological level, one can only speak in terms of grace. In relation with God, human nature, vitiated and corrupted as it is, is no longer able to act autonomously, at least on the ethical theological level. By autonomously, they mean that Augustine is right when claiming that fallen nature on its own is no longer able to act in such a way that what we do can be considered to be meritorious.

In this paper, I would like to go back to Augustine who, in his dispute with the Pelagian Julian of Aeclanum, was confronted with the critique that he had given up liberty in favour of an arbitrary grace; even when such grace was a gift of God.

WHAT KIND OF FREEDOM IS PRESENT IN FALLEN NATURE?
As is shown by Huftier,⁵ Augustine seems to make a distinction between free will
(liberum arbitrium) and freedom (libertas). I immediately add that this distinction is not always clearly present in Augustine, but, at least on a theoretical level, it might be helpful. When Augustine speaks of libertas, he thinks of a freedom that can be described as a capacity to do the good. It is a liberty which is able to will and to do the good (posse et velle bonum). It is the freedom of the righteous man (the homo rectus). For him, it is a freedom which can be compared to that of Adam before the fall: posse non peccare. This kind of freedom must finally lead to the non posse peccare. This kind of freedom is inner related to God’s freedom. This kind of freedom has to do with perfection and eternal happiness.

Liberum arbitrium is used when Augustine thinks of the human being as a rational being with a will. Both are present in the concept liberum arbitrium. This free will can never be lost by human beings. He speaks of it as congenitum and inamissibile. In other words, it belongs to our nature and therefore can never be lost.⁶

In much literature, this difference between the two notions is often neglected. From the very beginning, I wish to underline that this difference is crucial: I will argue that much of the confusion in literature is the result of a negligence of this fundamental difference. Indeed, one may not forget that Augustine, living in a theocratic society, thinks in a very hierarchical way. On a theological level, he relates everything to God. This means that the criterion for evaluation of our moral behaviour is God. It will be clear that God, source of all goodness, cannot possess a liberum arbitrium. In that case, Augustine continues, God, who cannot want to do evil, would no longer be free: “If free will means that one can choose between good and evil, God is no longer free.”⁷ True freedom has to do with and refers to the immutable Good. True freedom is described as a happy necessity. This necessity has to do with feliciter vivere (living a happy life), with a necessity that we enjoy: “Hac necessitate non premuntur sancti angelis sed fruuntur”, Augustine said.⁸ True freedom has to do with the good and with happiness. True happiness is related to immutability and as such can no longer be part of the fallen nature.

Because of the fall, human beings have lost this kind of libertas, described as immortal righteousness. Human beings, in so far as they belong to fallen nature, do no longer have the power and capacity to live a good life (bene vivere).⁹ According to Augustine (and in line with the biblical tradition) human beings lost the liberty not to sin. All human beings will sin. One can also formulate this rather pessimistic view as following: human beings will learn, by trial and error, what is the best way of living. Indeed, one of the consequences of the fall is that we lost the right perspective. Since the fall human beings have lost a clear idea about what they must do in order to be eternally happy. It is interesting to see how often Augustine relates our lost freedom with our ignorance about truth. I also wish to add that Augustine speaks of this loss in a context where no faith is present. It is often forgotten that ignorance belongs to the essence of original sin. It is absence of the perspective of faith through Christ.

From such a point of view, moral acts are not evaluated in se, but in the broader
perspective of the why. The why is the criterion and every act which is not done propter Deum cannot be considered as a theologically speaking good act. Augustine, when dealing with the virtues of pagans, will underline that they possess virtues, that these virtues belong to the essence of their nature, but that the absence of the right perspective explains why their acts cannot be evaluated as theologically good. Not the what but the why is the criterion for moral and theological evaluation. If one does not do the good because of God, one does not do the (theological) good, one must do. When non-believers help the poor, their acts can be described as good acts in se, but not as theologically good acts. In my opinion, this fundamental idea explains why Augustine’s concept of sin is so broad. In passing, I wish to underline that pagans, known for their virtuous life, will be less punished after death than others. They will be punished because they venerated their idols, their gods, but their punishment will be less severe because of their moral activity as such. In such a perspective, one can easily understand that the concept peccatum – which is more than sin, which also means sinfulness, absence of God, absence of the absolute good, doing things because of fear – is a very broad one. Peccatum belongs to the essence of human beings living without the gift of grace.

I wish to repeat that such a position does not mean that human beings no longer possess a free will. Time and again Augustine states that we all possess a free will. Thanks to this gift of the free will, we can make decisions such as studying, walking, talking, drinking, etc. Of course, this free will is not absolute: think of tiredness, the presence of other ambitious people, our limited physical capacities. But this free will is real. One of the clearest proofs of the existence of this free will is that all human beings want to be happy, which is not the same as living a theologically good life. In other words, Augustine really accepts the idea of a relative autonomy in one’s daily life. Moreover, this free will is as it were the prerequisite for our liberation: because of this presence of free will we are able (capax) to convert, to change our life, but also to continue to be what we really are: children of Adam. As children of Adam, we stay in a long tradition of disobedience and we continue that tradition.

It is on this level that Augustine often speaks of the presence of carnal concupiscence in human beings. With carnal concupiscence, Augustine simply means sinful desire. On the level of concupiscence, Augustine distinguishes three kinds of desire. He speaks of the good concupiscence (bona concupiscentia): this is the desire for God, the living under the spirit, a life in faith. Further, he mentions the natural desire: we all search for happiness. Finally, Augustine speaks of carnal desire. It is a self-oriented desire. It is a desire that does not have God as its object. Often referring to Paul, Augustine speaks of the inner tension between flesh and spirit. This tension is not a gnostic dualistic one. It is not a tension between body and soul, but a tension within the soul. In my view, this is one of the main reasons why those, who accuse the late Augustine of Manichaeism, are missing the point. Indeed, Augustine does not speak of salvation by means of separation of body and soul, but in terms of healing.
Further, Augustine insists that rational beings want to follow their desires. In other words, Augustine does not accept that we all are led by a blind fate. We experience in ourselves this desire. It is an attractive desire, a desire that tries to convince us. It is a desire that wants to take the lead. I think that every fair exercise of introspection will make clear that Augustine’s analysis is correct: we all want to be the best, we all like to criticise others, to dominate. Although it can be lonely at the top, most of us want to be at that top. The many examples, given by Augustine, make clear what Augustine has in mind: instead of considering all as a gift of God, we think it is our merit. Sinful desire, sinful behaviour can essentially be reduced to self-orientation, to egoism. The desire to build up our life, to fulfil our aspirations, causes unrest in our hearts. Our internal peace is disturbed. Typical of the sinful desire is that it longs for too much, not for what is sufficient.

This desire is present in all human beings. It is a desire experienced by rational human beings, a desire that causes unrest. It is a desire that disturbs, in a sense, our harmony. Because of it, human beings are no longer ‘open houses’. It is in this context that Augustine quotes time and again Paul, Rom. 7:15: “Non enim quod volo bonum, hoc facio, sed quod nolo malum, hoc ago” (cf. also Rom. 7:19) and Gal. 5:17 where Paul speaks of the struggle between flesh and spirit. It is interesting to see that Augustine right in the controversy with Julian, refers to the I in Paul as the I of a Christian.17 I do not have the time to develop this further, but it makes clear that for Augustine the inner struggle is part of this mortal life, even after baptism. Once one accepts that the propter Deum is the only acceptable criterion for the evaluation of one’s moral life, one has to agree with Augustine’s analysis. But this seems to be the major issue in contemporary critique: once God’s existence is questioned, or people no longer accept that God is the last and only criterion on the moral level, Augustine’s view will be put under critique.

Moreover, people do not like the idea that one is responsible for one’s moral behaviour in so far as it is related to sinfulness, while the theological good seems to be a gift of God. Indeed, time and again, Augustine emphasises that human beings are responsible for their moral activity. We decide to follow our desires. We decide to give in. In other words, Augustine never accepted that a gnostic or platonic dualism could be used as an excuse for the evil human beings do. Nowhere will one find a text in which Augustine declares that moral evil is a reality that transcends us in such a way, that we are no longer responsible for it. In Augustine’s opinion (and he really thinks that he is in line with Paul), the tension between flesh and spirit is a tension within our soul and thus cannot be the result of a struggle between substances, transcending our historical context. For Augustine, history is the place one will find sin. Human beings, living in history, are responsible for their sinful life. The late Augustine never accepted the existence of a mala substantia.

To this, one also has to add that in Augustine’s view mortality and sinfulness are related to each other. Both are characterised by mutability, change. It is probably good to recall that most of the authors in Christian antiquity accepted the idea that death was the result of Adam’s fall.18
Whether sinfulness is the result of a custom (consuetudo peccatorum) or essentially belongs to our nature, it is a reality present in a human being’s life. It seems to me that many of Augustine’s critics do not pay enough attention to this statement. According to Augustine, we consider this sinfulness as problematic because this inner problematic tension reveals that we are still longing for a better life. Human beings lost the libertas boni in so far as this liberty to do the good is present as a real option for all human beings. However, this libertas boni still exists as a potential reality: “Si nulla eis esset, id quod sanctum et iustum et bonum est, non velle potuissent”. This text was written by Augustine a couple of months before his death. It makes clear that Augustine, up to the end of his life, maintained that human beings had the capacity to do what they were expected to do, through the gift of grace. As far as I know, this text is seldom quoted in literature. It is a fundamental text for it makes clear that the Bishop of Hippo still believed that the theological liberty survived after Adam’s fall, as a potential reality.

THE TRUE FREEDOM OF THE FAITHFUL

In line with Julian of Aelam and his followers, many authors think that freedom, preceded by grace, is no longer freedom. Grace as gift, seemingly given to this one and not to the other, can be described as a kind of fate, a blind power. I would like to emphasise that the Pelagians made a serious point. If God gives his grace to this person but not to the other, if God wants that this human being will be saved and healed but not another, one must come to the conclusion that God is a very arbitrary God, a tyrant, a dictator. Such a God created human beings but did not equip them with the means, required to do what God expected them to do. As Julian said: Does such a God deserve qualifications as good creator, loving father, just judge?

Augustine, in his reply, answered that he was not interested in a theoretical reflection about the precise relation between grace and free will. Augustine, time and again, referred to Scripture and faith. He spoke as a faithful who wanted to reflect on the religious relation between sinful human beings and their merciful God. In this relation, Christ plays an important role as mediator between God and human beings.

The basic idea for Augustine seems to be that God’s grace, since the fall, is a gift, a gratia gratis data. This statement is, at first sight, rather simple if not simplistic. However, within the context of Augustine’s time, when emperors could decide about one’s life or death, it has a deeper meaning. This concept reveals that one’s life is in the hands of a superior authority. Transposing this idea to the God of Scripture, it means that God is the lord of life and death. He is the king, or, if you want, the emperor.

Moreover, one has to keep in mind that, in Augustine’s view, because of the fall all are sinners and thus condemned. Humanity, in Adam, decided to turn away from the supreme lord, God. This Lord – and that is why Augustine can think of a felix culpa – did not give up his dream about humanity. Therefore, he decided not to destroy but to save humanity. In Augustine’s view, this is crucial. God did not have
to save humanity. There was even no reason for doing this. Since humanity decided to continue its history without God, God and humanity no longer needed each other. In the language of today, this simply means that we can live our life: birth, youth, adulthood, death, and the story is over. No need to refer to God. He might exist, which is, hopefully, fine for him/her, but we do not wish to take this existence into account, when living our lives. Augustine believed that life had more to offer than just that life, described above. He believed that God did not want to forget fallen humanity, but that he wanted to save, heal and elevate it to new life. Although humanity left God, he did not leave us. This is, I think, one of the core ideas we have to take into account when speaking about Augustine’s concept of liberty. God no longer must offer his salvation to human beings because of their merits. No one can claim that God has to reward him/her.\textsuperscript{22}

I do agree that Augustine, thinking of his own life and of the many graces he experienced, thought that his story was a universal story and true for all human beings. On the other hand, I would like to refer to the lives of saints: most of the autobiographies of saints speak of sin, sinfulness, grace as gift, etc. I do think that many scholars forget this. In relation to God’s goodness, no one can claim that he/she is meritorious. Human beings better forget their \textit{merita} within the context of their relation with God. In relation to God, human beings better hope for mercy and remission. One of the major differences between Augustine and his opponents is precisely this: boasting of one’s good deeds as a condition for eternal reward is ridiculous. No one deserves God’s grace. If this were the case, grace would no longer be grace. Grace is a gift, a present. These gifts and presents we receive, but do not deserve. God’s grace, in Augustine’s view, cannot be offered as a reward. It will be clear that Augustine’s view has to do with a spiritual attitude: the Christian recognises and confesses that he/she is hoping for salvation. Such an attitude requires that Christians recognise and confess that they are sinners. In Augustine’s view, Christ – the unique mediator between God and men – can only be mediator in so far as human beings accept that, in the long run, they are not able to save their own lives. With Paul, Augustine can state: “What do you possess what you did not receive?” (1 Cor 4:7b). Only because of God’s mercy we will be saved (Titus, 3:5); through grace we are saved in faith (Eph. 2:8-9). If one wants to boast, he/she must boast of the Lord (2 Cor. 10:17).

Such a spiritual attitude belongs, according to Augustine, to the essence of theology, what he called the \textit{philosophia christiana}.\textsuperscript{23} What one is, what one might be \textit{ante Deum}, is a gift of God. This reveals that one may not expect Augustine to offer a theoretical, philosophical reflection about the relation between grace and free will. According to Augustine, God as revealed in Christ, the unique mediator, offers his grace. No one can come to Christ, if not attracted by the Father. Conversion is the result of a gift, not grace a result of conversion. Again: Augustine wants to be in line with Scripture. God, Augustine continues, acts in our hearts. It is an inward upward move. God makes of \textit{nolentes volentes}.\textsuperscript{24}

A crucial question here is whether such an inner conversion has to do with
coercion or not. According to Augustine, such coercion is absurd.\textsuperscript{25} that people believe is God's work, but this God does not act without human beings. Who believes in God, really wants to believe.

On this level, Augustine often speaks of a mystery. He mentions the case of Paul who, unexpectedly converted to Christianity. Augustine also thinks of his own time: many, \textit{inimici gratiae}, convert to Christianity. Indeed, with this kind of remark, Augustine makes clear that concrete experience is part of this theological reflection. It goes without saying that the Bishop of Hippo was convinced that his idea of a preceding grace was already present in Scripture. In this context, Augustine often quoted texts such as Proverbs 8,35b: "\textit{Voluntas praeparatur a Domino}"; Philippians 2:13: "\textit{Deus est enim qui operatur in vobis et velle et operari pro bona voluntate}"; Ps. 36:23: "\textit{A domino gressus hominis dirigentur et viam eius volet.}" Since the fall, human beings need help in order to rediscover what is essential to their life: obedience to God. According to Augustine, this obedience belongs to the essence of Christian faith and spirituality.

