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Reflections on a Lutheran Theology of Creation: Foundations for a New Reformation

David Rhoads

The article proposes a new Lutheran reformation that rises to the global ecological crises we are facing. This proposal is one expression of many possible ways to respond to the degraded state of God's creation and what we as Christians need to do to address it. The ideas and views contained here are meant to be preliminary rather than final, generative rather than definitive, and an opening for dialogue rather than an effort to close it down. Whether you agree or disagree with these ideas, my hope is that, as a church, we will respond to the ecological crises with constructive dialogue, transformation, creativity, and action. The lecture I gave at the Spring Convocation on "Getting Green Faithfully" was one part of this larger piece. The Seminary Ridge Review editors graciously invited me to publish the entire essay.¹

A New Reformation: Introduction

I am proposing that we inaugurate a new reformation. We Lutherans have always considered "perpetual reformation" to be an ongoing dimension of our common life. Nevertheless, what I am proposing is more than mere adjustments in Reformation trajectories. We are facing unprecedented changes in our life on Earth and the times are calling for something much more substantial. If we are to be prepared to face these crises and to address them, some paradigm shift, some foundational transformation of our church, needs to take place.

The ecological crises, particularly the alarming progression of global climate change, are rapidly becoming matters reaching to the heart of faith.

Twenty years ago, in the social statement “Caring for Creation,” the ELCA issued a warning for the church to respond to the looming ecological crises and the social justice issues related to them. Now it is time to meet the challenges presented by that document. This is a clarion call for a new re-formation.

The Ecozoic Age

The list of crises we are facing as a planet is long and substantive. To name a few: global climate change; unpredictable weather patterns; increase in frequency and intensity of storms; drought; rampant wildfires due to dry conditions; deforestation; desertification; shifting agricultural conditions; movement of species of plants and animals; loss of species diversity; deterioration in air quality; pollution of fresh water sources and oceans; degradation of soil; rise of seas levels, human overpopulation, and more – all of which produce negative impacts on human life, particularly the most vulnerable people and societies. Every eco-system on Earth is under stress. Earth itself is under stress.

Father Thomas Berry has said that humanity is entering a new era, the Ecozoic Age – an age in which ecological issues will dominate our global life together. He argues that creating a sustainable environmental lifestyle on the planet is the “great work” of our time.² It is a work in which all people can participate, a work that all must embrace if human life on this planet is to be sustained. This work will require intention and sacrifice; and it can be joyful. The environment is not a fad. It is not an add-on, not one more issue alongside others. It is not just for those who happen to be interested in this cause. Earth is our home. It involves everyone. It has an impact on all living things. And we humans, we Christians, we Lutherans, need to step up and embrace dramatic changes in ourselves and in our life together for the sake of Earth – and for the sake of the God we confess to be the creator and preserver of our planet and the whole universe.

Transformation of Society

In this twenty-first century, an adequate human response to the ecological state of the world – by all nations, but especially among industrialized countries – will require a systemic transformation far greater even than the transformation that occurred in the United States and other Allied societies when they rose to the challenge of war in the 1940s. In the United States, for example, the entire economy was re-directed to address the challenge of war. Standard factories were quickly transformed. New industries arose overnight.

Goods and resources such as gas and other products were rationed. People grew their own food. Cars were limited. Everyone made sacrifices. The assets of our society were marshaled to rise and meet the challenge.

That is what industrial nations need to do now at national and global levels to address the challenge of the environmental crisis: a transformation to renewable energy, transition to eating local foods, massive reforestation projects, replanting of native species everywhere, cultivation of resources to develop and share new technologies, limits to the use of pesticides and herbicides, prohibition of the clearing of forests and the stripping of land, rationing of energy and water, protection for wetlands and wilderness, among many other things. We need an economic system that settles in and sustains life, all living things, instead of an economy that depends on unlimited resources and unlimited growth. These are systemic changes that also require personal commitments. Whether or not these changes are being made by governments and corporations, we as individuals and communities need to begin to do them *now* on a voluntary and unilateral basis. We see one such change bubbling up already with the number of local initiatives around food: urban gardening, home gardens, community supported agriculture, restoration of native habitats, humane treatment of animals, eating lower on the food chain, organic farming, soil restoration projects, among others. We need to see a pervasive grassroots groundswell of changes on this issue and many others. We cannot wait for everyone else to go along.

The Christian Churches

The church is called to participate in this “great work” and, indeed, to offer leadership. To do so, we need a transformation as great as that required by the society.³ There are many reasons why Christianity in general has failed to show significant change in attitude towards Earth. Indeed, Christian traditions and practices have contributed significantly to the problems and to the societal ethos that has produced the problems. Nevertheless, in the last two decades, world-wide ecumenical organizations of churches such as the World Council of Churches, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, and others have held many meetings covenanting with member churches to design new ways of developing a relationship with all of God’s creation, to understand afresh how God works in the world of the nature around us, and to build and nurture sustainable Earth-communities. In the United States, the National Partnership for the Environment was formed to foster care for creation among four representative groups: The National Council of Churches, the National Catholic Conference, the Evangelical Environmental Network, and the Coalition on Jewish Life and the

Environment. Many denominations are stirring, including our own ELCA. Many para-religious groups dealing with the ecological crisis, such as Earth Ministry, Green Faith, and Faith in Place have arisen. Clearly, the environment is an emergent theme in contemporary religious life and mission.

Lutherans

But the ecological challenge will take much more, something radical and comprehensive. There is a lot of care-for-creation activity going on in many places in Lutheran congregations and institutions, along with reflective thinking in all major disciplines in Lutheran academic circles and advocacy in relation to environmental policies.⁴ Unfortunately, it is often isolated and scattershot. We need a comprehensive and systemic approach. For the most part, popular theology is not creation-friendly; neither are curricular materials; nor worship; nor the way we care for the building and grounds of our congregations and institutions; nor our models of discipleship, stewardship, or evangelism; nor the core, the ethos, or the identity, nor our denominational and institutional missions. A paradigm shift will involve more than tinkering, more than tweaking, more than a conference here or a hymn there. We need to get it into our marrow. We need to incorporate this into our DNA. Just as we have to think boldly about how to change the society, so we need to think boldly about how to transform the church – in terms of personal and systemic transformation. Creation care and sustainable living need to be as natural and inescapable as loving our neighbor. Our entire church – congregational life and mission, theology, ethics, worship, pastoral care, spiritual practices – need a radical overhaul if we are to care for the life of God's creation and contribute to our endurance as a species. This calls for fundamental re-formation.

I am convinced that we Lutherans have the resources and the organization necessary to bring us into this new reformation dedicated to a sustainable world. We need to draw on these resources and traditions so that they fulfill their promise for our age. Lutheran theologian and ethicist, Larry Rasmussen, has noted Romans 8:19 – that the whole creation has been groaning in travail “waiting with eager longing” – and then he has added that creation is “Waiting for the Lutherans.”⁵ Let us hope that this is not like waiting for Godot!