As already stated, Augustine did not accept that grace was coercing human beings. For him, grace had to do with love:\textsuperscript{26} we, beloved by God, want to love him (1 Joh. 4:19). We must not be loved because we first loved, but because we were loved, we must love: \textsuperscript{27} God is the \textit{initium caritatis}.\textsuperscript{28} Such a position reveals again that speaking about Augustine's concepts of grace and free will, one always has to keep in mind that a faithful person, a bishop, a spiritual theologian is speaking. He reflects on concrete experiences and he is doing this within the context of faith. For him, grace's essence is love: \textsuperscript{29} such love is identical with the desire to do the good, of which the almighty is the origin. On this level, loving God is done without any hidden selfish motive. For Augustine, such love, such freedom can only be the result of a gift. This gift inspires human beings to love God.\textsuperscript{30} To love God is, for Augustine, a gift and a challenge or task: on the level of gift, God, by his presence, offers us the grace to live a true life. He illuminates our mind, he helps us to overcome our sinful desires. On the level of task or challenge: human beings, touched by God's grace, \textit{sponte} (spontaneously) start to obey God's commandments.\textsuperscript{31} Having discovered that the final purpose of one's life is being loved by and loving God, human beings, as faithful, will be happy because of this experience. I do think that Augustine's personal experience played an important role in the development of his view on the relation between grace and free will. It is interesting to mention the ways in which this process of love is described: \textit{delectatio, condelectatio, amor libens, dilectio, excitare, accendere, attrahere, cupidatus boni, tangere cor, dulcescere, inspirare, adducere}. This terminology reveals that grace has nothing to do with coercion. People like Boublík really missed this point.\textsuperscript{32} grace as described by Augustine had nothing to do with violent coercion but with the free sweetness of love.\textsuperscript{33} We are really free when we do not love against our will.\textsuperscript{34} Christian life is, in Augustine's view, inwardly related to love and/in freedom.

In my opinion, too many scholars have, in line with the position of Julian of
Aeclanum, criticised Augustine on the basis of a concept of freedom, which was limited to a freedom of choice. I do think that such a concept, well known by Augustine, is a concept that is not really useful when reflecting about the relation between God and human beings. It does not make sense to think that human beings and God are equals (even without a concept of fall this would be ridiculous).

During the Pelagian and the so-called semi-Pelagian controversy, Augustine time and again underlined that he was the defensor liberi arbitrii. Through love, human beings become free. For Augustine, recognition of one’s own sinfulness and belief in God’s loving primacy are Siamese twins. As a person of faith, the Bishop of Hippo is well aware that God is the first, for he, who is the perfect one, is willing to love us sinners. For Augustine, God ‘inflames’ in human beings the zeal to live secundum Christum or secundum Deum. Faith offers the context within which human beings will be enabled to live their moral life. What we need is a liberation, which makes us children of God, and such liberation can only happen through Christ. Faith offers truth. This is not a theoretical truth, but a living person, Christ. Faith offers us the will to do this truth because our life is God orientated. Faith offers also strength for the realisation of this good. Our liberation is indeed more than a liberation from; it is also liberation towards. In this regard, one must take into account the importance of baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit renews us constantly and progressively. The process towards the good is possible because human beings remain capax boni. We will be set free because we can be set free. We will do the good because we are able to do the good.

Augustine’s concept of freedom clearly does not speak of a theoretical, natural capability but is a theological, spiritual freedom, a being attracted by a loving God. God realises that we will become what we must be (happy) by doing what we must do (in love): oboedire Deo cum amore. Then, and only then, are we truly free. Such freedom has to do with affection. Such a concept of freedom cum amore is still worthy of being a subject of reflection.

NOTES

* Annual Augustine Lecture on 28 August 2002, held at St Augustine College of South Africa, Johannesburg.


3 It is interesting to see that the Declaration of Augsburg in many regards was based upon Augustinian ideas.


6 “Hominis vero liberum arbitrium congenitum et omnino inamissibile si quaerimus, illud est quo omnes beati esse volunt, etiam hi qui ea nolunt, quae ad beatitudinem ducunt.”; *Opus imperfectum* VI,11, PL 45, 1521.

7 “Si liberum non est nisi quod duo potest velle, id est bonum et malum, liber Deus non est, qui malum non potest velle.”; *Opus imperfectum* I,100, CSEL 85,1, p. 118; “Qui (Deus) utique nec potest velle nec vult posse peccare...”; I,103, CSEL 85,1, p. 120; “Sed in ipso Deo summum est liberum arbitrium, qui peccare nullo modo potest.”; V,38, PL 45, 1474. J. BALL, *Libre arbitre et liberté dans saint Augustin*, in *L’année théologique* 6 (1946) 368-382 rightly stated that it does not make sense to look in Augustine for distinctions between ‘naturel’, ‘surnaturel’ or ‘prénaturel’. Augustine is reflecting on the truth of Scripture, especially when Scripture speaks of our need for liberation.

8 *Opus imperfectum* I,103, CSEL 85,1, p. 120; cf. also Huftrier, *Libre arbitre, liberté et péché chez saint Augustin*, pp 223ff.

9 “Quis autem nostrum dicat quod primi hominis peccato perierit liberum arbitrium de genere humano? Libertas quidem perit per peccatum, sed illa, quae in paradiso fuit, hebendi plenam cum immortalitate iustitiam. Propere quod natura humana divina indiget gratia, dicente Domino: ‘Si vos Filius liberaverit, tunc vere liber eritis’ (Jh. 9,36)”;
*Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* I,5, CSEL 60, pp 425-426.


11 See the text, quoted in footnote 5.

12 “Qua beati esse omnes volumus, et nolle non possimus: sed haec ut beatus sit quisque non sufficit, nec ut vivat recte per quod beatus sit: quia non ita est homini congenita libertas immutabilis voluntatis qua velit possitque bene agere, sicut congenita est qua velit beatus esse; quod omnes volunt, et qui recte agere nolunt.”; *Opus imperfectum* VI,12, PL 45, 1524. Cf. also H. Staffner, Die Lehre des hl. Augustinus über das Wesen der Erbünde, in *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 79, 1957, p 385-416, esp. p 397.

13 “Natura vero humana quamvis mutabilis, quantum ad id pertinet quod condita est, bona est; quae non solum sine vitio facta est, verum etiam, cum per vitium mala est, capax est bona, quo bona sit.”; *Opus imperfectum* I,101, CSEL 85,1, p 119.


16 “Sed aliae sunt rerum corporalium qualitates ..., et aliae sunt animae cupiditates, quae propter eam carnem dicuntur, quae secundum carnem anima concupiscit, cum sic concupiscit, ut et spiritus, id est pars eius melior et superior, debeat repugnare; *Contra Iulianum* V,28, PL 44, 802; cf. also V,16, PL 44, 793: “Si prudenter hic saperes, profecto esse iniquitatem
videres, qua pars inferior hominis repugnat superiori atque meliori." On possible Platonist influence, see N. Cipriani, Una teoria neoplatonica alla base dell’etica sessuale di S. Agostino, in *Augustinianum* 14, 1974, 351-361, esp. p 357.


19 As was the view of Julian of Aeclanum.

20 *Opus imperfectum* VI,11, *PL* 45, 1520.


22 “Quomodolobit dicas Deum facere quod debet, gratiam nemini debet multisque non reddit supplicium, quod malis eorum operibus debet et largitur gratiam, quam nullis eorum bonis operibus debet.”; *Opus imperfectum* I,133, *CSEL* 85,1, p 146.

23 “Ac per hoc in philosophia christiana ut gloriemur in tribulationibus, non est nostrum, quia et hoc accepi mus...”; *Opus imperfectum* II,166, *CSEL* 85,1, p 287.


25 “Trahitur ergo miris modis, ut velit, ab illo qui novit intus in ipsis hominum cordibus operari, non ut homines, quod fieri non potest, nolentes credant, sed ut volentes ex nolentibus fiant.”; *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* I,37, *CSEL* 60, p 454; “Si enim cogitur, non vult; et quod absurdius quam ut dicatur nolens velle quod bonum est?”; *Opus imperfectum* I,101, *CSEL* 85,1, p. 119. See also, among many others, E. Bailleux, La liberté augustiniennne et la grâce, in *Mélanges de science religieuse* 19, 1962, p 30-48.

26 See, e.g., *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* II,21, *CSEL* 60, p 482.

27 “Non ergo diligamur, quia dileximus, sed, quia dilecti sumus, diligamus.”; *Opus imperfectum* I,131, *CSEL* 85,1, p 144.

28 *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* II,21, *CSEL* 60, p 482.

29 *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* IV,11, *CSEL* 60, p 532.

30 “Quando fit propter ipsum, id est, quando gratis amatur ipse: qualis amor nobis esse non potest, nisi ex ipso.”; *Contra Julianum* V,9, *PL* 44, 788.

31 Cf. *Opus imperfectum* III,106, *CSEL* 85,1, p 426


33 “Nemo nisi per gratiam Christi ad bonum quod vult agendum et ad malum quod odit non agendum potest habere liberum voluntatis arbitrium, non ut voluntas eius ad bonum sicut ad malum captiva rapiatur, sed ut a captivitate liberata ad liberatorum suum liberali suavitate amoris, non servili amaritudine timoris attrahatur.”; *Opus imperfectum* III,112, *CSEL* 85,1, p 433.

34 *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* I,33, *CSEL* 42, p 245.

35 “Me non esse liber arbitrii (...) negatorem, sed potius defensorem Dei gratiam
confitendo.”; *Opus imperfectum* III,214, *CSEL* 85,1, p. 505; “Secundum gratiam Dei non contra eam, libertas defenditur voluntatis. Voluntas quippe humana non libertate consequitur gratiam, sed gratia potius libertatem.”; *De correptione et gratia* 17, *PL* 44, 926.

36 “Nec liberum auffertur arbitrium (gratia), sed cuius beneficio sit in bono liberum ostenditur.”; *Opus imperfectum* IV,124, *PL* 45, 1409.

37 Needless to repeat that humanity left God and gave up the partnership with God.


39 “‘Si vos filius liberaverit, tunc vera liberi eritis’ (Jh. 8,36), utique liberi ad bene iustaeque vivendum.”; *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* I,5, *CSEL* 60, p 426.

40 *Contra Julianum* VI,39, *PL* 44, 843.

41 “Nec potest homo boni aliquid velle, nisi adiuvetur ab eo qui malum non potest velle, hoc est gratia Dei per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum (Rom. 7,25).”; *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* I,7, *CSEL* 60, p. 429.

42 “Quod (Jh. 8,36) non solum propter peccata praeterita dictum esse, quorum remissione liberamur, verum etiam propter adiutorium gratiae, quod ne peccemus accipimus, id est, ita liberi efficimur, Deo nostra itinera dirigente, ut non nobis dominetur omnis iniquitas.”; *Opus imperfectum* VI,15, *PL* 45, 1534.


45 *Opus imperfectum* I,101, *CSEL* 85,1, p 119.

46 In this regard, it is good to remember that Augustine speaks about a liberty one prays for; *Opus imperfectum* I,88, *CSEL* 85,1, p 101; see also Huftier, *Libre arbitre, liberté et péché chez saint Augustin*, p 257.

47 “Hoc arbitrium liberum adivatur per Dei gratiam, ut quod naturaliter volumus, hoc est beate vivere, bene vivendo habere possimur.”; *Opus imperfectum* VI,26, *PL* 45, 1566.
A Spirituality to Accompany Sustainable Development*

DONAL O’MAHONY

INTRODUCTION
Have you ever been in a country where you did not understand even one word of the language spoken there? It is a painful and alienating experience. Communication is central to being human. Communication reveals who we are. It is through relationship that we know and are known.

In reflecting on the topic of an eco-spirituality to accompany sustainable development, we need to discover how to communicate with the Earth and how to give nature attention, time and honesty.

We need to offer some of our contemplative space to it, that is, to give her a listening ear without expecting anything in return. We need to develop a language with nature that takes us beyond identification of and into identification with. A language that will help us establish a relationship that will perceive the Earth as not mine but me; that I am part of the earth, not apart from it. The author, James Conlon develops this further in his book Geo-Justice.¹

Earth literacy makes intimacy with the natural world possible. John Muir articulated this well in his famous phrase: “I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay until sundown. For going out, I discovered I was going in.”² Earth literacy leads people inwards to earth intimacy.

When we reflect deeply before creation, insights concerning its deeper dimensions are enlivened. In Christian terms, we will come to appreciate more acutely the three realisations about creation made in divine promise in the Scriptures and proclaimed in both the major and minor prophets:

Firstly, that the redemption of humankind is linked to the natural world, and the natural world’s experience of transformation is linked into the process of humans being redeemed from their sinfulness. Secondly, that the natural world can provide delightful and invigorating images, metaphors and similes that will allow people to envision how beautiful and liberating life can be when there is a sense of balance, order, reverence for, and relationship with all of creation. Thirdly, that God’s
plan for salvation is one of cosmic redemption secured by promises that are both divine and eschatological.³

Because the environmental crisis has spiritual roots, there is reason for hope; since its solution must begin at a spiritual level as well. For this reason, ecological spirituality is important in any serious discussion about sustainable development. Real change begins only with the transformation of the human heart.

This paper is divided into four sections. In part 1 there will be a reflection on the ‘old world’ we are still coming out of – an objectified, mechanistic world, controlled by the whims of humans. In this world view, God tends to be remote God, spatially at least, up there. This view unconsciously reveals itself in peoples’ spirituality. It often nurtures a legalistic religion, which in turn instils anxiety and fear. It is spiritualities of such genre that moderns are rejecting. In part 2 there will be a reflection on the ‘new world’ we are moving into – an energetic, evolutionary world that is empowered and sustained by ‘created energies’ such as gravity, electromagnetic forces, the nuclear strong and nuclear weak, and from the spiritual point of view by impulses of God’s ‘uncreated Energies’ permeating and swirling through all of creation. The ‘new world’ seeks a holistic spirituality that will form a global consciousness of our oneness with God’s Spirit and with all living and non-living systems throughout the universe. I will refer later to the convergence that is beginning to take place between science and religion. The extraordinary new ‘world view’ brought about by new insights from physics, especially through Einstein’s special and general theories of relativity and the incredible world of quantum physics. I believe this convergence of the natural sciences and religions has major implications for all future spiritualities and, indeed, the way we will teach theology in future years. It may well be a ground-breaking change.

In part 3 I will offer one example of a specific spirituality which is grounded in the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ, but which highlights the sacred immanence of the divine in all of God’s creation. It called a ‘Logos Spirituality’ and is found in the Byzantine Church and in the Gospel of John. It is a spirituality well suited to accompany the calls for sustainable development. Finally in part 4 I will make a plea on behalf of ‘voluntary simplicity’. Voluntary simplicity includes embracing a way of life that is outwardly simple but inwardly rich. It is a direct challenge to consumer culture. This consumer culture may still be amassing record profits, however, it is of some consolation to hear experts say that it is already showing signs of becoming a spent force. Consumer culture was never socially sustainable; now it is also proving to be environmentally unsustainable, even toxic. Because consumer culture does not monitor its environmental deficits, it seems doomed to perish in the ocean of its own poisonous wastes.

PART 1: THE OLD STORY OF THE UNIVERSE
In a world of transition
Let me begin by asking something about the world we are now beginning to come out of. An Irish writer, Diarmuid O’Murchu in his book Our World in Transition⁴
tries to make sense of a changing world. From the strong language he uses in his book, it is clear that he does not lack confidence in his own message. In the opening paragraph of the book, he declares:

If you feel the ground shifting beneath your feet; if you don’t know what the hell’s going on in today’s world; if you think Western Governments are out of touch with reality and you feel the churches are talking a language that nobody understands apart from themselves, then this book is for you.

O’Murchu was preceded by the late Thomas Merton, a monk who still continues to have an extraordinarily positive influence among believers and non-believers alike. Shortly before he died, Merton prophetically wrote this passage:

We are living in the greatest revolution in history ... a huge spontaneous upheaval of the entire human race. Not a revolution planned and carried out by any particular party, race or nation, but a deep elemental boiling over of all the inner contradictions that have ever been in people, a revolution of the chaotic forces inside everybody. This is not something we have chosen, nor is it anything we are free to avoid.5

The dilemma which faces the whole planet as it moves wildly through this period of transition is: How can an essentially open world economic system continue to expand when it must push against a closed terrestrial ecological system? The simple answer is, it can’t.

So while a time of transition may be an exciting space, this present transition is truly a disturbing one. Many people are frightened as they see the ‘old world’ disappearing so quickly, but even a greater number are terrified about the prospects of the ‘new world’ they are facing into. The looming ecological crisis ranks as the most critical challenge as we gaze into the future.

We recognise, of course, that the industrialised North is the greatest destroyer of the world’s resources with its capacity to produce luxuries with capital intensive technologies. The nations of the South are dependent components in this. It is their resources which are being used or sucked away by the industrial trading houses of the rich world. But ecological degradation has no political boundaries. The felling of rain forests and consequent climatic changes can be as destructive to the North as to the South.

So there is a widespread call today for the South and North to approach their respective problems from new angles and perspectives. For as long as our economies continue to function on the basis of uncontrolled growth, it will be impossible to stop the rapid increase of environmental damage being done to the planet. As long as we continue to measure progress by gross domestic product, we will continue to diminish the gross earth product. When we destroy species, when we exhaust the bio-systems, they are finished! No power in heaven or on earth can restore extinguished species or fully purify, in historical time, our poisoned aquifers.

Responsible relationships between people of the North and the South and
between the peoples of the world and planet Earth, require that once the ‘economy of enough’ is achieved, it should stop and instead direct itself towards betterment of quality. This means that in addition to devising technologies, practices and products that are durable, safe and satisfy real needs so as to minimise wastage, the ‘economy of enough’ would direct itself also to minimising the use of nonrenewable resources, and introducing alternative renewable ones. In other words, it would concentrate on developing a democratic, technically advanced sustainable society.

Once society can admit and articulate its non-material needs and find non-material ways to satisfy them, it will achieve much higher levels of fulfillment and happiness. However, for this to happen, a new model, a new dream is required. It is here, I suggest, that a unique challenge faces us. Have we the possibility and the commitment to present a new vision, and a spirituality to accompany that vision which will help people again to hear the ‘voice of the earth’ inside themselves? I hope the answer is yes.

Understandably, many believers will continue to hold on to an old spirituality that has served them well up to now. Questions of unsustainable development and ecological destruction will remain for such people only ‘secular’ facts that can be disconnected from the spiritual life. But an increasing number are now experiencing, not without some shock, that their daily life experiences are no longer in tune with the spirituality that sustained them in the past. Prayers, found in well-thumbed devotional books, now lack spirit and life. What has happened? Why is this?

The Cartesian/Newtonian story of the universe

We need to recall that our Christian faith, which was handed on to us from the first followers of Jesus Christ, was handed down through a historical process of reflection. This process of reflection in turn was influenced by a melting pot of philosophical, theological and scientific factors. Together they combined to create the particular world vision for any given epoch.

The dominant world vision from the 18 to 20th centuries, but which is now disappearing like the Titanic, was enormously influenced by two people. Rene Descartes, the 17th century mathematician, and the British scientists, Sir Isaac Newton. On their shoulders most of the blame for the quagmire of the present day global ecological crisis is being laid. Descartes preferred to quantify and measure reality rather than contemplate it. Once he declared the world of matter was ‘dead’, he paved the way for industry to do what it liked with the material world. Any human as a ‘subject’ could stand over against ‘objects’ and relate to them as a field for exploitation and control. This quickly developed to serve greed and avarice as profitability became the first criteria.

Descartes successfully promoted his idea that there is an essential split between mind and matter. He summed up this split by the phrase: *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am). But what Descartes introduced into the human psyche was not only a split between the human mind and body (a split, incidentally, which still haunts
people's sexual lives and has been responsible for so many problems). It was also a split that was projected outwards. Everything outside the mind, Descartes perceived, as a multitude of separated, independent, competitive objects. He could not envisage nature as an intricate network of interdependent systems, let alone that humans were also part of nature.

The renowned scientist, Sir Isaac Newton thoroughly assimilated Descartes' separation of mind and matter. Newton confidently asserted that the universe could be likened to a giant clock, which operates in a predictable fashion determined by God, who is the master clockmaker. So it was a mechanistic world that God made. He wound up this massive clock at the beginning and it has gone on ticking steadily and reliably ever since. So God was given a location outside the world. A remote God; a distant static observer overseeing His mechanical world. That is why the Cartesian/Newtonian vision influenced greatly peoples' idea of God.

The Christian piety that followed the mind/matter split was predictable. Christians began to pray to a God, spatially at least, up there. He was a remote God, an omnipotent God, a transcendent God. To speak of God's presence in the world of nature made one suspect as a pantheist. So much prayer time of good people was given to pleading with this 'absent' God to intervene concerning this and that. After all, hadn't every Christians a right to expect help from the original Master Clockmaker?

Another corollary of Descartes' separation of mind and matter, was that the human body, especially woman's bodies, were often objectified, 'de-souled' and then disdained. Women today are angry about this. Not just because of the prevalent male attitudes towards women, but because of the commercial and advertising industries which have cashed in on it.

Yet another consequences of this Cartesian split was that the lyric sense of wonder and amazement before création went missing. It was taboo to say one could love nature for its own sake. The words of the devout writer, Thomas a Kempis, summarise the kind of attitude I am referring to: "Unless a man is clearly delivered from all love of creatures, he cannot fully attend to his Creator" (111:31).^6

It is the young people of today, however, who have most difficulties with this spirituality deriving from the old mechanistic understanding of the universe. It encouraged, indirectly at least, various types of extrinsic forms of worship and dogma. The rituals and rites, the language and symbols have now apparently lost most of their usefulness for the modern generation. Many older people also have difficulties. But some find compensations by relying on little rituals and devotions which at least permitted them to settle for the trappings. The Cistercian monk, Fr. Charles Cummings, called some of these older spiritualities "Spiritualities without Spirit".7

Another well known writer, the late Henri Nouwen, told me before he died about a personal experience he had which shows that even 'professionals' sometimes suffered from hand-me-down systems of spirituality. Nouwen had gone on a sabbatical to South America. While there he sat in on a course on Spirituality given
by Gustave Gutierrez. It proved to be for Nouwen a shattering experience. This is how he wrote about it subsequently:

As I reflect on the impact of this spirituality (as presented by Gutierrez) on my own way of living and thinking, I realised that a reductionism had taken place on my side. Talking with those pastoral workers during that summer course, I became aware of how individualistic and elitist my own spirituality had been. It is hard to confess, but true, that in many respects my thinking about the spiritual life had been deeply influenced by my North American milieu with its emphasis upon the ‘interior life’ and the methods and techniques for developing that life. Only when I confronted what Gustavo calls the ‘irruption of the poor in history’ did I become aware of how ‘spiritualised’ my spirituality had become. It had been, in fact, a spirituality for introspective persons who have the luxury of time and space to develop inner harmony and quietude.8

However, we should not show disrespect for the way past generations prayed and lived their lives. Their spirituality was a product of their time. After all, most of our own parents walked happily down that spiritual road. And they also managed to produce this lot of us here today. We thank God for them and their extraordinary fidelity to the faith. They were indeed, people of great faith. On the other hand we should not forget those visionaries who often suffered because they promoted a more wholesome picture of the world, the human person and God. These people, many of them poets and artists, lived out their intuitions and feelings with strong passions of the heart.

What most people today are looking for is a God who can relate to them in his holiness, in His joy, in His compassion, in His love. Why not? If people believe that God is the ground of their being, why shouldn’t they be able to experience Him? If people want to revere the Earth because of its beauty, why can’t they experience God in the heart of the earth?

So this leads us to the ‘new story’ of the universe.

PART 2: THE NEW STORY OF THE UNIVERSE

There is a new and hopeful story burgeoning in the world today. Its scientific roots are to be found in the physics of Einstein, especially his special and general theories of relativity. Its religious foundations are still being worked out by, among others, the ‘Process School’ of theologians. Its ecological foundation is based on an exciting new cosmology which takes special account of the modern insights of quantum physics; it is a dynamic spirituality that is digging deeply into the Eastern Church and the Greek Fathers to re-discover how to encounter God in matter.

It is the physicists rather than the theologians, who have been the first to tell the story of the ‘new’ universe. Albert Einstein, who died in 1955, expressed the truth that everything in the universe is alive and relational. Nothing is static. The human person cannot be a detached observer, but is himself/herself a participator. Energy keeps rearranging itself in new forms by creating new relationships with the
environment. All this is in harmony with the biblical account that the world is made in the image of God: a relational, Trinitarian God.

Over a decade ago I read an exciting book by the Jesuit theologian, Daniel Liderbach called *The Numinous Universe*. Liderbach demonstrated that contemporary physics is discovering how the world is made up of movement, forces, and energies: that there are dynamic presences within the world that were wholly unknown to classical Newtonian physicists. The foundation of the world is now no longer thought to be a single ‘building block’, but rather shockingly for many agnostic scientists, it is thought to be built on something that is non-material. This leaves open, from a scientific point of view, the real possibility of a Presence, with a capital ‘P’, at the heart of the world. At the same time, from the Christian point of view, there is the notion that the kingdom of God is already in our midst. This was at the core of Jesus’ preaching. It was a proclamation that God remains dynamically active in the heart of the world. Liderbach concluded the book with a brilliant chapter in which he demonstrates the potential harmony that exists between the presence of the Kingdom of God in our midst as proclaimed by Jesus and the world view of contemporary physics which says it is no longer scientifically acceptable that there is a basic building block of matter at the foundation of the world.

For Catholics, this offers an interesting rational ‘propping-up’ for belief in the real presence in the Eucharist – a reality which belongs essentially, of course, to the domain of faith. It seems that the 21st century may further support the Christian belief that the Kingdom of God is already in our midst and is not in dissonance, but in harmony with the rigorous suppositions and findings of the natural sciences.

Pope John Paul II would support all this. Like many Polish intellectuals, he has a great admiration for the natural sciences. In a preface to a bound volume of papers prepared by theologians and scientists who were meeting together over the past ten years in Castlegandolfo, the Pope wrote:

Is the community of world religions, including the Church, ready to enter into a more thorough-going dialogue with the scientific community? A dialogue in which the integrity of both religion and science is supported and the advance of each is fostered? … For a simple neutrality is no longer acceptable. If the people of the world are to grow and mature, they cannot continue to live in separate compartments pursuing totally divergent interests from which they evaluate and judge their world …

The Holy Father then added that contemporary developments in science challenge theology far more deeply than did the introduction of Aristotle into Western Europe in the 13th century. He went on to say that theologians might well ask, with respect to contemporary science, philosophy and the other areas of human knowing, if they have accomplished this extraordinarily difficult process as well as did these medieval masters who were unafraid to go back to pagan philosophers of Aristotle and Plato and incorporate their insights in theology.
PART 3: A SPECIFIC SPIRITUALITY TO ACCOMPANY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Having rather ponderously gone through some aspects of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ stories of the universe, we are now ready to talk of an eco-spirituality that can accompany ‘sustainable development’ in a dynamic, evolving universe. What the world desperately needs is a spirituality that will restore the sense of the sacred immanence of the divine in all of God’s creation, including ourselves in our vital relationships with the world and with others. The present agony of the earth should alert us to the short-sightedness of solving difficulties by seeking only to alter the outer world. For example, is it always right for a road construction company to get planning permission to hollow out a tunnel through the heart of a mountain rather than go around it?

The mystic, Julian of Norwich, was able to write that “in the hazel nut, is everything that is”. She says that the little hazel nut in her hand has three characteristics: that God made it; that God loves it; and that God keeps it.

Reverence for nature does not, should not, imply irreverence for God. In his Peace Day Message, Pope John Paul II said: “The very contact with nature provides us with deep restorative power; and the contemplation of its beauty imparts peace and serenity” (Message for World Day of Peace, January 1990).

An eco-spirituality encourages us also to be more sensitive to social needs. Every time nature is wantonly destroyed; every time there is a situation of injustice; every time violence is used against others; every time the principle of ‘relationality’ is interrupted by attitudes of domination – for example, creditor countries over debtor countries, or rulers over peoples, or men over women, or humans over nature – then those living an ecological spirituality will be quick to experience the pain and will want to do something about it.

Already, the whole area of expanded consciousness is attracting an ever-growing segment of people who are eager and willing to embrace a global consciousness of their oneness with all of created nature, as well as with human beings. St Francis of Assisi strongly felt a spiritual and emotional bond with all creation. For him there was no hierarchy of being. All shared creaturehood under God, the Creator. In all horizontal relationships he saw everything and everyone as a brother and sister.

This bond with nature acts as a spiritual corrective and offsets the imbalance that comes by placing human beings as the sole centre of the universe. If human beings are part of the earth, then degrading the planet is diminishing part of our larger selves. Nature is not something outside us. We are something inside it. Anthropocentrism is the enemy of sustainable development. Altruism and respect for every creature is the real friend and partner of sustainable development.