Comparison of Reformations

What might a Lutheran eco-reformation look like? And how might it be similar to or different from the first reformation? A Methodist historian,

Phillip Watson, identified the sixteenth-century Reformation as a “Copernican Revolution” in religion.⁶ Just as our physical view of the cosmos shifted from being Earth-centered to being sun-centered, so also the first Reformation shifted the conception of salvation from being human-centered to being God-centered, from human efforts to God's actions of grace in Christ. This was a revolution in basic perception that changed everything in relation to the dominant views and practices of the time. Lutheran Reformation churches had a theological image of God as a God of grace. They were liberated from the bondage of needing to please God. They focused on a servant theology of the cross instead of a triumphalist theology of glory. They read the Bible differently with justification as the internal canon of interpretation. They placed Scripture in the hands of the laity. They worshipped in ways that focused on God's direct action in worship. They embraced the sacraments as material reality bearing the spiritual reality of Christ. They affirmed the goodness of creation. They reinvented church order around a priesthood of all believers. They saw ethics as a response to grace and characterized in freedom as a vocation to love the neighbor, especially in relation to the poor and the hungry. They understood Christians acting as citizens of two kingdoms. And more.

Now, without losing the foundational fruits of that revolutionary Reformation and by building on them (indeed by shaping them for our current context), we need a new reformation, a new “Copernican Revolution,” – so to speak – from being human-centered to being creation-centered, from being anthropo-centric to being cosmo-centric, from God's relation to humans alone to God's relationship with all creation, from the extreme enlightenment individualism of our culture to a quest for the common good of the planet. For most of us, this is as mind-bending a change in perception as the first Reformation was. It will require *metanoia* (repentance) in the true sense, a mind change and a behavior change – both individually and collectively as a church. Again, this shift is revolutionary. It changes everything. It changes the way we think of ourselves (as mammals embedded in nature); it changes how we see our interrelationship with the world around us (every living creature and every non-living thing connected to everything else); and it changes our image of God as an ongoing creator (working for good in, with, and under everything).

To make this shift, we need theologies that are earth-friendly and creation-centered. We cannot be stuck in the issues of the sixteenth century if we are to address the issues of our time. In a conversation with Lutheran theologian Paul Santmire, he said this: “Just as Luther addressed the signal issue of his time, namely, human salvation, so we need to address the signal issue of our time, namely, the fate of Earth.” To do that, we need a reforma-

tion that responds to the Ecozoic Age. Luther responded to the salvation crisis by rediscovering Paul's concept of justification by grace through faith; now it is our turn to build on this and rise to the current ecological crisis to foreground Lutheran theologies of creation. And just as Luther recovered portions from the Bible and other neglected traditions that the sixteenth century had overlooked, so we can recover from the Bible and from our Lutheran heritage those traditions that address us in our time.

For example, although (as we shall see) Luther had a profound appreciation for material creation, most of his attention was focused on seeing theology through the prism of the second article of the creeds to address his time (salvation of humans). Now, however, we need to see theology through the prism of the first article of the creed as the starting point of Trinitarian theology for our time – on God as creator and on the redemption of creation and on the consummation of creation. Furthermore, we need to read the Bible with a new lens that encompasses creation. In this regard, Santmire also commented that we need an additional canon for interpretation in our time, namely, Rom 8:18-25, with all creation “groaning in travail” and eagerly awaiting “freedom from its bondage to decay” – seen in deep interrelationship with justification by grace (indeed justification and creation are already integrated in the Letter to the Romans!). Without losing anything from justification and appropriating it anew for our time, we are called to reinterpret Scripture in light of this new canon within the canon – and to bring out all the rich resources of Scripture for the task before us.

And this new focus on the signal issue of our time will change everything for us. In order to anticipate the points that follow, let me name some changes we might embrace. We need to learn to worship every week *in relationship with* creation. We can preach the word of God for all creation. Our ethical reflections need to encompass *ecological* justice so as to expand our commitment to social justice for the most vulnerable. We can enlarge our circle of compassion by recovering our original vocation from Genesis to “serve and protect” creation. We can understand the theology of the cross to encompass solidarity with suffering creation. We can expand Luther's two kingdoms to encompass the animal kingdom and the plant kingdom as arenas of God's activity and our response. In addition to the book of Scripture, we can also place the revelatory “book of nature,” as Luther called it, in the hands of the laity. We can train clergy to be sages whose wisdom will help to lead us through the changes we will be facing. We can employ our profound view of the sacramental elements of bread and wine as a paradigm for treating all life with reverence. We can see God in every rock and rodent. We can have a spirituality that is earth-centered in the belief that the finite bears the infinite to us. We can reinvent congregational identity and mission to en-

compass love of creation. We can create communities that are alternatives to consumption and exploitation. We can expand our commitment to the hungry and the marginalized to include endangered species and vulnerable ecosystems. We can have an encompassing mission of ecological justice that hears the cry of the poor *and* the cry of the Earth.

In this new reformation, we need to reform *ourselves*. At the same time, this is a reformation that will unite rather than divide. It is not a confessing movement within the church but a confessing movement in the world along with the whole church. It unifies around a common mission as the church for the world. As such, this reformation will listen to the diverse voices within our Lutheran tradition. And it will be ecumenical. It will also be interfaith, because all religions have salient traditions and resources that can be garnered for crafting new eco-ethics for Earth. Christians, Unitarian Universalists, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Taoists, indigenous religions, among others (including secular organizations) together will find common ground (Earth!) in the collective calling to earth-care.⁷ We are all in this, and it will take all of us to work together to address our situation. No place for a theology of glory here!

A Suggestion: For a Moment, Bracket Life After Death

I have a suggestion about how best to imagine a theology of creation. In our current thinking, there is a tendency to take creation for granted and to talk primarily about redemption. In so doing, we detach salvation from creation – we individualize it and spiritualize it. “Jesus died for my sins so I can go to heaven.” By itself, this is not earth-friendly. This life becomes merely a pilgrimage toward our true home in heaven. Lutherans have not generally embraced the popular rapture theology that people will be saved by being snatched out of this world. Nevertheless, in our focus on afterlife, we have sometimes embraced a more subtle form of rapture, namely that we are raptured to heaven at death. Not that this view is wrong, but when taken by itself, it denigrates the creation left behind. Salvation becomes what happens after we die. We leave the world behind. Australian Lutheran biblical scholar and theologian, Norman Habel, critiques this theology as “heavenism.”⁸

However, in Scripture and in our Lutheran tradition, the movement of salvation has not been away from Earth but *toward* it. I sometimes tell my students that if you think of salvation only as dying and going to heaven, you may pass Jesus coming the other way! That is what in-carnation is about: God becoming human, God coming to dwell with humans, Jesus returning to be with us.

As we recover neglected traditions about creation, we might remember that most of the Old Testament was written without belief in a life after death and without the expectation of an end-time. People believed that salvation occurred in *this* life, with the community, and with the rest of nature – with individual redemption embedded in the redemption of the people of Israel and in all creation. In the New Testament, there is an affirmation of personal life after death, but always in the context of the community and always with a framework involving the rest of creation. Consider the cosmic dimensions of the vision of the end-time in Mark 13. Or consider Paul's claim that all creation is waiting to be set free (Rom 8:21). Consider John's claim that God so loved the *world* (John 3:16). Consider Colossians' assertion that God was in Christ reconciling all things in heaven and on Earth (Col 1:20). Or Revelation's vision of the future New Jerusalem with God, Christ, humans, and fruitful nature abiding together in peace and justice (Rev 21). Creation is not a stage or a backdrop on which human redemption is carried out. We have screened creation out of much of our reading of the Bible, where the natural order is an integral part of that which God is seeking to redeem and bring to fulfillment.