How then can you and I uncover the presence of the divine immanence in all creation? How can we connect with the “Kingdom of God that is already in our midst”? Certainly we can do it by practicing authentic justice, peace and integrity of creation. St Paul writes that the Kingdom of God is found in “Justice, peace and joy in the Spirit” (Rom 14:17).
But we also need to nurture a theocentric vision of the universe; a vision that sees, as it were, the world through the lenses of God’s eyes. This contemplative way of seeing will deepen and make more constant our collective and individual responsibility for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

One thing is certain: saving humankind from its own isolation and alienation, and saving the threatened planet from its degradation, will not be accomplished by mere negative motivation, for example, through fear of a final cataclysmic war, or a global climatic disaster. There is no short cut. All of us will always have to work day in and day out in dispelling the pollution of our inner spirits. Only then can we stretch out creatively to work with God in bringing about a better universe.

I want now to share with you a Byzantine spirituality which was almost lost in the West, but is now showing signs of renewal. I believe it is particularly suited to accompany sustainable development. It is called a ‘Logos spirituality’ or ‘Word spirituality’. St Maximus the Confessor (+662) was its great expounder. For him, as well as for St John the Evangelist, the whole world is interrelated in its harmony according to the differentiated logoi (words). By that is meant that each individual creature and each individual person is an articulation of a word in the mind of God. Not as an inert model, but as the creative power of God, realising itself in each creature. The logos with a small ‘l’ in each being is its principle of existence which relates the given creature to God as its cause. The logos exists in every stone, flower, bird, air, ocean. It is at the root of every individuated thing. To identify the presence of the logos in everything and every person around one, is truly an enriching spiritual experience. For sustainable development it is motivating and rousing.

St John in his Gospel writes that all things are created in the Logos (Word). “In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God ... through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him” (Jn1:1-3). Each logos with a small ‘l’ is a syllable as it were of the Logos with a capital ‘L’.

There is a delightful story about Gerald Manley Hopkins when he was a student at the Jesuit house of studies in Wales. I can only recall it from memory. One day Hopkins was walking alone down a pebbled path at the back of the student house. The gardener saw him stop abruptly then bend over slowly as if trying to ‘stare’ a pebble out of existence. Hopkins then proceeded to slowly swivel around the solitary pebble. The gardener was concerned for the student and later informed the rector of his strange behaviour. It was then that Hopkins explained that he was ‘intuiting’ the pebble. He was inscaping the pebble to discover its uniqueness. While still in this contemplative mode, Hopkins also was ‘contuiting’ the pebble, that is, unveiling God’s divine immanence in the heart of the pebble. Hopkins would regularly ‘intuit’ and ‘contuit’ things. This enabled him to experience the separateness of each thing (principle of individuation) and at the same time its interconnectivity and communion with all else (relationality), ultimately experiencing all in God, the Logos made flesh in Jesus Christ.
Once we surrender to the *Logos* of God made flesh in Jesus, now risen and inserted into this material creation, we can walk down the hard concrete streets of our big cities, or the shanty towns on the suburbs, or the open fields of nature and creatively work with Him in each material creature we touch. We can go out into the world of action provided with a unique interior knowledge and sympathy with everything and everyone because we have learned to habitually practice this *Logos* spirituality. In this way we will grow in love for the entire human race and for all creation, in their diversity and in their unity.

Back in Ireland I sometimes look at Mount Gabriel as it sweeps upwards into the sky behind the little village of Baltimore. An image springs easily to mind of a womb teeming with life. I can then identify with St Paul when he describes the new creation as “groaning in labour pains in one great act of giving birth” (Rom 8:22) and it helps me to internalise two truths: The first is the global significance and meaning of sustainable development at this critical time on our planet Earth. And the second says that personal and global salvation are holistic dimensions of the same divine process.

**PART 4: VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY**

What do we mean by voluntary simplicity? An American author, Mark Burch, writes that this question has been his most constant companion. Voluntary simplicity is the answer to the question: How can I best live in order to be love, to be non-violent, and to be in harmony, first with my inner spiritual realm and then with the outer realm of other people and the Earth?

Neither St Francis of Assisi nor St Clare of Assisi wrote a developed thesis about voluntary simplicity. They simply practiced it. And that is what simplicity is about. It is something one lives out in day-to-day life.

The attraction of voluntary simplicity is mysterious because it draws us in a completely opposite direction from where most of the world seems to be going: away from conspicuous display, accumulation, egoism, and public visibility – towards a life more silent, humble and transparent than anything known to the extroverted culture of consumerism.

Voluntary simplicity begins in personal action. Anyone can understand it. Anyone can practice it. One of the most encouraging aspects of voluntary simplicity is that there is no need to wait on a sea-change in social consciousness, or a global spiritual awakening, or a new political party to begin.

Voluntary simplicity contributes directly to environmental sustainability because it engages a powerful ‘reverse multiplier’ effect. Every kilo of ‘product’ we see at the retail level represents tens, or even hundreds of kilos of resources and energy expended in the extraction, manufacturing, distribution, and retailing stages ‘upstream’ in the lifecycle of that product. Individuals often feel as though their choices matter little in meeting the global challenge of environmental preservation. Yet, as individuals forgo excessive consumption, each such decision avoids all the ‘upstream’ environmental costs incurred in bringing the product to market.
Those who take on voluntary simplicity are taking on the responsibility for making life choices. This is the exact opposite of allowing yourself to be just another automaton at the conveyor belt of consumer culture, or being narcotised by advertising, or hypnotised by marketing imagery.

Voluntary simplicity is about engaging in healthy ‘de-junking’ that brings feelings of lightness, cleanliness, spaciousness and freedom. It is about ‘growth by subtraction’, or pairing away whatever distracts us or is extraneous or alien to what we believe are our central purposes in life. It makes us more aware of our place in All Life, and assists us in developing a greater capacity for love, compassion and holiness. That is why voluntary simplicity can be called a spirituality.

Voluntary simplicity is also a proclamation of solidarity with the poor. It helps us to know when enough is enough. And it recognises the needs of future generations. Voluntary simplicity is a blank book in which we can write a new story. But instead of telling a story about how the Earth belongs to us, we can tell a story about how we belong to the Earth. The connection and the relationship between human beings and the natural world is not just a moral problem. It is profoundly a religious question. It may even be the beginning of a new phase in the story of the evolution of the universe.

NOTES

* Talk given at St Augustine College, as part of a lecture series sponsored by the Justice and Peace Desk of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference to coincide with the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, August/September, 2002.
8 G. Gutierrez, We Drink from Our Own Wells – see Preface by Henri Nouwen. SCM Press Ltd 1984:XV1.
Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?
Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer
thou me (Job 38:1-3).

INTRODUCTION
I am not a theologian. I have no formal accreditation to write about the things I will
develop in this article. In the late 1960s, through my work in Latin America and the
ensuing culture shock, I started to question the two pillars of my education. I had
been raised as a Catholic and was fortunate enough to do my secondary education
at a Jesuit college. I studied later engineering: electronics and nuclear sciences. So
I went through a serious religious crisis: I decided to step out of the Church and to
live as a religious exile. I lost my faith in the relevance of the scientific approach to
the human problems we were faced with at that time and which have increased in
the mean time.

But one cannot deny one’s roots. The only way for me to deal with this double
crisis was to go to the roots of the traditions, with whose formal institutions I could
not participate any more. Partly by coincidence, partly because I was looking out for
it, I started a double trajectory.

To deal with my religious crisis, I started to study Hebrew and the Qabbalistic
exegetical method. This method has a long-standing tradition. This tradition, which
before was mostly oral, received a strong revival from the 11th to the 13th century
in the south of France and the north east of Spain. I think that this revival is due to
the fact that in that period the three children of the Book – Judaism, Christianity and
Islam – were living relatively peacefully alongside each other and surely influenced
each other. For example, it is very clear that St Thomas of Aquinas has been
strongly influenced by Maimonides, who rediscovered the Greek philosophers
through the Islamic tradition. I have been fortunate enough to meet a Qabbalistic
teacher and to be initiated in what is called the chain of Alphim, the chain of Alephs
Aleph being the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This chain, when drawn, is, strangely enough, very similar to the DNA molecule. As this molecule is at the base of the transfer of the living, the chain of Alphim is the base of the transfer of the living word. The way I will develop some of the elements of the book of Job in this article is directly related to the Qabbalistic tradition. Nevertheless, I will try to avoid as much as possible referring to the Hebrew text itself, because, I suppose that most readers are not proficient in Hebrew. Nevertheless it is necessary to use some transcribed Hebrew key words. The consonants which constitute these words are linked with one another. There is no way to show this through translations.

To deal with my scientific crisis, I followed a similar road. I started to read the original texts of the great scientists: Newton, Pasteur, Darwin and others. There I discovered that these scientists were far from value-free, objective human beings. All of them were passionate and had a passionate relation with those aspects of nature, which they were studying. Their search was always as much a search inside themselves as a search in the outside world. They were also on a spiritual quest. But this quest was fed through their relation with nature.

So the two themes of the title are coming together: my relation to nature and my relation to the spiritual tradition of the books of Wisdom are a result of my own quest as a religious person and as a scientist.

**WHY THE BOOK OF JOB?**

**A ‘strange’ book**

Among the Jewish scholars there have been huge debates about the inclusion of the book of Job in the biblical canon. Although the tradition says that Moses himself wrote the book, the fact that Job is not a Jew, that he is an uncircumcised gentile (goi in Hebrew), is scandalous. In the book of Job there is no reference to Jewish laws and rituals, to the Revelation on Mount Sinai, the essence of Judaism. Furthermore, the theme of suffering, the theme of evil is not very liked in Judaism: depression, although also present in other texts, is due to lack of faith and there is a kind of guilt feeling, when one falls into depression. The book of Job is a very long dialogue, in which the principal actor expresses his depression in very straight ways.

Let the day perish, wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.

Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it (Job 3:3-4).

These words are very near to blasphemy in the ears of a faithful Jew.

Furthermore, Job has no ascendance, which is unheard of in a tradition that stresses so strongly the fact that one belongs to the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to one of the twelve tribes generated by Jacob-Israel. On the contrary, Job is an isolated individual and as we will see later, is defined as such. It was not a surprise to me that when I talked about my interest in the book of Job to a rabbi friend, that he said the book is not very popular in Judaic tradition: it is looked upon
as abstruse, untransparent, somehow odd. In the Qabbalistic tradition there is no systematic exegesis of the book, although the book is referred to in many exegetical texts of the other books of wisdom.

A ludicrous book!
The story itself, which the book of Job reports, is an enormity! A very devout and righteous person, nearly a saint and perfect man, is brought forward. He has only a relation with the ‘transcendent’ Godhead, named in Hebrew Elohim, the one who created heavens and earth (Genesis 1:1). But apparently there is also a heavenly court around the immanent God, the one who was revealed to Moses near the burning bush: YHWH, the tetragrammaton, mostly translated as ‘the Lord’, or misspelled as Yahweh in certain translations. On this court apparently the presence of the exponent of evil, the devil himself, Satan, is accepted and a dialogue between YHWH and Satan appears to be quite normal! Moreover, YHWH and Satan are betting on behalf of the good man Job. Let’s “bedevil” him a bit and we will see what he does. A very strange behaviour indeed of a loving God, a God who puts his benevolence towards the righteous. One could become an atheist for lesser reasons!

When a biblical text or perhaps an evangelical text is so strongly confronting, there are two ways of dealing with it. Unfortunately, the most common one is to edulcorate the text by translating it inconsistently. Every translation necessarily is a choice, an interpretation. But some translations are expressions of a great anxiety towards the text. I give an example out of the book of Job.

What shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? (Job 2:10 St James translation)
When we accept happiness as a gift from God, why not accept in the same way misfortune? (translation: Jerusalem Bible)

The St James translation, which is an excellent translation, translates the Hebrew words for good and evil literally and poses without any shame the question of evil originated by God. In the Jerusalem translation, good and evil become happiness and misfortune. Moreover, without any reference to the original text the words “in the same way” appear. I interpret the second translation as an expression of the theological anxiety or perhaps paternalism of the translator. The message gets edulcorated and loses its cogency.

A second way of dealing with these confrontational texts is to ‘scrutinise’ them. Why are they confronting me? There must be a very potent message in the words for me, if they trigger me so strongly. This is much more the Qabbalistic way of treating texts: contradictions and apparent inconsistencies in the text are the raw material to develop their understanding and relevance.

My relation to the book of Job
I started a systematic exegesis of the book of Job, verse by verse, word by word, even consonant by consonant in 1999. The text of Job resonated in two ways: the disappearance of the small organisation in which I worked for 20 years and the
ensuing severe financial loss and the death struggle of my Hebrew teacher, victim of an ineradicable lung cancer. My interest in the book dated from some years earlier, but it seemed a good occasion for me to start the real exegetic work in the Qabbalistic tradition. After three years’ arduous but rewarding work I have nearly finished the exegesis of the second chapter of the book and produced about 80 A4 printed pages. It is clear that I have still some work to do: the book contains 42 chapters and 1070 verses, of which I only commented on 35.

I have become aware that the book of Job is the story in dialogue form of a very actual human transition. Job can be seen as the patron of ‘modern man’, who has fought for and achieved a certain form of autonomy, of self-sufficiency, of integrity and identity, who has franchised himself from superstition and religion, who even declared the death of God and found in scientific truth his certainties and doubts. But nowadays, exactly, these ‘acquisitions’ are under threat. Loneliness and anxiety, even paranoia are pervading Western culture. Modern man emancipated himself from the mineral, vegetal and animal aspects in himself, estranged himself from nature and seems again powerless against the forces of nature that he helped to release: global warming, the threat of radioactivity, biological and chemical weapons, new epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, the threat of shortages of food and water caused by the way man tinkers with agriculture and water resources, etc. Perhaps modern man stands before the same transformation through which Job passed.

In the following paragraphs, I shall try to use some of the key texts of the book of Job, to develop this hypothesis. I hope that the reader will be stimulated to try to discover for himself/herself the actuality of these old texts. Only when a tradition is meaningful for those living now, is it worthwhile to continue to work on it. If the word is not relevant for today, it only has some interest for a historical exegesis. This is not the way of Qabbalah, which stresses the actual value of what has been ‘received’: Qibbel, the root of Qabbalah, means in fact nothing else than to receive in order to pass it on to the next generation.

**KEY TEXTS**

**Job is a ‘man’**

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man... (Job 1:1).

The first word of the book of Job is ‘YisH, a man in the sense of husband. (There is another Hebrew word for indicating a male). It is important to know that the word ‘YisH in Genesis 2 is used after the word ‘ishH, wife. Man needs a woman first to get defined. The word ‘YisH in the book of Job is thus not defined, it has no definite article. The word could mean in this way: anybody. It is only in the second half of the first verse that the word receives a definite article, after Job has been referred to as coming from the land of ‘uTis, his lineage. This lineage is also necessary to give a name to the man: Job. The name Job itself starts with the same two consonants as ‘YisH. Alliterations are abundant in Hebrew and always refer to a semantic connotation. Once you know that the two first letters of ‘YisH and ‘Y(W)oBh (Job)
are Aleph and Youd the meaning becomes still more apparent. Aleph is the first consonant of Elohim, the transcendent Godhead and Youd the first one of YHWH, the immanent one. The transformation of Job is, following his name, the Passover from a transcendent position to an immanent one.