Given our focus on personal salvation after death, I want to give you this challenge as a way to get us out of the theological boxes we put ourselves in. In order to understand the biblical ideas of creation, redemption, and fulfillment, consider thinking about them apart from individual life after death. Please know that I am not denying life after death, nor am I asking you to think that life after death with God is unimportant. I am simply asking you to bracket life after death for a momentary time in order to see the full potential of creation and redemption in *this* life. How might the major theological concepts of our faith be understood as related wholly to this created life? Perhaps by looking at things this way we will be more fully able to understand what is meant by redemption in the biblical materials (and, indeed, in the Reformation). At the end of the essay, I will return again to the concept of life after death and suggest how it might fit into a Lutheran theology of creation for this new reformation.

Why must we revolutionize our theology? Both consciously and unconsciously, human attitudes and actions toward nature are formed by religious worldviews and ethics. How we *think* shapes how we *act*. If our theology is not earth-friendly, what would lead us to think that our actions and commitments will lead us to care for creation? Perhaps the moral test for theology in our time is this: Does it lead to harm or neglect of Earth community, or does it foster love for creation, leading to decisions that sustain Earth – even to the seventh generation ahead, which many Native Americans use as a measure? We Christians need to become aware of how we think, so as to see the consequences of our thoughts and assumptions. We

need to change our thinking about God and about ourselves as humans and about Earth as God's creation so as to provide a solid foundation for earth-care action. Such change involves a paradigm shift of deep cultural and religious structures. It is re-socialization at a primary level.⁹ What follows is an effort to address theological foundations for a new eco-reformation in relation to the three articles of our Trinitarian faith.

First Article:

God the Ongoing Creator of the Universe

Christian churches have spent the better part of two centuries focusing on God's relation with humans and our human relationships with one another. Now we need to focus on God's relationship with all creation, our relationship with the rest of creation, and our relationship with God in and through creation. In our time, it appears that God is orienting us to creation.

Creation from Beginning to End

Foundationally, Lutherans have a very strong theology of creation rooted in an affirmation of the first article of the creed: "I believe in God the ... creator of heaven and earth." Unfortunately, we have often seen the realities to which the three articles of the creed point as events that happen sequentially in time rather than as continuous realities. We Lutherans embrace creation as continuous, not as a single event in the past. As such, the whole sweep of salvation is the continuous creative activity of God. Therefore, we need to see theology through the prism of creation – creation as the beginning, middle, and end of God's activity. The first article of the Creed is the foundation of theology. The second article continues creation as redemption and simultaneously builds on it. Redemption is new creation. The third article continues creation as sanctification and brings it toward fulfillment. The Holy Spirit sustains creation. And eschatology is about consummating creation. All of it represents the ongoing creative activity of God from beginning to end. Ongoing creation is foundational, and our redemption in Christ and the sanctification of the Spirit liberate and empower us humans to be agents in service of creation.

A "Copernican Revolution" in our human relationship with Nature

The Copernican revolution in our relationship with God involves a paradigm shift from being anthropo-centric to being geo-centric or cosmo-centric. This shift implies a radical change in our human relationship with

the rest of nature. We need an awakening, a great awakening to the life of nature around us. On a personal and corporate level, many of us are woefully unaware of our interrelationship with the rest of nature, the ecosystems upon which we depend for life and well-being. Therefore, we are systematically degrading air, land, water, and the atmosphere itself – unaware of where the products we use come from or where they go when we discard them. We have to “wake up” to what is all around us and how we are inter-related to it and what we are doing to destroy it. The nature that sustains us is around us, and we do not “see” it. This involves an actual perceptual shift in what we see every day and how we see it.

To awaken to the world around us, we have to re-imagine the world and our relationship in it. We have to *see* it differently. We have to be *in* it differently. This is critical, because the ecological crisis is a spiritual problem. Yes, we need all the technological solutions we can muster. However, the ecological problems have resulted from our human alienation and estrangement from creation, and they will not be adequately addressed without a restoration of this relationship. This social and cultural separation from nature after the industrial revolution is a primal wound, an experience of loss and sadness of which we humans are hardly aware. Our life is profoundly diminished by our failure to relate to and interact with nature on a continuous basis. And our relationship with God is greatly diminished in so far as we are estranged from God’s creation. We think we live *on* Earth, not *in* it and *because of* it, as if we were not ourselves animals.

Some years ago, I had an epiphany about this. I was in my apartment in Chicago. It was in the middle of the night. I never sit up when I awaken. And I never talk when I first wake up. I have no idea where this came from as I suddenly woke from sleep. But at 3:20 in the morning I sat bolt up in bed and blurted out: “I’m a mammal!” Well, I knew that. At least I thought I did. But the experience led me to see my true self in a new way. As I pondered this epiphany over and over in the succeeding months, I became acutely aware of how we could strip away all that separates us from nature – houses, buildings, pavement, stores, language, customs and habits, entertainment and social media that so occupy us – take that all away and we are clearly animals, as dependent on Earth as all other animals. And I realized how separated we are from the earth that gave us birth. I woke up to the reality around me. This epiphany happened in February, and it occurred to me that I had gone for at least three months never putting my foot on natural ground – going from house to sidewalk to driveway to car to store to work to wherever and back again, never putting my foot on sod. It was a parable for me of our human estrangement from nature. We have created this artificial world on top of Earth. And we take our relationship to Earth for granted.

The point is that the ecological problems we face are deeper than a fix-it approach. It has fundamentally to do with our relationship with the rest of nature. We need to go “back to Earth” and have a love affair with nature. Larry Rasmussen has commented that “[w]e will not save what we do not love.” In a lecture on the importance of native plants, naturalist Douglas Tallamy said: “If we do not have an emotional connection with Earth, we will not care for it.” This is one of the distinct contributions of religion to environmental concerns. Unless we have cultivated love of and care for creation, unless we see God and God’s grace in creation, we will not as humanity do what needs to be done to develop a just and sustainable life for future generations. The opposite of love is not hate, but indifference. We have been indifferent to and destructive of the world around us. And now we are called to wake up and reunite our bodies, souls, and spirits with all of God’s creation.

Who we are as Humans

This great work of reformation involves changing the perception of who we are as humans and how we are connected to world around us. We are mammals, higher primates. We eat, drink, urinate, and defecate. We sleep and rise, we copulate and reproduce. We are young, we grow old, and we die. We return to the earth, dust. We have come from earth and we are part of earth. Here before me in the fourth row sits our friend here at Gettysburg, John Spangler. It has taken fourteen billion years of the emergence of the entire universe and three billion years of life on the planet to evolve to this precise moment in this place to create you! For each of us, your life in this moment as you are present here has required all of that!

The creation stories in the Bible confirm that we belong to Earth. Adam was made from the dust of the Earth. The name Adam (*adam*) is the masculine form of the Hebrew word *adamah*, which literally means “soil” or “arable [farmable] earth.” So Adam is an “earth man” who belongs to the land and who is responsible to the land. Dust we are and to dust we shall return. If instead of transliterating the Adam, we had for the last four centuries translated the name of the first human literally as “Earthman” or “Soilman” or even “Farmer,” our common understanding of human beings and their relationship to Earth might be quite different than it is.

Here is the new Copernican revolution: We need to de-center ourselves and see ourselves as one species among many and find a place in this planetary eco-system for all of us to thrive together. We are so anthropocentric. Life has been emerging on Earth for three billion years. And we show up at the last minute and think it’s all about us! It’s like the Carly Simon lyrics: “I bet you

think this song is about you, about you.” We think it was all made just for us. Consider that God has been gracing and loving life on Earth for three billion years – the amoebas and the trilobites and the arthropods and, yes, the dinosaurs and the mammoths. Then we emerge. Do we think it is too much for God to expect us to take care of this planet God has loved and nurtured through the ages?