This may seem far-fetched, but it stresses the specific fact that ‘man’, meaning the husband, is defined in terms of the land. When we talk about the relation of man with nature, it is remarkable that in this way man only can be defined when his relation to his ‘natural origins’ has been made explicit. Every man has a mother as his most visible ascendance. And mother nature is the stereotype of all motherhood. But apart from his land of origin, Job has no ascendance. In the second verse, the text refers to the sons and daughters of Job, but there is no mention at all of his wife. She appears only in the second chapter, after Job has already lost all his possessions and his children. It would lead us too far to analyse exegetically the words of the wife of Job, which are labelled foolish by Job himself. Let us only make the remark that Job’s wife is repeating the words of the Lord himself in an earlier verse:

... and still he holdeth fast his integrity... (Job 2:3)
... Dost thou still retain thine integrity?... (Job 2:9)

If the husband can be seen as the ‘abstract’ one, the transcendent one, then the wife is archetypically the one who operationalises the ‘dream, the vision, the abstraction’ of her husband. Each one of us takes sometimes the role of husband or of wife, independent of our gender. ‘YiSh and ‘iShaH are theological concepts, not biological ones. This sheds a different light upon, for example, the so-called misogyny of St Paul.

The integrity of Job

... and that man was perfect... (Job 1:1)

The word TaM, translated here by perfect and which forms the root of the word ‘integrity’, previously mentioned, is only used a second time in the whole Bible as an attribute of Jacob. In fact, the inverse of the word, MT, forms the root of the word ‘death’. Job is here defined as complete, as completely accomplished. This completeness is developed in the subsequent verses, describing the possessions of Job and finishing with:

... so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East (Job 1:3).

Job can thus be seen as the exemplar of the fully emancipated individual, the homo universalis, the dream of man (masculine) at the dawn of modernism. This dream that led to the model of the scientist as a subject, emancipated of his object, nature: the autonomous, self-sufficient individual in complete control of his life. He is no longer subject to religious superstitions. As a scientist he is even bound to be value-free, beyond good and evil as Nietschze pointed out in the 19th century. Job is one that feared God (Elohim), which may be seen as a vague ‘theist’ stance. There is still an acceptance of the transcendent. But it requires only a very small step to deconceptualise this God and to look upon the ‘natural’ mechanisms to understand and control the world. The ‘perfect’ Godhead can also be seen as the ‘dead’
Godhead: he is not needed any more for understanding the workings of nature and the world. Maybe he is the original creator, but in fact this is irrelevant.

The perfection of Job as the perfection of God leads to isolation, a complete decoupling with nature and fellow humans, one could say a kind of autism. This lack of relations is clearly indicated in the first chapter of the book of Job. His sons and daughters are having a meal together, the strongest symbol of conviviality, but Job is not present with them. It is as if he takes the same stance as a progenitor of his children as Elohim, who rested from his work on the seventh day of creation. The only concern of Job is that his children may be blasphemous, or in fact be less perfect as he is. That is why he offers holocausts to Elohim, an expression of his fear of Elohim.

And the Lord God (YHWH Elohim) said, it is not good that the man (Adam) should be alone ... (Genesis 2:18).

The price to be paid for autonomy, emancipated self-sufficiency, is loneliness, is the absence of any relation. It is clear that this is also the price we pay in a society where individualism is seen as the highest good and where ‘commons’ have been systematically destroyed. Society is seen as an aggregate of ‘individuals’, of atoms which by coincidence bump into one another. Fear and paranoia are the direct result of this loneliness. This is exactly the starting position of Job, before his process of transformation.

... and eschewed evil (Job 1:1)

In Hebrew as in French (mal) the words bad and evil are translated by one word Ra’. This word is mostly interpreted superficially in a moralistic way. But it is clear from Genesis 2:17, remarkably in contradiction to Genesis 1:29, that the word Ra’ has a theological meaning.

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (Genesis 2:17).

As the book of Job is said to be a book about the mystery of suffering and evil, there is a need to go to this theological meaning. Otherwise, as we already mentioned, the whole story of Job is rather ludicrous, not to say disgusting. In Genesis 2:17, the first time that the word Ra’, evil, appears in the bible it is intricately linked to T(W)oBh, good. The first time the word ‘good’ appears in Job is in 2:10.

But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?

It is interesting to notice that the ‘commandment’ of Genesis is given to Adam, just before the separation of husband and wife (‘YiSh and ‘iShaH) and that the snake repeats and deforms the commandment talking to the wife separately, not to the couple. The words good and evil jointly appear in Job after his wife has spoken for the first time. But Job seems to rebuke his wife. There seems to be a theological relation between the concepts of good and evil and the roles of husband and wife.
Even a superficial and moralistic reading of the fall has associated in a strange way
the original sin with sexual relations.

The fact that Job “keeps himself far away from evil” is directly related to his
definition as the perfect ‘man’. Ra’ is associated to the role of ‘wife’, T(W)oBh to
the role of husband. As we already mentioned: the husband has the vision and is
keeper of the word, his attention is geared to what has been ‘accomplished’. Job 1:
1 to 3 illustrates clearly the perfection, the fulfilment, the completeness of the man
Job. The fact that he keeps himself far from Ra’, means that he keeps himself far
from what has yet to be accomplished. Remember that the role of the wife is to
operationalise the vision of the husband. The role of the wife is geared to the future
and to production: she carries the Messiah, the promised one, the one who comes to
accomplish it all. Job lives in the illusion that there is nothing any more to be
accomplished. That is why he keeps himself far from Ra’. But this means that also
the concept of T(W)oBh, the accomplished, disappears. The word is not used at all
in the description of Job and his possessions. Only after he has been confronted with
his losses and with his own skin disease, which is also labelled as Ra’, does he start
through the ‘foolish’ intervention of his wife to make again the inextricable relation
between what has been accomplished, the T(W)oBh, out of the hand of God and the
unaccomplished, the Ra’.

Job reconnected
The first dialogue that Job starts is with his wife, who as we have seen is repeating
the words of YHWH to Satan. She is the messenger of the immanent God, of the
relational God.

The Qabbalists have a daring and profound understanding of the origin of Ra’,
the unaccomplished, of what is too easily translated by evil. In fact God, Elohim,
was completely fulfilled, was totally light, to use another metaphor of what is
accomplished. In a certain way he was similar to Job. The only thing that He created
was a capability to receive, was a void, part of His reality from which he withdrew.
God took the risk of creating a relation with the created. But every relation contains
something unaccomplished: even the one who initiated the relation, who created it,
loses control upon that relation. The other party, the created one, has as much a say
in the relation as its creator. In this way Ra’ appears at the same time as creation.

And darkness was upon the face of the waters ... (Genesis 1:2).

Darkness is the metaphor for Ra’, and the waters refer clearly to the ‘feminine’
element. Creation itself generates an unaccomplishment.

The discovery of what is unaccomplished is the essence of the transformation
that Job is undergoing. The first words he speaks after he has lost all his possessions
are:

And said, naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I
return thither ... (Job 1:21).

It is remarkable that the word naked, ‘eRoM, is exactly the inverse of MeRa’, of
verse 1:1, which means far from evil, far from Ra’. Through the experience of loss,
Job starts to reconnect. And not by coincidence his first reconnection is with his mother, with the wife, which makes him conscious of his nakedness as the inverse of the unaccomplished in him. When he is touched by the hand of YHWH or the hand of Satan (this remains very ambiguous in the text) and he gets his skin disease, which is labelled bad, Ra’, his wife starts a dialogue, exemplifying what is still to be accomplished. This is the second reconnection. After that he is able to start the dialogues with his three friends. Friends is spelled Re’Ye, which is nothing else than Ra’ with the plural suffix Youd. Remember that Youd is the first letter of YHWH, the immanent God. The three friends can be seen as Job’s Ra’ in existence, his immanent Ra’.

Consistently Job starts to be reconnected more and more with his Ra’, with what is still to be accomplished. This painful reconnection makes the dialogues between Job and his ‘friends’ so harsh. They are not harmonious at all, depression and anger is the mood of it. Breaking ones self-sufficiency down, opening ones autonomy is not easy.

The bad skin disease that Job suffers refers directly to this opening process: the skin as protection from the outside world is touched. The skin disease of Job is the same as the sixth plague of the Egyptians due to the stubbornness, the ‘integrity’ of the Pharaoh. Egypt, the place of abundance, a paradise, is also a closed place, literally in Hebrew it means the place where things are measured, where things are under control. Even the waters of the Nile, the waters as symbol of the unaccomplished, are under control in Egypt. The sixth plague is the first plague that cannot be repeated by Pharaoh’s magicians.

**Job’s reconnection with the immanent God through nature**

From chapter 38 (see quotation at the beginning of the article) until chapter 41, YHWH, the immanent Godhead, reveals himself to Job by passing in review the whole of nature: the stars, meteorological phenomena, minerals, vegetals and animals. In fact YHWH reconnects Job as being part of nature, restores the relation of ‘man’ with nature, of the perfect one with what has to be accomplished. St Paul refers to the fact that nature is in labour pains, which is exactly pointing out the time of accomplishment.

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding (Job 38:4).

What YHWH stresses is his relation with creation and nature. He does not define himself as the subject who is separated from his object and in this way creates separation and a dominant position. The way YHWH reveals himself through nature to Job is full of empathy: YHWH reveals himself as a nature lover. Chapters 38 to 41 are one of the most beautiful and poetic reports about what nature is that can be found in literature. In the works of Darwin and Pasteur, one reads also this same wonder, this love and respect of nature, which is quite distinct from the supposed value-free, dominating position of the ‘objective’ scientist.

For me, the message behind this text is very relevant, in a time where science
and scientific thought is characterised by arrogance. Paradoxically enough, the more human beings experience the awe and wonder resulting from the ways scientists and technologists tinker with nature, the arrogance that the same scientific approach will be able to solve all the generated riddles becomes ludicrous. In fact as the Egyptian magicians and as the ‘man’ Job in his autonomy and self-sufficiency, the Ra’, when denied, will become more visible. Only by restoring a loving relation with nature, instead of an exploitative one, will ‘understanding’ grow, together with the wonder and awe.

Where is the way where light dwelleth? And as for darkness, where is the place thereof?
That thou shouldest take to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof?
Knowest thou it, because thou wast then born? Or because the number of thy days is great? (Job 38:19-21).

This text resonates with the ‘commandment’ not to eat, which means not to integrate completely, from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Remember the relation between light and darkness and good and evil. Here the word knowing is used instead of understanding. The word knowing is strongly related to a loving relation: a husband knows his wife, means that they have sexual relations. The message may be: don’t try to assimilate (eat) the knowledge of good and evil, of what is accomplished and is still to be accomplished. This leads to death, as we have seen the inverse of perfection, of TaM, the difficult starting position of Job. But continue in time (the number of thy days) the Great Work of creation, relating good and evil, the accomplished and the unaccomplished.

The two animals with whom YHWH finishes his revelation in nature are the Behemoth and the Leviathan. The first one is the sweet water monster, the second one the salt water monster. Remember that the waters are the metaphor for the feminine, for what has to be accomplished. For example, who are we that we will define what is genetically right and genetically wrong? Will we separate what is T(W)oBh and what is Ra’, and which criteria will we use. Do we understand the criteria which were at the ‘foundation of the earth’, do we lovingly know them? Or are we envisioning our ‘brave new world’? How can we lovingly know the ‘monsters’ which we generate and label as evil? What are the criteria with which we define that something is ‘waste’? Are the ‘waste’-monsters we create not the wealth of the future?

It is not by coincidence that in Hobbesian terms, the aggregate of unrelated individuals, is called Leviathan, the indomitable society. But Hobbes could not see the beautiful self-regulating mechanisms which make this Leviathan alive, a beautiful creature. As the Russian sociologist Shinan discovered, when trying to understand why the economic crisis in 1998 in Russia did not create a devastating famine, the conviviality of the Russian peasantry, unknown to economists who only see competing and warring individuals as Hobbes, was in a self-regulating way in charge of food distribution in spite of economic theory. The loving and
commercial relations between the country people and their familiars in the city created a beautiful Leviathan instead of a fearful one.

Job’s relation to nature and to YHWH, restores the relation with his fellow-men

Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money and every-one an ear-ring of gold (Job 42:11).

Without any doubt the ‘evil’, Ra’, which was brought upon Job is attributed here to YHWH, the immanent God, not to Satan. But much more important, the brothers and sisters and acquaintances of Job unite with him and ate bread with him. Again ‘his acquaintances’ in Hebrew is Re’aYW, the same word which was used for his three friends but now ending with the consonant Waw. This consonant is the most frequent one in the Bible and means ‘and’. The word ‘and’ is at the same time a separator and a copulative.

What Job was not able to do at the start of his transformation process, to feast together with his sons and daughters, is done now for a much greater crowd. In fact the brothers and sisters and acquaintances can be seen as all humankind. Through the rediscovery of the Ra’ and the subsequent revelation of the immanent God, YHWH, through the exploration of nature, Job gets related again to his fellow-men. The verse ends naturally with the word ‘eHhaD, which means ‘one’ and is the word which indicates the unity of God and the unity of the universe. A unity which implies a separation and a union, as the consonant Waw indicates.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

What I have presented is one reading of some key elements of the book of Job. As all great texts of wisdom, there are many readings possible. These texts are essentially inexhaustible. I have tried to give a reading that is related to my own life story, but also to the situation in which ‘Western’ man has manoeuvred himself since the Enlightenment.

The transformation process from a self-sufficient autonomy, from the free and emancipated ‘man’ to the rediscovery of his belonging to nature and his belonging to the commons of his sisters and brothers is surely not an easy one. The story of Job helps us to become aware of that process. Instead of denying the ‘evil’, the Ra’, or hiding it out of fear, the message of Job is that inexorably what we deny will confront us. It is the material of the Great Work of creation that humankind continues: the transformation of the unaccomplished into the accomplished. When Jesus dies upon the cross and shouts: All is accomplished, darkness comes over the earth. Although His work ended there upon the cross, immediately the signs were there that the Great Work is not yet finished: transforming darkness into light cannot be done if we deny and/or fly away from darkness. This is also the meaning of the
passage through Hell before the Resurrection. Denying ‘evil’, Ra’ or flying from it is the wrong Enlightenment approach. After his enlightenment, Buddha decided to embrace again darkness, Ra’, out of loving compassion and to continue the work of restoration: this means relating again to nature and his fellow-men in the mixed light-darkness state they live in length of days. Similar to Job and the last words of the book of Job:

So Job died, being old and full of days (Job 42:17).