We evolved with all the other living and non-living things. There are no plants without soil. There are no animals without plants. At every point, we have been interdependent with the rest of nature. We share 99% DNA with some other primates. We are kin to every living thing. Not only are we animals in our own right but other animals are “human-like,” as a recent analysis of dolphin behavior led the author to refer to them as “non-human persons.”¹⁰ We have a *kinship* with every living thing (or as some Native Americans refer to living and non-living things as “their relations”), and we need to cultivate these relationships. We are all part of a global, diverse gene pool. We evolved as part of a vast web of creation. At every step, we have been totally interrelated. Just in this brief time in this room together for this lecture, we have exchanged millions of cells with each other – touching those around us and breathing the same air. While here we have interacted with the trees and the grass around us. We have depended on the beetles and insects and birds. We are part of a long process of life organizing itself into ever more complex patterns and organisms. Creation is a seamless and changing web of which we are a part.

This is what it has come to – the song of the bird, the slither of the snake, the eye of the eagle, and you! And you are related to everything else. You cannot even define yourself apart from the food you eat, the soil and sunshine that nurtured the food. Jorge Luis Borges wrote: “How can we talk about the tiger without meaning also the deer that the tiger ate, the grass that the deer ate, the soil and sun that nurtured the grass, the solar system that made the sun and earth possible, and so on.”¹¹ One thing implies and includes everything. Each single moment and event is not possible without the whole sweep of the evolution of Earth and the emergence of flora and fauna in the biota of life – from micro-organisms to llamas and leopards. Everything truly is connected to everything else. Can we see this with our eyes and our minds?

Imagine the teeming life of a wetland: water, hot air, sunshine, fish swarming, dragonflies buzzing, frogs croaking, birds flitting, with reeds – mayflies, water beetles, mosquitoes, spiders, water striders, bulrushes, cattails, duckweed, milkweed, nettles, wild flowers, and more. You can hear the hum of aliveness. The wetland is a living thing with all the participants interacting as one living organism. We humans also are part of a living eco-system, except that it is spread out and we are unaware of it, unaware of how dirt, sunshine, beetles, worms, trees, all contribute. We are unaware of it at the macro-level

and the micro-level – that for example, as Annie Dillard wrote: “In the top inch of forest soil, biologists found an average of 1,365 living creatures: including 865 mites, 265 springtails, 22 millipedes, 29 adult beetles, and various numbers of other creatures. Had an estimate been given of the microscopic population, it might have ranged up to two billion bacteria and many millions fungi, protozoa, and algae – in a mere *teaspoon* of soil!”¹²

Nor are we conscious of how much life has made us what we are. Here is a poem by Judith Morley that expresses that in a significant way:

*By what miracle
does this cracker
made from Kansas wheat,
this cheese ripened from French caves,
this fig, dried and grown near Ephesus,
turn into me?
My eyes,
My hands,
my cells, organs, juices, thoughts?
Am I not then Kansas wheat
and French cheese
and Smyrna figs?
Figs, no doubt, the ancient prophets ate?*¹³

This gives new meaning to the expression “we are what we eat.” We are made up of what is around us. You know this. So why do I say it? Because we have a hard time getting it into our heads and hearts. I have had the hardest time convincing my grandchildren that we are animals – we so distinguish ourselves from other animals (although my four-year-old granddaughter Cazhmere had it right one day when she was trying to embrace our cat, and she said, “I want my cousin!”). Take off your clothes and walk around your house naked. Look in the mirror. Run barefoot in the grass and among the trees. We need to do whatever it takes to get us in touch with our natural bodies and our rootedness in Earth.

Deepening our Rootedness in Earth

This great awakening to the world around us will involve what Roman Catholic theologian and teacher of spirituality, Mary Frohlich, has referred to as a “conversion to Earth.”¹⁴ Mary compares our need to change as similar to Alcoholics Anonymous twelve-step program: we need to overcome our addiction to our destructive personal habits and social systems. We need to

acknowledge our helplessness, turn to our higher power, do a fearless moral inventory, make amends to all we have harmed, and spread the conversion to others. We need a love affair with nature, and only a great awakening will do it.

She also compares a conversion to Earth with the same steps we need to make to be in solidarity with the poor, what she calls a “third order level of change.” We begin with personal changes, the first order. These are critical. But then we realize that this will not be enough. So we turn to changing the systems and cultural patterns that contribute to the degradation of Earth, which is the second order. Then we enter a dark night of the soul, in despair that nothing we do may make any difference. And then we work through the despair to a third order of change, to such solidarity in love with creation that we will care for creation whether our efforts will ultimately work or not. In this sphere, we are in such solidarity with Earth that we will not do anything to harm creation or let any harm come to it. “Caring” for creation may not be enough. As ELCA pastor, Peggy Ogden, once remarked to me, “I get it. We *care* for our cars, but we *love* our children.” Can we love Earth like our children? Can we love Earth so much that no matter what happens we will protect it. We need to expand the circle of our compassion to embrace love for all Earth community. This is so fundamental as to express it the way Martin Marty once said: “Love God, love neighbor, love creation.”

So how can we rectify our neglect of creation and the actions we have taken as a species to destroy and degrade the rest of nature? We can begin by looking around – look on trees, grass, plants, and animals around us. *Behold* things. Discover a sense of place. Re-root ourselves in Earth and return to our sense of kinship with animals and plants. Treat your yard and your seminary/church yard as an Earth-community. Spend some time everyday taking in the world around you. Come back to Earth.¹⁵ The new reformation calls us to rethink and reorient our relationship with the rest of creation with great intention. We need an app on our cell phones and ipods to remind us to thank the nearest tree, to breathe the air slowly and feel its grace, to behold the things around us, and know where we are and where we belong. The New Reformation calls us to rethink and reorient our relationship with the rest of creation.

God is in Creation

But an even more profound step is required of our relationship with creation. Critical to this foundational shift in our relationship with Earth is the experience of God in and through creation. Luther wrote:

God is substantially present everywhere, in and through all creatures, in all their parts and places, so that the world is full of God

and He fills all, but without His being encompassed and surrounded by it. He is at the same time outside and above all creatures. These are all exceedingly incomprehensible matters; yet they are articles of our faith and are attested clearly and mightily in Holy Scripture For how can reason tolerate it that the Divine Majesty is so small that it can be substantially present in a grain, on a grain, through a grain, within and without, and that, although it is a single Majesty, it nevertheless is entirely in each grain separately, no matter how immeasurably numerous these grains may be? ... And that the same Majesty is so large that neither this world nor a thousand worlds can encompass it and say: “Behold, there it is!” ... His own divine essence can be in all creatures collectively and in each one individually more profoundly, more intimately, more present than the creature is in itself, yet it can be encompassed nowhere and by no one. It encompasses all things and dwells in all, but not one thing encompasses it and dwells in it.¹⁶

Wow! To say that God has been and always will be fully present *in all things* is a life-changing realization. God is embodied in creation. How can we see God in all things? How can we change our perception so that we see Christ not only in the faces of one another but also in the faces of animals and the leaves of plants? How can we see the world around us as valuable for its own sake – apart from our human use of it?

If God is present in all of nature and seeking to manifest God’s self to us there, then our life is diminished when we fail to relate to nature. As such, it is critical from a theological point of view to restore the human relationship with nature as a place God loves and as a place where we encounter God.

Continuous Creation

Luther himself did not view creation as a single event that set the world in motion, after which God detached while creation continued on its own, separate from God. God continues to be present creating. Creation has never stopped. Luther believed that God was continually sustaining creation and that each moment is dependent on the continuing act of creation by God. As a person of his time, Luther likely imagined an ongoing, stable, and unchanging creation. God continues to create by upholding the world and by bringing forth life through birth and seeding. Luther argued that if God withheld his creative presence, the world would collapse.

We now need to translate that view of “continuous creation” in the context of what we know about evolution and the emergence and complexity of

life. We need to imagine creation as continually changing, evolving, and sometimes devolving. The whole manner of creating in an evolving universe is a matter of God's intimate presence forever creating, shaping, and influencing – sustaining the world and working for good in all things. We need to reflect on evolution. Science is one critical way in which we become knowledgeable about God's creation. We may not be permitted to talk about God the creator in public schools (and rightfully so), but that should not prevent us from talking about evolution in churches!

It is difficult for us to grasp the scope of evolution in time and space. The concept of continuous creation as an ongoing process with the immanence of God leads us to realize that creation is not complete. We have this misconception that Earth was created pretty much as we know it – with the continents, the oceans, the temperatures, the seasons, and so on. As a human species, we have basically lived within a brief window of time in which the features of Earth have remained remarkably stable – no continents shifting, no ice age, no massive disruption by volcanoes or meteors or asteroids hitting Earth. This stability has fostered in us an illusion that it has always been this way and it will always be this way in the future, at least for a very long time to come. However, over billions of years and into the future, Earth continues to change. Therefore, the temperature can change and the continents can shift again and the seasons can be altered by climatic conditions. And we are now entering a period of unprecedented rapid and dramatic changes, caused, in large part, by human activity.

Nevertheless, our affirmation is that God is in all of life creating and working for good in all things. This does not mean that God causes all things that happen or that God has a purpose for everything that happens or that God pulls strings to manipulate events. Rather, God has created the world in freedom and with a critical dimension of separateness. God has limited God's power so that God's relation to the world bears some measure of dynamic mutuality, so that creation itself participates in the creative process.

So what is the nature of God's presence in the world? We know from the biblical materials that God grieves the loss and destruction of life, God suffers when creation suffers, God loves, God resists injustice, God seeks redemption, God heals.¹⁷ In John, Jesus says he is doing the works of the father. And as Paul said, "God is working for good in all things" (Rom 8:28). If we wish to see the nature of God in all things, we need to look at the face of Jesus – a life of healing and giving, a life of solidarity with the poor, a life of suffering for the vulnerable. God is the love that graces all things and holds all things together.

Changing our Image or Location of God

This whole approach leads to a dramatic shift in our image of God in which we shift the focus of our image of God from being *out there* to being *in here*, from space to Earth. We now need to take seriously that God is not only transcendent but also profoundly immanent, that God is not only "up" but also "down" and "around." We tend to think of God as "up in heaven," and we lift our head and hands to God in prayer and praise. Incidentally, that posture always puzzled me in light of the spherical shape of the Earth, because up is also down. Nevertheless, the idea of looking "down" and "in" things helps to overcome an unfortunate spirit-matter dualism. When we pray "up" and think of God as "up," we tend to associate God with the empty sky, with what is airy or wispy rather than what is earthy, as if God's spirit is transcendent and not also incarnate. We tend to associate God with what is ethereal rather than with what is material. If the whole Earth is filled with God's glory, then that is where we shall find God. What if we now thought of God as down, as in, with, and under things? What if we saw God in the depths? This is in some sense a reversal of the way we ordinarily locate God.

I give two examples. First, I had a period of time in my devotional life when I prayed in the position of Islam, kneeling in a prostrate position with my forehead to the ground and hands down in submission to God above. This gave me a wonderful experience of my own humility in the presence of God above me. Nevertheless, as I prayed I realized that I was facing down and indeed praying down. I realized that the God is not only the Most High but also the Most Deep God. God is deep in the marrow of things, deep in the ebony blackness of earth, in the depths of the mystery of life. In the words of Paul Tillich's well-known assertion, "God is the ground of our being." This is a down-to-earth theology of creation in which we meet and encounter God in deep down things. We believe we meet Christ in others. Why not also in rocks and elm trees and earwigs and roses?

The second example is this: When my wife had cancer, she was overwhelmed by the network of people praying for her from so many different places. And she felt incredibly strengthened by their prayers. She thought of an analogy for her experience. A year before her illness we had visited the Rocky Mountains and taken a tour with a guide. On one hillside, our guide pointed out to us a stand of aspen trees. He noted that aspens do not reproduce through seeds. Rather they grow new trees up from the root system. As such, an aspen stand is really one living thing connected through its root system (the largest living thing in the world). Then he explained that when there is no rain, and the trees on the upper hillside are dry, the trees near a stream of water on the lower part of the mountain send water up through the roots to

preserve and nourish the dry trees. Sandy said: “In my drought, I feel like the community through their prayers is sending nourishment to me deep through the root system.” There is a wonderful image for prayer that turns us to God’s presence in all of life: pray downward. God is the root system deep within that will convey our prayers to the needs of others.

So, as Santmire argues, we do not need an *ascent* theology whereby we look upward to God and aspire to rise above Earth in some spiritual quest to be above the material. Rather, we need a *descent* theology whereby we see ourselves settling in the good land, where God can be found to dwell.¹⁸

Because of God’s presence here, everything in life is sacred. That is the Lutheran affirmation. Often we do not see the glory of God in creation. But Luther said that after we have been freed from sinful preoccupation with justifying ourselves, from being curved in on ourselves, we are able to see creation in a whole new way. After we have been liberated by grace from self-centeredness, freed from the need to view all things as commodities for our use, then we are able to see the brightness of God’s presence everywhere. We are able to see creation as it really is, filled with the glory of God. I used to sing the song: “Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. And the things of the earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace.” Now I sing the last line this way: “And the things of the Earth will grow strangely *bright*, in the light of his glory and grace.” And this vision will change us. After describing a hummingbird hovering before him on a porch where he was sitting, Wendell Berry added: “My mind became beautiful by the sight of it.”¹⁹

Environmentalists talk about the re-enchantment of nature. Well enough. But I am talking about the re-sacralizing of nature. As we open our eyes and ears to the sacredness of life, we will love Earth for its own sake and also because it blesses us in communion with God through this deep personal connection with life. Then life is experienced as *communion* – communion with one another, with nature around us, and communion with God.

The affirmation of the sacredness of life reflects Lutheran sacramental theology. The bread and wine of the Eucharist were not just a way to remember Jesus. Nor did the bread and wine need to be transubstantiated or transformed to become the body and blood of Christ. For Luther, Christ is already in, with, and under the material elements in the sacraments of communion and baptism. Lutheran sacramental theology does not imply that God and Christ are present *only* in the sacraments or that *only* the elements in the sacraments are sacramental. The point is this: If we can be assured by Christ’s word that Christ is in, with, and under such ordinary elements as grapes and grain and water, then God is indeed in *every* ordinary thing in life. That makes everything (not Sacraments, but) sacramental. The sacraments confirm the ubiquity of God’s presence, that God is present everywhere. We

need to fulfill the promise of this Lutheran sacramental view in practical terms in our relationship with all of nature. We readily embrace the spiritual dimensions of the sacraments. What if we also focused on our relationship with water and grain and grapes in their own right as well as in their capacity to bear Christ to us?