NOTES

* Talk given at St Augustine College, as part of a lecture series sponsored by the Justice and Peace Desk of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference to coincide with the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, August/September, 2002.
The Integrity of Creation: Environment as a Social Issue

PAUL FALLER

Without a vision the people perish (Proverbs 29:18).

INTRODUCTION
The awareness of an ecological crisis has only recently dawned on humankind, and the Catholic Church, for reasons we shall consider, has been slow to join its voice with those of other religious traditions and of secular society. To set the scene we shall consider the dimensions of the crisis, and the earliest responses to the global threat. The bulk of this essay will deal with the Church’s voice, and the emerging ecological teaching that has issued from it. We shall become aware of the foundations of this teaching that have, as it were, remained buried through a long tradition reaching back to scriptural times. We shall also look to the future by taking stock of the resources at the Church’s disposal for developing a vibrant eco-theology, and by considering what action the Church can take in putting this vision into practice.

SCENARIO: THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS
The publication in September 1962 of Rachel Carson’s book, Silent Spring, caused a major shift in the United States in public consciousness about the environment. As a biologist, working in the Fish and Wildlife Services, Carson had become aware of the problem of pesticides. She wrote to challenge their indiscriminate and ill-informed use, and to warn against the effects their application was having and would have in the long term on human beings, animal species and whole ecosystems. Silent Spring, in which Carson questioned the “irresponsibility of an industrialised technological society towards the natural world”, is widely credited with the birthing of the modern environmental movement.

Now, nearly forty years later, the world spotlight is again on agriculture, with the focus on biotechnology, rather than on the chemical technology of poison manufacture. No longer are insects being killed by chemicals, such as DDT. Instead, they are being outwitted by genetically engineered (GE) seeds. But the issue is the
same in that agrochemical companies are commercially planting huge areas with GE maize and cotton without any guarantee on the impact on health and environment. Modern industry and commerce, similarly, are cause for concern as their activities lead to depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, deforestation, global warming, pollution of air and water, and other conditions that undermine the delicate balance of the natural environment.

A GROWING AWARENESS: RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS
The early leadership in response to the emerging crisis was taken, not by the Church, but by secular groupings, such as the United Nations, the World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, and Friends of the Earth. Perhaps the Church’s theology was not ready and equipped to answer a radically new awareness of the Earth that was growing among those giving their very lives to save the precious heritage of humankind.

Inspiration was scarcely to be found in a Church theology that was somewhat equivocal with respect to the intrinsic value of the Earth. Rather, a swing to Neo-Paganism, that sees the Earth as a sacred living being, seemed to satisfy that need. Even in the realm of science, matching the shift from a modern, mechanistic world view to the appreciation of a holistic and interconnected universe, theories like the Gaia Hypothesis were conceived.

James Lovelock, in the early 1970s, put forward the scientific hypothesis that the presence of life all over the surface of the Earth has dramatically changed conditions on its surface, and caused them to remain remarkably stable in a range which allows living systems to continue in a healthy state. Just like a human body, the Earth is a self-regulating mechanism with the capacity for homeostasis, or resistance to external change. Lovelock’s description ranges between the scientific and the metaphysical and in some places he speaks of the Earth as a quasi-living entity. When speaking of Earth as Gaia, the Greek personification of Mother Earth, and source of all life, he describes her as “stern and tough, always keeping the world warm and comfortable for those who obey the rules, but ruthless in her destruction of those who transgress.” Such language has an emotive power far beyond the hypothetical scientific description, and many moderns draw motivation for the protection of the planetary environment from it.

Our chief interest in this essay, however, is what the Church has said, and has to say today, about the environmental issue. Is her voice coherent, convincing and compelling? And why has it taken so long to be heard?

THE CHURCH’S VOICE, PART I: FOUNDATIONS
The environmental question has not received as wide an exposure in official Church documents as some commentators would like, and there are reasons for this that we shall consider a little later on. Even so, the foundations for addressing the question run deep through Scripture, Theology and Spirituality over the two thousand years of Church tradition. We take a quick, selective glance at this tradition, which in the
main supports a healthy eco-theology. We shall see, however, that the tradition casts some shadows.

Scripture
All things and beings are good and form one creation brought into existence by the Word of God: “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31). There is no secondary power involved, or a struggle between cosmic forces. There is no suggestion of an inherent opposition between the visible and the invisible aspects of creation. But while creation is one, it comes into being through time (Genesis 2:1-2), and its goal is mankind who is given precedence of authority and power over the rest of creatures (Genesis 1:26-30). However, this sovereignty, resembling that given to the heavenly bodies to control the calendar and to the earth to bring forth vegetation, is not given to serve the selfish whim and pleasure of its holder. It is there to serve, so that all creatures may have life and gladness (Wisdom 1:14; Psalm 96:12). Through this service of stewardship, the will of God the Creator will be “done on earth as in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). It is by following the decrees of God that there will be peace in the land (Leviticus 26:3-6).

Human beings seem to have a different ontological status to the rest of creation. They are of the Earth, but in a different way. The Earth produces vegetation and every kind of living creature (Genesis 1:12, 24), and there are shades of the notion of ‘Mother Earth’ here. In the case of human beings, Yahweh takes personal control, breathing life into the nostrils of the man he had shaped from the soil. Even so, all creatures are an integral and enduring part of creation, and objects of the Father’s tender care (Genesis 9:9-10; Matthew 6:26). They are all to benefit from the gospel of Jesus the Christ (Mark 16:15). The relationship between Adam and the rest of creation is reciprocal. It is endowed with an eloquence and a wisdom that can benefit humankind (Job 12:7-10).

The unity of creation is dramatically borne out by the consequences of Adam’s sin. Not only humankind, but all creation, finds itself in travail (Romans 8:18-23), suffering the loss of the blessings of harmony – fertility of the soil, fecundity of trees, brilliance of stars, friendliness of animals, and limitation of insects, according to the rabbinic literature. Creation is cursed on account of Adam’s sin (Genesis 3:17, 5:29), but ironically waits “with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed” (Romans 8:19) so that it can enjoy a share in the redemption. Human beings did not lose their sovereignty, but are indeed destined to fulfil the role of co-redeemers, bringing the whole creation together in solidarity in a new heaven and a new earth, where uprightness will be at home [2Peter 3:13].

Theology
The positive approach to the world and its creatures found in Scripture is continued and further clarified in the theological tradition. This can be demonstrated by a few examples. Mich identifies two central and connected theological assumptions of the medieval saint, Thomas Aquinas, that are foundational. Firstly, everything that
exists is sacred because God made it; secondly, the diversity of creation more adequately reveals God than any one species, even humanity. Mich suggests that a rereading of St Thomas today will enable us to reclaim many insights that will be valuable in the development of an eco-theology.

Karl Rahner, a more contemporary theologian, stresses the unity of creation. Creation, he says, is one, not only because the entities go back to one and the same origin, but because they are in communion with each other. This unity is primordial, and every difference in creation springs from that unity as a mode of the unity itself. Everything exists for the sake of the rest, and all else for each thing. The goal of the world is the final union of a developed creation with the Trinity at Christ’s second coming. This unity, however, does not contradict the equally important truth that the world is hierarchically ordered.9

Michael Schmaus affirms the unity of creation: the things which go to make up the world form a relational unity and an all embracing one. While every creature has an indissoluble and indestructible value of its own, and reaches its goal by coming to share in the resurrection of Jesus, human beings occupy a special place that is critical. Creation is entrusted to them, who become created creators. On their decisions hangs the eternal fate not only of individuals but of the whole of creation.10

The predominance of humankind in creation is strongly and positively echoed in the work of Karol Wojtyla, our present Pope John Paul II. Riding on the wave of optimism generated by Vatican II, he affirms mankind’s ability and duty to strengthen its mastery over nature in order to conquer and rule in justice and holiness. After all, the whole development of the world, brought about by mankind, is nothing but a progressive manifestation and revelation of God’s work of creation.11

**Spirituality**

It is more obvious in the spiritual tradition that we find an emerging critique of humankind’s dominant stance over the rest of creation. We find a greater emphasis on the human being as part of, and not apart from, creation. An ardent proponent of creation spirituality is Matthew Fox. He grounds his thinking in that of the medieval Dominican mystic, Meister Eckhart. In creation, God pours his being in equal measure to all creatures. God is truly in all creatures on an equal basis with the difference being attributable solely to the creature’s capacity to receive. Because of this equality of being that we share with all creatures, we can learn from all creatures instead of lording it over them. We should love all creatures equally with everything which we have received from God. We should learn what it means to be in God with all other beings that are in God. We share with them a common origin, a common *isness*, and a common destiny.12

Eckhart’s predecessor by a century, Francis of Assisi, is the figure in Christian tradition who captures the imagination of the modern, ecologically sensitive world. Francis, as a man of action, embraced nature in a relationship of cruciform character.13
He, in effect, united two grand theological themes: on the one hand, the vision of the descending goodness of God, which makes all things good and worthy of respect in their own right, since they are indeed of God and for God; on the other hand, the vision of the descending love of God in Christ, the self-giving, self-humiliating Saviour, who, in turn, mandated sacrificial love for the world.

**Shadows on the Earth**

Is the positive approach to creation I have described in the preceding sections entirely typical of the tradition? Why did the Catholic Church, then, remain hesitant for decades to address the growing concern that the rapaciousness of human industry, in its desire to conquer nature, was threatening life itself on the planet, and was the source of blatant injustice? It seems that everything on Earth casts a shadow, and Church tradition is no exception. False conclusions have at times been drawn from the Scriptures, sometimes in such a subtle fashion that their falsity only becomes evident over generations. Dualist thinking, which divides reality into opposing realms, opened the way for the exaltation of the spiritual at the expense of the material and sensory. Even the great fourth century teacher, St Augustine of Hippo, was affected by a touch of Manichaeism, which held that matter is evil. He advised that we use creation like a shipwrecked person clinging to a plank to reach home. (This, of course, was not the sum of Augustine’s thought. He looked forward to a time when the whole cosmos would be transfigured with divine glory.)

Another shadow cast by the Judaeo-Christian religion is the anthropocentric perspective, which is pre-Copernican in its belief that the created universe revolves around mankind.

Because such theological tendencies have, at times, represented a popular or even official view, Christianity has been subject to criticism. Lynn White, Jr, in 1967, wrote of the role of Christianity in the ecological crisis. Christianity, he said, preached the message that it was wrong to exploit people, but right and proper to exploit nature. By cultivating an irreverent or dismissive attitude towards nature, it broke the hold of animistic belief in the intrinsic sacredness of nature and set the preconditions for the emergence of modern science and technology.\(^{14}\) It thus bears, according to White, a heavy burden of responsibility for our ecological degradation today. Mich names other potentially negative assumptions that undercut a constructive Christian eco-theology – a fear of pantheism, a disregard for this life in favour of the next, asceticism, an hierarchical worldview, and the Church’s attitude towards women and sexuality, population control, and environmental racism.\(^{15}\)

If we accept the thesis of Max Weber concerning the rise of capitalism in the West, then Protestantism may carry a major share of the blame among Christians for the ecological crisis. It may also be that in Catholic countries, where the capitalist spirit was not as strong, that the effects of the industrial and technological revolutions were not as noticeable. This might, in part, explain the Catholic lack of
awareness. Weber argued that capitalism was encouraged by the Calvinist idea of the calling:

... that in his undeviating pursuit of wealth, or rather capital, in his devotion to the precepts of personal frugality, in his consecration to those material activities by which grace is alone manifested – in these as well as in his direct and unmediated faith in God – the individual is serving God and fulfilling a calling not the less divine for its orientation towards economic matters.\textsuperscript{16}

Protestant theology in the four centuries after the Reformation tended to give up its claims on nature and the life of humanity in nature altogether. Rising above nature in order to enter into communion with God, says Santmire, became a hallmark of Protestant thought.\textsuperscript{17} Nature was approached as a self-enclosed, machinelike structure without any value or life of its own before God, set apart from both God and humanity, and serving merely as the scenery for the divine-human drama. Such a view gave the spirit of modern industrialism permission and encouragement to work its will on nature.\textsuperscript{18}

**THE CHURCH’S VOICE, PART II: AN ECOLOGICAL TEACHING**

In this section we trace an emerging ecological teaching found in official Church documentation, including papal encyclicals from Leo XIII to John Paul II, the documents of Vatican II, and declarations of various bishops’ conferences.

**Leo XIII and Pius XI**

The earliest social encyclicals reflect a strong anthropocentric view of creation. God gave the whole human race the earth to use and enjoy (RN 14). God bade them bring it under their rule – all created nature, all lands and all seas – to serve their interests (RN 57). In fact, animal nature was created to serve and obey human nature (RN 11), and without mankind’s intervention, the earth could not produce in sufficient abundance the things necessary to preserve and perfect life (RN 15). Life on this planet has a limited and passing value for human beings who were not created for the fragile and transitory things of earth, which is a place of exile, and not our permanent home (RN 33). All created goods are mere instruments under God, to be used only in so far as they help towards the attainment of our supreme end (QA p 67).

**John XXIII**

In the social encyclicals of John XXIII, written in the 1960s, one detects the beginnings of a sensitivity to ecological issues, though they are not named as such. While the lordship of humankind and the divine mandate to harness the forces of nature is affirmed (MM 196, PT 2-3) and the progress of science and technology is seen to glorify God (MM 47, PT 3), some concern tempers the optimism of the decade. The negative effects of advancement are decried (MM 198), and particular concern is expressed over the nuclear arms race (PT 111). The principle of the
universal destiny of created goods is given a wider application than ever before: the common good demands that we “ensure that the advantages of a more humane way of existence not merely subserve the present generation but have regard for future generations as well” (MM79). A cautious sanction for dialogue with non-Catholics on socio-economic issues is given so that the insights of Catholic social teaching may be brought to global issues (PT 160).

**Vatican II**

The Fathers of Vatican II, while not recognising the environment as a specific issue, further laid the groundwork for a later ecological teaching. The view of mankind as the apex of creation (GS 12), given the mandate to strengthen its mastery over nature (GS 9), and the only creature on earth that God wanted for its own sake (GS 24), is tempered by a respectful attitude to the rest of creation. All things have their own stability, truth, goodness; their inner law and coherence, which man should respect as flowing from God’s hands (GS 36, 37).

While subduing the earth to make the life of the human family more humane, we must remember that the fundamental law of human fulfilment and hence of the transformation of the world is the new commandment of love (GS 38).

The Council detects an interdependence of human history growing in extent to embrace the whole world (GS 5, 26). While not extending this interdependence to other parts of creation, nor making a link between environmental degradation and social injustice, the norm of human enterprise it formulates serves as a basis for both these connections. “Human enterprise... should by the divine plan and purpose harmonise with the real good of the human race, and allow mankind individually and in society to fulfil their vocation wholly.” (GS 35) The management of things should be subordinate to personal values (GS 26.3).