This theological foundation of the sacraments affirms the goodness and value of the created order. It means we can encounter God anywhere and everywhere in life. God created all things and declared them good. Luther believed that matter mattered, that the material world was good, and that God was present in all of nature. He believed that the finite could bear the infinite, that all parts of creation could bear the reality of God. There is no “God forsaken” place – not even Sheol. There is nothing of life that we should de-value. The creation stories in the Bible, the Psalms, the laws of Israel, and many passages from the prophets and the wisdom literature affirm that God values creation for its own sake. Psalm 104, for example, affirms that God created the trees and the grass and the mountain crags and the rain not for humans but for the birds to nest and the cattle to graze and the goats to have a home and the plants to grow.

The intimate presence of God in creation does not mean that God is to be *equated* with nature and the world. This is not pantheism. The creation is not “divine” by virtue of God’s presence. Creation or nature is not to be worshipped. On the contrary, creation is to worship God. Some Lutheran theologians speak theologically of God’s relation to the world in terms of panentheism (all things “in” God). Others prefer pansyntheism (all things “with” God). But whatever terms we use, our purpose must be this: to find a way to envision God as both immanent in nature and transcendent to nature. This is the paradoxical view that encompasses both realities that defines a Lutheran perspective.

Reverence as Basis for Use

There is more to our change of perception. The insight that all of life is sacramental is critical for our ethical commitments. If all of life is sacramental, then a posture of reverence will be central to our Christian life. All of life should be treated with reverence. Reverence is not a trait we have cultivated in the West. We look at the rest of nature and we see resources to be tapped, materials to be used, places to be exploited, sites to be developed, and opportunities for human enrichment. The rest of life is treated as if it were made up of lifeless things without mystery and devoid of God’s glory – all there for us to use and abuse freely. What if we began with reverence for all things and then made use only of what we needed? What if we treated animals, plants, and land with

respect? Reverence is the right basis for use. If we have the eyes to see God's glory everywhere, then our appreciation for the sanctity of life will lead us to live in ways that are sustainable for all creation.

Joseph Sittler has said that delight is the right basis for use.²⁰ If we delight in something, we will not abuse it or misuse it or neglect it. We might also say, then, that reverence is the right basis for use. Consider the long-standing Native American deep regard for nature where there were (and are) rituals designed to give reverence to the buffalo before there was a buffalo hunt or to a tree before cutting it down for a Sun Dance. We could well adapt that approach to our prayers before meals or for any use that we make of the resources of Earth.

I give a personal example. I was participating in the wedding of my nephew Adam. The wedding was in a Roman Catholic church in Connecticut. Because I was in the service, I sat to the side of the altar. I had a close up view of the priest as he prepared the elements and completed the communion. I was struck by the way in which he handled the elements with such care and reverence. At the end, he slowly drank the remainder of the wine from the chalice, cleaned and dried it with the linen cloth, then took the communion wafers and placed them carefully into the container to be placed back in their place in the sanctuary. Nothing was lost, nothing was wasted, all was treated with the utmost respect. Suddenly, I thought to myself, "Why do we not treat *all* food this way? Why do we not show the same reverence for food at all meals?" And so I began a spiritual practice at meals in which I am careful not to put any more on my plate than I will eat and to eat everything on my plate. Nothing wasted. Nothing lost. And I eat slowly so as to savor and enjoy the food I am eating – all to be treated with gratitude and reverence.

I even changed the blessings I spoke over the food. I used to say things like, "Let this gift to *us* be blessed." Or, "Bless this food to *our* use." Now I pray for the food itself that potatoes and peas and apples and rice may thrive on this Earth and I express gratitude that I am so fortunate to be able to enjoy them – always remembering those who are not so fortunate. I shifted from *my* use of this food to a commitment to the food *itself*, the plants themselves, the animals themselves, and the equitable sharing of all of it. If everything is sacramental, then reverence and care are deeply appropriate.

Worshipping with Creation

Now for another level of relationship with creation. One of the most striking things about the biblical understanding of nature is that all creation is enjoined to worship God. Scripture is downright exuberant about the praise of creation. "May the heavens be glad and the Earth rejoice. Let the fields exalt

and everything in them, let the trees of the forest sing for joy, let the oceans roar and all that is in them" (1 Chron 16:29-34). "Let the fields exalt!" This means, as John Paarlberg says, that "the very soils beneath our feet are, in their own way, choirs of creatures singing their insect hymns, microbial chants, and fungal anthems in praise to the God who made them."²¹ This does not mean that each animal and plant and land and sea have special sounds to do that, although that may be part of it. No, it means that these created things praise God by doing and being what they were created to be and by thriving/relishing in it.

Joseph Sittler has said that when we diminish and degrade the life of forests and fields and seas, we diminish *their* capacity to praise God. We may not only diminish the capacity of Earth to praise God, but also, by degrading creation, we may be diminishing God's capacity to delight in creation: "May the Lord rejoice in all his works" (Pss 104:31). If we have a God who suffers with us, as indeed the crucifixion shows that we do, then we may be increasing God's suffering empathy with Earth by our recklessness and destructive ways. When we delight in creation and care for it, we magnify God's joy at the flourishing of life.

Hence, our solidarity with the rest of creation does not stop with a sense of kinship with creation or even with our reverence for life. We humans are called not just to thank God *for* creation but to praise God *with* creation. Again, this has nothing to do with worshiping creation and everything to do with worshiping as part of creation. Scripture always includes humans among the members of nature who are to praise God. "Let them [all creation] praise the Lord" (Pss 148:13). "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord" (Pss 150:6). Praying and praising with creation changes our fundamental relationship with creation.

In the sixteenth-century Reformation, the key to the transformation in worship was to provide unmediated access to God – no venerated saints, no statues, and no indulgences. Guess what? Today, we are blocking or neglecting access to God in nature by our buildings, by our worship patterns, and by cultural customs that are not earth-friendly. There is little access to God through nature in worship – even an awareness of our own natural bodies worshipping. For twenty centuries, we have spent so much of our liturgy and worship practices focusing on the God-human and human-human relationships that we have neglected the God-creation relationship and the human-creation relationship. The first Reformation put the book of Scripture into the hands of the laity. But Luther also talked about another "book" that revealed God to us, the reality of nature. Our worship provides an opportunity for us to relate to the presence and revelation of God in and through nature. Our most recent Lutheran hymnal does much to incorporate our relationship with nature into

worship. We should make use of this resource to its fullest. At the same, we need to worship in ways that make our worship with creation unmistakable. How can we incorporate creation so fully into our services that it permeates every experience of worship?

I had this vision in a dream during sleep one night over a decade ago.

I was in the front row of a cathedral looking at the scene before me during a service of communion. I saw the priest passing bread to the first person kneeling at the communion rail. As I looked, the next figure at the railing was a snake! It was curled at the bottom with its back arching up over the rail and with its head straining forward to receive the grace of Christ. The next figure was another person. Next was a raccoon with paws up on the communion rail leaning forward to receive the grace of Christ. Then I saw a bird perched on the corner of the communion rail eating bread crumbs.

As I finished surveying this scene in my dream, suddenly the side walls of the cathedral fell away and outside was thick foliage of forest and jungle on both sides with all manner of wild animals roaming around. In this moment, it seemed as if the walls of separation had been removed and there was a seamless web of all creation praising God and exalting in the grace of Christ.