While the Church exists as the leaven of human society (GS 40), those who comprise her members should listen critically, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to contemporary utterances, to interpret them, and to evaluate them in the light of the divine word (GS 44).

**Paul VI**

The environmental issue burst rather suddenly on the scene in the early 1970s. Cardinal Roy, in his 1970 message to the United Nations on the occasion of the launching of the Second Development Decade, gives a succinct and penetrating description of the ecological malaise. What is most significant here is the link he makes between ecology and justice for the poor. He urges:

... that a fundamental reconsideration of the planet’s resource use and management be undertaken so that the increasingly irrational levels of extravagance, waste and pollution of the ‘high consumption societies’ should not jeopardise the poor nations’ hopes of development and humanity’s ultimate hopes of survival.\(^\text{19}\)

The first official documentary mention of environmental degradation came in
Paul VI’s encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens* in 1971, while the Club of Rome, a group of European industrialists, was beginning to analyse the impact of industrial growth and population increase on the environment.

Man is suddenly becoming aware that by an ill-considered exploitation of nature he risks destroying it and becoming in his turn the victim of this degradation. Not only is the material environment becoming a permanent menace – pollution and refuse, new illness and absolute destructive capacity – but the human framework is no longer under man’s control, thus creating an environment for tomorrow which may well be intolerable. This is a wide-ranging social problem which concerns the entire human family. The Christian must turn to these new perceptions in order to take on responsibility, together with the rest of men, for a destiny which from now on is shared by all.  

In his message to the 1972 Stockholm Conference, Paul VI insists that the environment be regulated for the good of all human beings, for they are the first and the greatest wealth of the earth. This statement echoes the same pontiff’s description of integral development (PP 14), and anticipates John Paul II’s emphasis on the importance of protecting the “human environment”.

Two significant Synods were held during Paul VI’s tenure – the Synod on Justice and Peace in 1971, and the Synod on Evangelisation in 1974. The former synod delivered a pointed critique of environmental degradation as a violence carried out by wealthy consumers against the poor (JM 11), and among its recommendations was the following (JM 70):

We consider that we must also stress the new world-wide preoccupation which will be dealt with for the first time in the conference on the human environment to be held in Stockholm in June 1972. It is impossible to see what right the richer nations have to keep up their claim to increase their own material demands, if the consequence is either that others remain in misery or that the danger of destroying the very physical foundations of life on earth is precipitated. Those who are already rich are bound to accept a less material way of life, with less waste, in order to avoid the destruction of the heritage which they are obliged by absolute justice to share with all other members of the human race.

This recommendation applies the concept of the universal purpose of created things to the ecological crisis, and offers a bold challenge to the rich in whose hands the power lies to change both the impact of human activity on the environment and the inequitable distribution of the world’s resources.  

*De Justitia in Mundo* “calls on all, especially the poor, the oppressed, and the afflicted, to cooperate with God to bring about liberation from every sin and to build a world which will reach the fullness of creation only when it becomes the work of man for man” (JM 77). For this to come about, the Church’s work of evangelisation will need to upset, “through the power of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria of judgement, determining values,
points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life” (EN 19).

John Paul II

John Paul II's theological orientation towards the human person, “the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced out by Christ himself” (RH 14), serves as the foundation of his concern about justice, development and the environment. While his approach is still dualist and anthropocentric, we see in his earliest encyclicals a correction of the interpretation of Genesis 1:28 that generations have used to sanction domination and exploitation of creation. He speaks of a new form of alienation as a product of exploitation whereby the power given to mankind from the beginning to subdue the earth turns against himself (RH 15, DM 11). Is progress making human life more human as economic and social structures cause an accelerating dilapidation of material and energy resources, and compromise the geophysical environment? (RH 16) The essential meaning of the Genesis mandate “consists in the priority of ethics over technology, in the primacy of the person over things, and in the superiority of spirit over matter” (RH 16). For humankind to learn that “being a king” is truly possible only by “being a servant” will require a great depth of spiritual maturity (RH 21).

Marvin Mich sees the Synod on Reconciliation in 1984 as a missed opportunity on the part of John Paul II. However a Japanese bishop, Stephen Fumio Hamao, called for reconciliation between humanity and the natural world. He urged that:

...work for peace will be effective if all men become aware of their deep connection with nature, especially with all living beings. Man must not only dominate nature, but also seek harmony with it and admire in it the beauty, wisdom, and love of the Creator. Thus men will be freed of their frenzy for possessions and domination and will become artisans for peace.23

John Paul II strikes a similar note in Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987). He expands the notion of true development initiated by Paul VI where human rights, spiritual values, and opportunity for growth are integrated without economic considerations being the final criterion. The moral character of development must include respect for the integrity and the cycles of nature (SRS 26), and the beings which constitute the natural world (SRS 34). This respect is built on a threefold consideration which deserves careful reflection (SRS 34):

• All beings in the cosmos are mutually connected in an ordered system.
• Natural resources are limited, and some are non-renewable.
• Industrialisation, through pollution, has negative consequences on the quality of life.

All this suggests a limitation on the use of the natural world in development (SRS 34), and calls for a change in spiritual attitudes which define the individual’s relationship with self, with neighbour, with even the remotest human communities, and with nature itself (SRS 38).
Despite some attention being given to ecological concerns, the Vatican teaching lagged behind the World Council of Churches and some Catholic bishops’ conferences. In 1989 the Vatican was under pressure to join with the World Council of Churches in sponsoring a world convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.24 This gave the incentive to Rome to publish the first official statement of the universal church devoted exclusively to environmental affairs. *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation* was the Pope’s Message for the World Day of Peace in 1990. If man is not at peace with God, then the earth itself cannot be at peace (WDP 5).

The roots of the ecological crisis are seen to lie in an indiscriminate application of scientific and technological advances (WDP 6), coupled with a lack of respect for life when “the interests of production prevail over concern for the dignity of workers, while economic interests take priority over the goods of individuals and even entire peoples” (WDP 7). There is reckless exploitation of natural resources, and indiscriminate experimentation in the biological sphere (WDP 7), while a privileged few accumulate excess goods, squander available resources, and leave masses in conditions of misery at the very lowest level of subsistence (WDP 8). The crisis is further exacerbated by the impact that the unequal distribution of goods, such as land, has on the environment through subsistence farming and the exhaustion of the soil (WDP 11). War is another dangerous menace that threatens us (WDP 12). In short, the ecological crisis is a direct consequence of human sinfulness, which destroys the existing harmony by deliberately going against the Creator’s plan (WDP 3).

The ecological crisis is clearly a moral issue and a common responsibility (WDP 15). Many ethical values, fundamental to the development of a peaceful society, are relevant to the ecological question (WDP 2). Respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person, is the ultimate guiding norm for any sound economic, industrial or scientific progress (WDP 7). While the document points out that respect for the integrity of creation is in line with God’s plan, and to our future benefit, it gives no guidelines for governing our relationship with the rest of creation. What degree of interference in nature, for example, constitutes a lack of respect for its integrity?25

What the message does encourage is a new lifestyle of simplicity, moderation and discipline (WDP 13). There is also an appeal to the aesthetic value of creation, which has a deep restorative power. In practice this would mean good urban planning and sensitive development that would have a respect for the natural contours of the land (WDP 14).

There is also a strong appeal for action. While awareness of the ecological problem is growing, it ought not to be downplayed but encouraged to develop into concrete programmes and initiatives (WDP 1). It also needs to be fostered through an education in ecological responsibility (WDP 13) so that the duties and obligations that belong to individuals, peoples, states and the international community are clearly recognised (WDP 15).
Since ecological problems transcend national borders, there is an urgent moral need for a new solidarity between states so that a more internationally coordinated approach to the management of the earth’s goods is put into effect (WDP 9,10). Individual states also carry weighty responsibilities in this regard. As the right to a safe environment is ever more insistently presented today as a fundamental human right (WDP 9), it is the task of the state to provide for the defence and preservation of common goods such as the natural and human environments, which cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces (CA 40).

Lastly there is a vast field of ecumenical and interreligious cooperation opening up before all those who, believing in God the Creator, are ready and willing to assume their responsibility to address the problem (WDP 15). Members of the Catholic Church are reminded of their serious obligation to care for all of creation (WDP 16).

Marvin Mich hails the text of the World Peace Day Message as a breakthrough in Roman Catholic official teaching on the environment for a number of reasons. He cites its lively style, its comprehensive coverage, its incisive analysis, and the note of urgency it communicates. The critique of technology, or rather its indiscriminate application, that it offers is a significant shift from the optimism of previous magisterial teaching. It also challenges the consumerist culture of instant gratification that is one root cause of the environmental predicament. The concept of solidarity is applied to nations, and respect for life is extended to the rest of creation, “which is called to join mankind in praising God” (WDP 16).

The seeds sown by the World Peace Day message did not seem to blossom in the later encyclicals of John Paul II, though there is some ongoing reflection. He is criticised for playing down ecological concern in the light of a more serious destruction of the ‘human environment’ (CA 38). To be fair, this emphasis is in keeping with his stress on the theological centrality of the human person that we noted earlier, and he does define the parameters of the ecological question as ranging from “the preservation of the natural habitats of the different species of animals and of other forms of life to ‘human ecology’ properly speaking” (EV 42).

Perhaps what his teaching lacks is a more sensitive treatment of the relationship between the human person and the rest of creation, which his critics might characterise as one between fellow creatures. In fact, in Evangelium Vitae (1995) his thinking seems to entrench an anthropocentric view of creation. The life which God gives man is quite different from the life of all other living creatures (EV 34). Only his creation is the result of a special decision (EV 34). Man is placed at the summit of God’s creative activity, as its crown, at the culmination of a process which leads from indistinct chaos to the most perfect of creatures (EV 34). Everything in creation is ordered to man and everything is made subject to him and entrusted to his responsible care (EV 34). This dominion over the earth and over every living creature is given to man as a sign of glory and honour from his Creator (EV 42).

Consonant with this view, his approach to development is also anthropocentric
in its implicit glorification of modern technology as the decisive factor of wealth over against the natural fruitfulness of the Earth, which, in earlier times was nursed in a harmonious partnership, rather than exploited (CA 31-32).27

Bishops’ conferences
In more recent years, guiding statements have come from individual bishops’ conferences. The US Bishops spell out the many urgent ecological problems besetting our world and call on us to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth, what we pass on to future generations, and how we live in harmony with God’s creation (RE 1). They point out that environmental issues are linked to other basic problems – environment, energy, economics, equity, and ethics are interrelated (RE 2):

To ensure the survival of a healthy planet, then, we must not only establish a sustainable economy but must also labour for justice both within and among nations. We must seek a society where economic life and environmental commitment work together to protect and to enhance life on this planet.

Sustainability is a key concept in secular discourse on the environment, and this is the first official mention of it in church documents that I have come across. The Australian National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development defines it as follows: “Ecologically sustainable development uses, conserves and enhances the community’s resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased.”28

A later statement (1999) by the US bishops insists that Catholic social teaching and care for the Earth is a central and essential element of our faith (CST 1, 5). We are thus called to live our faith in relationship with all of God’s creation (CST 5).

In a short pastoral statement of 1999, the South African bishops highlight the serious injustices perpetrated against poor people through the deterioration of the environment (EC 2). They stress the need for responsible stewardship and appreciation of creation (EC 3). They express their pleasure at the initiative taken by the South African government to adopt a National Environmental Management Act (1998), which is seen as a major step forward in achieving environmentally sustainable development (EC 3). The conference urges members of the Church to familiarise themselves with the new legislation and with the Church’s teaching on the environment, and to actively involve themselves in their implementation (EC 3). In a second pastoral statement, Economic Justice in South Africa, published in the same year, they name environmental degradation as one of the factors to be considered in judging the morality of an economic system (EJ 3). Just economic activity will respect the inherent goodness, indeed, the holiness, of the created world (EJ 5).

TAKING STOCK OF CATHOLIC ENVIRONMENTAL TEACHING
What is the state of the Church’s ecological teaching at the turn of the millennium?
We need to take stock. A list of themes supplied by the US Catholic Conference in their 1991 statement *Renewing the Earth* provides a useful summary of the Church’s distinctive perspective, and a springboard for further discussion:29

- A God-centred and sacramental view of the universe, which grounds human accountability for the fate of the earth (a world that discloses the Creator’s presence).
- A consistent respect for human life, which extends to respect for all creation (the whole universe together participates in the divine goodness).
- A worldview affirming the ethical significance of global interdependence and the common good (everyone is affected and everyone is responsible).
- An ethics of solidarity promoting cooperation and a just structure of sharing in the world community (sacrifices of our own self-interest for the good of others and of the earth we share).
- An understanding of the universal purpose of created things, which requires equitable use of the earth’s resources (a just economic system which equitably shares the bounty of the earth).
- An option for the poor, which gives passion to the quest for an equitable and sustainable world (the poor suffer most directly from environmental decline).
- A conception of authentic development, which offers a direction for progress that respects human dignity and the limits of material growth (a balanced view of human progress consistent with respect for nature).

While the above themes indicate that a firm foundation is in place, some areas need strengthening, while the practical application of others is not yet clear. I shall deal briefly with some unresolved issues.

**A universal perspective**

Taking the Genesis mandate of stewardship seriously means that we need to look at the ecological problem from the perspective of the whole of creation, and not from a narrow anthropocentric view. How else will the rest of creation be able to join us in praising God if we are not its voice in the debate (WDP 16)? Furthermore, we cannot capture the full extent of the problem if we persist in our narrow view.

If the whole of the created order is to be respected, preserved and promoted, how it is ordered must first and above all be understood. We need to consider important questions, such as the place human intelligence has in using, correcting, supplanting, enhancing, even transcending, nature.30

If religious leaders are to have an influence in future decisions, the Church will need to develop an understanding of our place in the cosmos that is in harmony with the deepest intuitions of Christian faith. These intuitions, I think, point in the direction of a new cosmology that situates faith, without compromise, in a world of interdependence and interconnectedness. In such a world, each creature, from the smallest to the largest, has its place within God’s creation, fitting into a web of life and having a role to play in keeping this web intact.31
A new cosmology
I mentioned the Gaia Hypothesis of James Lovelock earlier in this essay. Such a view of the Earth is not entirely foreign to Christian thought. Origen, for instance, saw the world as “an immense living creature which is united by one soul, namely the power and reason of God”. Our anthropocentric way of thinking, and our denigration of life on earth as having at most a passing value, has tended to place us in a transcendent and judgemental mode. It is as if we are separable from our own existence, and from this Earthly environment, and not part of an ecologically cohesive reality. We have not taken seriously enough the scriptural vision of “a new heaven and a new earth”. To restore the balance, we need to emphasise both the immanence of God and of ourselves in nature. We need to retell the Christian myth in a way that will resacralise nature. Michael Dowd, a strong advocate of a new cosmology, sees the need for a shift in consciousness, from thinking about the planet, to thinking as the planet. In this manner of thinking we humans are an integral part of the Earth, not superior to it. We share equally with the rest of creation the status of creature, and we relate to God through creation itself. From an evolutionary perspective, we may be thought of as the self-conscious and spiritually aware organisation of elements of this living planet; the being in whom the Earth has become spiritually aware. But consciousness is not the exclusive property of human life – all share in it to different degrees, according to their capacity to receive, as Eckhart understood it. This means that the universe is, in the words of Thomas Berry, “a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.”

Beyond human rights
Albert Schweitzer said that “a man’s religion is of little value unless even seemingly insignificant creatures benefit from it”. If Catholic ecological teaching adopts the new cosmology we have been discussing, then it will have to rethink its position on the ontological status and the rights of other sentient beings. The intrinsic and aesthetic goodness of creation goes beyond its instrumental worth. We are to cultivate and preserve nature as something beautiful and worthwhile in itself that both reveals and glorifies God. Perhaps we cannot go as far as Thomas Berry to see human solidarity with nature as entailing equality and mutuality. We need to take account of the fact that on Earth only humans are spiritual subjects, capable of reflective knowledge and moral judgement. But can we give a meaning to animal rights and, indeed, the rights of all created things? Bearing in mind Paul’s description of creation in travail (Rom 8:22), we certainly can advocate with the Six Nation Iroquois Confederacy that:

the people who are living on this planet need to break with the narrow concept of human liberation, and begin to see liberation as something which needs to be extended to the whole of the Natural World. What is needed is the liberation of all the things that support Life – the air, the waters, the trees – all the things which support the sacred web of Life...
It may not make sense to call for rights where there can be no concomitant responsibility. But we could see the rights of other beings vested in God: God has the right to have all his creatures treated with respect.\textsuperscript{39} One way of demonstrating respect, even if we accept the biblical sanction for the handing over of animals to humans in sacrifice between the beginning and the end of the world, would be to build in some compensation to animals for our actions, some act of reciprocity. That is the least we could do if, created in the image of God, we are called to make him present among creatures “as intelligent and noble masters and guardians of nature” and “not as heedless exploiters and destroyers” (RH 15). Whatever our position in the universe, we should act out of a consciousness of belonging to the whole, taking into full account the integrity, the pains and the desires of our fellow creatures.\textsuperscript{40}

**Eco-justice**

Far greater attention needs to be given to the pains and desires of our fellow human beings, especially the poor and marginalised, with respect to the environment. The indivisibility of social justice and ecological integrity is well-attested. The World Council of Churches’ Justice, Peace and Creation Team describes its mandate as analysing and reflecting on justice, peace and creation in their interrelatedness. In its 2000 Message to the World Trade Union it notes that the trade liberalisation policies of that body lead to, among others, the following result: “accelerated destruction of environment and ecological systems particularly affecting livelihood and health of the rural poor and threatening the food security of countries as a whole.”\textsuperscript{41} Sean McDonagh adds the following judgment:

Poverty ... is directly related to the misuse and squandering of natural and human resources in First World – mostly traditionally Christian – countries. The life-style and consumption patterns of many people in First World countries are way beyond what the Earth can support, and can only be maintained by enslaving the vast majority of the world’s population.\textsuperscript{42}

Another form of discrimination the Church needs to confront is environmental racism. There is mounting evidence that ethnic and racial minorities suffer disproportionately from the health hazards associated with environmental pollution, particularly in the form of hazardous waste landfills located in their areas.\textsuperscript{43} These communities are often targeted because they have little political and economic power. For similar reasons, we witness the extinction of cultural groups through destruction of their traditional environments.

D F Olivier, of the University of South Africa, offers a description of ‘eco-justice’ as the “bifocal vision of economic and environmental justice, (that) pushes us to the formation of a new social paradigm – a set of assumptions, standards, values, and habits appropriate to a new era in the history of our country”.\textsuperscript{44}

**A new economics**

While we might agree that the present global economic system is the cause of many
environmental problems, it is another matter to conceptualise and put in place a new ecologically sensitive system. What can the Church offer in this regard? It could espouse the wisdom of diversity. Ecological complexity and its infinite diversity of form are critical factors in the establishment of ecological sustainability, yet today’s economic system tends towards totalitarianism and uniformity, especially in the agricultural field. Any attempt to reduce diversity begins to undermine the system’s cohesive ability and, consequently, its ecological sustainability.45

Our accounting systems also need to be reviewed. They need to be extended to include considerations of waste and resource supplies. Two ways of instituting responsibility in this area are full cost accounting and product stewardship. The first of these strategies assigns prices to resource supplies, pollution and social problems, which would be activated as fees or taxes on problematic activities. The second places responsibility for products with the manufacturer who is encouraged to consider the repair and recycling of the product at the design stage.46 These and other similar cuts in profit should be taken by businesses to pay for measures to safeguard nature and natural resources.

A new technology
Can the Church guide modern society and technology down a path in relation to the natural world, marked by awe, wonder, praise and responsibility, rather than plunder? Together with a new vision of an ecologically sustainable economy must go a careful weighing of the pros and cons of any technology, whether new or old. In order to discover and develop a new, less exploitative relationship with the natural world, we ought to consider the ‘soft’ path of intermediate, alternative or appropriate technology rather than the ‘hard’ path of high technology. The ‘hard’ path in planning for energy needs, for example, involves nuclear plants, national energy grids, huge capital investments and the use of non-renewable resources. It leads to pollution, urbanisation and alienation, and hands political power to a small elite. The ‘soft’ path, on the other hand, is based on renewable or non-exhaustible resources like sun, wind and vegetation. It is flexible, clean and democratic orienting the society towards local decision-making and community initiative.47

These then are some of the areas that the Church might do well paying attention to in the further development of an ecological teaching able to provide a vision to sustain and support environmental action. I shall conclude this essay with a few short remarks concerning the action in which the Church might fruitfully be engaged.

THE CHURCH IN ACTION
Transforming spirituality and liturgy
Within the community of Church itself, a vibrant eco-theology will stimulate a revival of spiritual traditions that reflect a profound respect for God’s creation. Francis of Assisi, Benedict and Hildegard of Bingen are three that come to mind. The progressive creation spirituality of Matthew Fox, Thomas Berry, and others can
provide a necessary corrective to the dualism and anthropocentrism so prevalent in the typical Catholic community. Communing with nature will not be written off as some dangerous surrogate for true religion, but be acknowledged as the fitting consequence of a true appreciation of the creation which reveals God. The language of natural mysticism will gradually come to be canonised, or at least be recognised as consistent with the truth of things. Our liturgy may even come to express the holiness of creation in such words as the poetry of Thomas Merton.48

The forms and individual characters of living and growing things, of inanimate beings, of animal and flowers and all nature, constitute their holiness in the sight of God.
The little yellow flowers that nobody notices on the edge of that road are saints looking up into the face of God.
This leaf has its own texture and its own pattern of veins and its own holy shape, the bass and the trout hiding in the deep pools of the river are canonised by their beauty and their strength.

Assuming leadership
We have noted how the Church has been a follower in the ecological debate. Perhaps now, at the time of greatest crisis, the Church needs to assume responsibility for the fate of the Earth. Thomas Berry thinks “the Church has a unique opportunity to place its vast authority, its energies, educational resources, its spiritual disciplines in a creative context, one that can assist in renewing the Earth as a bio-spiritual planet”.49 Paul Gorman agrees, and points out that some of the aspects of a religious perspective on the environment have great power for people from a secular orientation. He lists “an embracing, purposeful cosmology; the sanctity and inherent value of all life; the link between ecology and justice; moral context for policy; appropriate virtues for sustainable behaviour; an invitation to personal transformation; affirmation of happiness as a spiritual, not material, condition; and good offices to mediate for the common good”.50

Listening to other voices and cooperating in ecological initiatives
Because leadership in this area in the past has come from the Protestant churches, non-Christian religions and secular organisations, the Catholic Church needs seriously to listen to and dialogue with these other voices. Furthermore, since there is consensus across a significant spectrum of religious traditions that the cause of environmental integrity and justice should occupy a position of utmost priority for people of faith, this concern has a great potential for religious unity. We have seen too how religion gives inspiration to the ecological cause in the secular arena.

Some fruits that could emerge from closer listening and cooperation are:
- the recovery of an appreciation of nature through an examination of our pre-Christian roots;
- the gaining of respect for non-Christian ecological perspectives;
- opportunities for mutual challenge and exchange with new social movements;
• the building of bridges among the peace, justice and environmental agendas and constituencies;
• working towards international agreements, such as the Kyoto Protocol,\textsuperscript{51} which respect the interests of all and protect the integrity of the global environment and developmental system;
• collaboration in global ecological initiatives, such as the Earth Charter.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{NOTES}

1 Dorothy McLaughlin, \textit{Silent Spring Revisited}, p 1.
2 Christopher Southgate, \textit{God, Humanity and the Cosmos}, p 226.
3 Kees Zoeteman, \textit{Gaia-Sophia}, p 156.
4 Quoted in Southgate, op cit, p 228.
5 See, for example, Marvin Mich, \textit{Catholic Social Teaching and Movements}, p 385.
7 Joseph Fitzmyer, \textit{The Anchor Bible: Romans}, p 505.
8 Marvin Mich, op cit, p 404.
9 Gerald McCool, \textit{A Rahner Reader}, p 192-5.
12 Matthew Fox, \textit{Breakthrough}, pp 91-100.
15 Ibid, p 396.
17 H Paul Santmire, op cit, p 122.
18 Ibid, pp 133, 140.
20 OA 21.
21 This is an age old principle in Catholic social teaching. See PP 22.
22 Marvin Mich, op cit, p 388.
23 Quoted in Mich, op cit, p 389.
25 Donald Dorr, op cit, p 334.
27 Donald Dorr, op cit, p 348.
29 See Marvin Mich, op cit, p 402; and <www.webofcreation.org www.webofcreation.org>
30 \textit{The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought}, p 309.
31 God’s ‘good’ creation in \textit{Faith and Earthkeeping}, 18, June 2000.
37 Quoted in Lewis Regenstein. \textit{Replenish the Earth}, p 149.
38 Quoted in Marvin Mich, op cit, p 411.
39 Lewis Regenstein, op cit, p 118.
40 The New Dictionary of Catholic Social Thought, p 44.
41 World Council of Churches. There are alternatives to globalisation, p 10.
42 Sean McDonagh, To Care for the Earth, p 5.
43 Marvin Mich, op cit, p 400.
45 Stuart McBurney, op cit, pp 169-170.
46 See Environmental Concerns <www.cyberus.ca www.cyberus.ca>
47 Adam Corson-Finnerty, World Citizen, pp 40-42.
48 Quoted in Marvin Mich, op cit, pp 403-4.
49 Quoted in Sean McDonagh, op cit, p 11.
50 Web of Creation. Quotations on the Environment.
51 This protocol aims at eliminating the gas emissions that are blamed for global warming.
52 A declaration of interdependence and responsibility, and an urgent call to build a global partnership for sustainable development, based at the Earth Council in Costa Rica.

REFERENCES
Catholic Church documents
QA Quadragesimo Anno. Pius XI. 1931.
RN Rerum Novarum. Leo XIII. 1891.
Other documents
1998. National Environmental Management Act (South Africa)
2000. The Earth Charter

Articles


Books
Justice and Peace Commission, Diocese of Johannesburg. 198?. *Our Best Kept Secret: The Church's Social Teaching*.
List of Contributors

MATHIJS J.G.P. LAMBERIGTS is Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of Louvain where he is also Professor of Church History and Theology. He is currently President of the Centre for the Study of Jansenism, President of the Centre for the Study of the Second Vatican Council, and a member of the Institutum Historicum Augustinianum, all at the same university. He is a contributor to Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche.

DONAL O’ MAHONY OFM (Cap) is a Capuchin Franciscan Priest coordinating the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation mission for the Franciscan Capuchin order in 11 African countries. Fr Donal was the co-editor of the Capuchin Annual for ten years, a parish priest in Dublin for six years, and secretary-general for his order in Justice, Peace and the Environment for seven years. He was recently invited as visiting scholar to Berkeley, where he taught a course in cosmology.

LUC HOEBEKE is a graduate of the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium in Electronics and Nuclear Science Engineering. He is also a director of Hoebeke, Staes & Partners – a company that aims to stimulate, accompany and realise boundary activities in various social domains. Hoebeke is currently involved in the design and implementation of the postgraduate MBA, Management and the New Media, at the I+M foundation, Faculty of Economics at the University of Amsterdam. He is also involved with activities of the Flemish Foundation for the Promotion of Arts as well as being a senior staff member of the International Professional Development Programme of IOD.

PAUL FALLER holds a BA degree in Mathematics and Philosophy from the University of South Africa, and an MPhil (Theology) from St Augustine College. A teacher by calling and profession, he has taught in Christian Brothers’ schools in Galeshewe, Kimberley and Pretoria. For the past nine years he has held the position of National Coordinator of Religious Education at the Catholic Institute of
Education, an associate body of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, mandated to serve the needs of South African Catholic schools. His work includes policy development and negotiation, teacher training, and curriculum and materials development for school-based religious education.
Instructions to Contributors

EDITORIAL POLICY

*St Augustine Papers* is the journal of St Augustine College of South Africa, and is published twice annually. It publishes scholarly, refereed articles and book reviews in all the fields in which academic programmes are offered at the College. Publishing decisions are made by the Editorial Committee.

PRESENTATION OF MANUSCRIPTS

Articles may be around 6000 words in length, and should be an original contribution. Two hard copies of each manuscript should be submitted as well as a disk containing the article using software that is compatible with MS Word. Manuscripts should be typed, double-spaced and on one side of standard A4 paper. The name, address, telephone number(s) and e-mail address of the author should be typed on a separate sheet. The first page of the manuscript should carry the proposed title and author’s name with highest degree. Under the name should appear an identification line, giving title and position held, the institution, and its location. A brief abstract (no more than 150 words) should follow the author identification data.

Hard copies and a disk should be sent to the Editorial Committee, St Augustine Papers, PO Box 44782, Linden 2104, South Africa and e-mailed to academic@staugustine.ac.za.

REFERENCES

The Harvard method should be used. All references should be specified in parentheses in the text (and in the text of notes) by surname(s) of the author(s), the year of the publication and page number(s), for example (Dworkin 1986:45-52). The complete citation should appear at the end of the manuscript (after the notes, if any) under the caption ‘References’. Such citations should be listed alphabetically by surname of author; for authors cited more than once, by year of publication, with the most recent references first. Please note the use of capital letters, punctuation marks and italics in the following examples:


NOTES

Notes should be numbered serially throughout the text by superscript numbers (without parentheses) to the right of any punctuation marks. The notes themselves should appear at the end of the manuscript but before the references, under the caption ‘Notes’.