From the time I awoke from that dream until this day, I have never experienced worship in the same way again. I now see Earth as the real sanctuary in which we worship, and I see myself invoking and confessing and giving thanks and praising God and making petitions and offering myself in solidarity with *all of life*. The author of Hebrews says: “Remember [in prayer] those in prison as though you were in prison yourself” (Heb 13:3). Now we can pray for all living things in nature as though we were part of nature ourselves – which indeed we are!

I have a suggestion for how we might frame all worship with creation. Perform four simple liturgical actions in every worship service. First, at the opening, invoke God the creator of all things (name some) and invite the congregation to join the “choir of all creation” in praise of God (naming some, perhaps animals and plants on your church property). Second, in the confession of sins, include at least one statement of our misuse and violation of creation. Third, include at least one petition on behalf of creation in the prayers (be specific and timely). Fourth, include our care-for-creation responsibility in the commission: “Go in peace. Serve the Lord. Remember the poor. Tend the Earth.” All these can be done naturally, with variation and without

fanfare. I am convinced this framework will also lead us to notice the rich tradition of references to creation already in our liturgies, hymns, and lectionary lessons. And it may encourage those preaching to incorporate care for creation in the proclamation with and on behalf of creation.²²

Human Role in Creation

In a new reformation, how do we rethink vocation and discipleship in relationship with creation? If we are to assume our role as agents of God acting according to the image of God, we will seek to avoid destroying creation, seek to restore life where it is threatened, and work to make life flourish in all its forms. This is a Lutheran theology of creation that fosters love for neighbor *and* care for all creation.

So what then is our role as humans in creation? From a biblical point of view, we are to exercise responsibility as servants to creation. In the first creation story, God created all and saw that it was good, and then God created humans to take care of Earth. Humans are given dominion, not authorization for domination (Gen 1:26). We have misinterpreted this word “dominion” to mean that humans have a right to dominate and therefore use, abuse, and exploit the rest of creation for our own use. The command to “subdue” the earth (Gen 1:28) relates to a time when human life was especially fragile in the face of threats from snakes and wild animals. As such, God was giving directions for humans to “subdue,” that is, to be able to restrain that which would bring them harm. The misunderstanding of these terms has had a tragic impact on our common life in the West. It has given us authorization to do just about anything we want to nature, without limits, for human benefit and for human pleasure.

For a contrasting understanding, consider that a ruler who had dominion over Israel would be expected to be a shepherd caring for and protecting those in the realm, not tyrannizing or exploiting but protecting and seeking justice for the vulnerable – the widows and the orphans, the poor and the strangers. As such, “to have dominion over all the creatures” means that humans are agents to care for God’s creation. Biblical examples include resting the animals on the Sabbath (Exod 20:8-10) and mandating that the land should lie fallow every seventh year (Lev 25:1-7). The Noah story also gives a paradigmatic example of the kind of care we are to exercise – making sure species survive and thrive (Gen 7:1-16).

The second creation story tells us *how* we are to exercise that responsibility – not from a position above, but from below and in solidarity with the earth, just as we seek to serve in solidarity with the poor. “The Lord God took the human and put him in the Garden of Eden to till [serve] it and to keep

[protect] it" (Gen 2:15). We now know that "to till and to keep" actually means "to serve and to protect." The word for "till" means "serve" and was used of people who served kings and priests. This mandate completely reverses and upends the misunderstanding of "dominion" as "domination." Instead of being in a hierarchical position "over" Earth, we are placed in a position of subservience so as to use our power to care for the well-being of all that God has created.

To speak of the paradoxical role of servant kings is foundational to the Judeo-Christian tradition. This mandate to serve Earth is reinforced by the teaching of Jesus who says that our whole ethical posture in life is to be one of service: "Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant. Whoever wants to be most important must be everyone's slave. For even the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life ..." (Mark 10:43-45). Although this teaching focuses on relations between humans, it echoes the command "to serve and to protect," thereby equally representing the approach that humans are to take in relation to all of life. Whoever wants to be great among you is to be least of all and servant of all. That word "all" now includes all of Earth-community.

And not only are we to serve, but we are to "keep" or preserve or protect. In a sense, we are all farmers who care for the land so that we preserve it in a sustainable way for future generations. As we are called by Scripture to be our brother's keeper and our sister's keeper, so we are called by Scripture "to keep" earth, to be earth keepers, earth protectors. We are called to help the land fulfill *its* God given role to bring forth plants and animals. In the biblical stories, that is why God created humans in God's image, to care for creation as agents of God so that the land, all plants, and all animals can flourish! In addition, Luther's theology of faith active in love can be extended to such service of creation.

Humans as Co-creators

We are therefore co-creators with God. The problem is we have been un-doing creation. Given our power and impact as a human species, we now have a special responsibility to undo our undoing. In the last centuries in the West, we have been making a mess of the planet. We could now stand to spend a few hundred years cleaning up after ourselves. We have made a difference in destroying Earth. Now we need to make a difference in restoring Earth.

Some say a role of co-creator is too elevated for humans. It reinforces the arrogance we already demonstrate. It may help simply to refer to the human role as agents of God. I prefer to use the term co-creators. There are four caveats that preserve humility in the notion of being co-creators. First, I sup-

pose if we can be destroyers, we can be creators. Given our influence in creation, we surely are affecting the evolution of the planet. Given that we are already co-creating in evolution, we might as well accept this and become responsible about it so as to exercise responsibility for positive change. Unfortunately, the main way we have taken evolution seriously is in the dynamic of species competition and the "survival of the fittest." It is ironic that even those who deny material Darwinism today often embrace social and economic Darwinism – with every human and non-human species left to fend for themselves with a few winners and many losers. Now we have to pick up on other dynamics of evolution if we are to survive, such as cooperation as the basis for survival rather than competition, and such as securing the most vulnerable and the most threatened species as a basis to preserve critical diversity.

Second, we can think of ourselves as co-creators as long as we recognize that we are partners in this co-creation with the land itself. In the creation stories, God commanded the land to "bring forth" vegetation, to bring forth creatures (Gen 1:24). Land itself is a co-creator as agent of God. If we are co-creators, so are the plants and animals. Ecologists agree. If not for soil, no plants. If not for plants, no animals. If not for flowers, no insects. If not for insects, no mammals. If not for small animals, no large animals. If not for trees, no oxygen. If not for trees, no ozone layer to protect life from the sun. And on and on. The Earth brings forth life. In addition, ecologists are recently marveling at the self-organizing capacities of life – the capacity of life to expand and connect in ways that increase the diversity and complexity of life. Life itself has incredibly creative and restorative powers to grow and to adapt to changing conditions. We are called to learn these ways and to work as co-creators *with* creation rather than against it. The Lutheran affirmation that God works through "means of grace" can also support the notion of humans as co-creators.

Third in humility, we need to see how critical the rest of life is for the endurance of our human life. The first rule of ecology is: Everything is connected to everything else. There is a complex and dynamic evolution of these things together and we cannot remove one species in an ecosystem and expect the rest to stay. We humans are playing the building block game where you pile high the blocks and then try to remove one at a time without the whole thing coming down. And humans are not the linchpin here, not the keystone. Beetles are much more critical. No beetles, no life. Trees have done more to create the world than humans. So we are all shaping and influencing. We are authorized by God as co-creators to allow all of creation to fulfill *its* role as co-creating agents of God.

Finally, part of the humility of our role in creation is to have a sense of limits. In our United States culture, we tend not to believe in limits in per-

sonal, social, or economic arenas. “Your world should know no boundaries” says the advertisement for a brokerage firm. “If you put your mind to it, you can do anything,” we say to our children. “We can use up the world’s resources because human ingenuity will come up with something to fix the problems” say the economists. But this is a cultural chimera. Even the Bible knows the sense of limits in our dominion. Adam and Eve were not to eat of the tree in the garden of Eden. Humans are to work six days and stop – with the animals and the land. The Book of Job tells us there are vast areas of creation left untouched by human presence – at least there were.

In this part of the essay, I have devoted an inordinate amount of time and space speaking of God the creator and our role in creation, because this is where our transformation needs to happen. If the new reformation calls for a conversion to Earth, then we need to attend to the changes in thought, perception, and behavior to make this happen. In the end, of course, we really do not know the mysteries of life and we do not know the nature of God. Much is hidden from us. And much is unknown. Nevertheless, we have glimpses. And these glimpses give us the trust that God is with us active with grace that bends toward love and justice.

The Second Article: Redemption as New Creation

In his catechetical reflections on the second article, Luther affirms that “Jesus is true God and true man who through his sufferings and death has freed me from sin to live in his kingdom.” For this new reformation, we suggest that redemption should encompass not only the individual but also the restoration and fulfillment of all creation. Redemption is ongoing creation and re-creation. It is new creation. All of a piece. So it is integral to God’s activity to engage in work that offers not only personal salvation but also redeems communities, nations, and the rest of nature.

Redemption is Incarnation

Again, this redemptive work is incarnational. John tells us: “The Word became flesh” – an amazing statement. This is the Word that was active in creation. Nothing was created that was not created through the Word. And, in John’s view, creation therefore attests to Christ – light, water, wine, bread, vines and branches, gates, ways, and shepherds. Again, created things (created by the divine) become vehicles for the divine. The critical point about incarnation for the new reformation is that it shows that the movement of God is toward en-fleshment. God moves toward embodiment. This places an enor-

mous affirmation on being human. Some theologies say: God became human so humans can become divine. That is not the thrust of biblical or Lutheran theology. Lutheran theology says: God became human so that humans could be freed to be the human beings we were created to be. God moves toward Earth and affirms creation. The Bible affirms the resurrection of the *body*. The Bible envisions that Jesus will return and that God will dwell in the midst of God’s people in the new Jerusalem. From creation to redemption to fulfillment, it is a matter of God manifesting and emerging in creation, not taking people out of creation.

With regard to incarnation, it is important to emphasize the full humanity of Jesus. In today’s world, this means seeing Jesus as a human being rooted in and dependent on Earth just as much as any other human being. We have stories in the Bible about Jesus coming down from heaven and Jesus being born of a virgin. The creeds affirm that Jesus was fully divine. However, these stories do not obviate the fact that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was born of a woman. From our modern biological point of view, here is the primary christological affirmation for the new reformation: *Jesus was a mammal*. He was a higher primate. He was in the gene pool. Just like all humans. This ringing affirmation speaks volumes about the nature of Jesus’ ministry and mission and about the potential for life on this planet. If Jesus was fully human in this sense, then Jesus was God en-fleshed in solidarity not only with humans but by extension also with all other creatures and inanimate parts of creation upon which humans are dependent. If he depended on air, water, plants, climate, terrain, soil, sun, and moon, as all humans do, then Jesus was indeed related to all of life, not just to other humans. To say that Jesus was a mammal is perhaps the theological test in our time of the claim that Jesus was fully human. With this affirmation as a starting point, our understanding of God and Jesus changes, broadens, deepens, and is transformed.

Now we can see in a new way what Jesus did. For example, we can see more clearly that the kingdom Jesus inaugurated was not an escape from this world or a kingdom for another world. Rather, it was redemptive of this life. The kingdom of God has arrived *here!* In his prayer, Jesus prays that the kingdom come on Earth. And it was redemption for humans and for the whole creation as well. When Jesus announces that the kingdom of God had arrived, we see restoration of life – the sick healed, sinners forgiven, demoniacs freed of possession, the lame walking, the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, and the poor receiving good news preached to them. The kingdom of God also includes the capacity for Jesus to lie down with the wild animals without fear, to calm a threatening storm, and to bring forth food in the desert. As such, Jesus is inaugurating and foreshadowing the restoration of all creation. Furthermore, in Revelation, the image of the future when the kingdom will arrive

fully is an image of trees bearing fruit throughout the year, water crystal clear and abundantly available to all without cost, and leaves of the trees a healing for the nations (Rev 21). All of this depicts redemption as the restoration of all creation – indeed, “new creation” (Gal 6:16).

Jesus’ life was devoted to restoring creation. In Jesus’ view, God not only counts the number of hairs on our head (Matt 10:30); God also knows the fall of every sparrow. Does not this give us a glimpse through a tiny window into God’s infinite love for all things in life? Can we not incorporate this love of God for all creation into our understanding of the kingdom Jesus was inaugurating?

Not just Jesus’ life and message but also his death was for the restoration of all creation. We have so individualized the meaning of the cross that we have lost its larger vision. “Jesus died for my sins to be forgiven” is a common statement of faith. But if that is all that we affirm about Jesus’ death we have missed its full power. Consider what the author of Colossians writes: “For in him all the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself *all things, whether on earth or in heaven*, by making peace through the blood of his cross” (Col 1:19-20). God is concerned with more than individuals. Jesus’ death breaks down the dividing wall of hostility between peoples and nations (Eph 2:14). Jesus’ death brings reconciliation – peace and justice – among all things in the whole creation. This is the biblical vision we Lutherans need to embrace in our time. As Joseph Sittler argued, only then will our image of God as a God of the universe and our image of Jesus as the *cosmic Christ* of the universe be large enough to address the size of the problems we face.²³

Larry Rasmussen tells the story of a congregation in Africa that has the following call and response. The leader says: “What did we used to believe?” And the people say, “That Jesus died for our sins!” “And what do we believe now?” the leader continues. And the people say, “That Jesus died for all creation!” This is the ringing acclamation from the biblical materials that we need to make so that we can rise to the challenges of our time. We need this affirmation to see that God and Jesus are committed to *this* life, that they seek to reconcile all of life, and that they call us to live in ways that restore rather than destroy this creation. If God is in all things “working for good,” then we ought to be doing that also. Rather than doing what *we* want to do and asking God to bless it, we should be seeking what in the world *God* is doing and asking how we can be agents of God’s ongoing creative and redemptive activity.

Securing the Well-Being of the Most Vulnerable

The kingdom announced by Jesus was about restoring the vulnerable in society – sick, demon possessed, lepers, the unclean, sinners, women, outcasts, poor,

and oppressed. The premise of this kingdom work in restoring Israel is that the way to secure the well-being of a society is to welcome and care for the vulnerable and the marginalized. Our theology of the cross reinforces that commitment by showing Jesus and God-in-Jesus identifying in solidarity with society’s outcasts: “He was numbered among transgressors” (Luke 22:37). Now we need to expand this circle of compassion to see that we also care for the most vulnerable in nature – endangered animals, threatened ecosystems, loss of plant diversity. We now know that what may appear to us to be insignificant members of an ecosystem may be the critical member that holds the ecosystem together and on which other species depend. This is a comprehensive creation-care approach to the kingdom of God. Whether human communities or ecosystems, securing the life of the most vulnerable members is not only the way of Jesus; it is the way to secure the whole – society and ecosystem alike.

A theology of the cross prevents us from having a romantic view of nature. Nature can be overwhelmingly violent and destructive. Ernest Becker has called Earth one large-scale “compost heap” from all the gnawing and defecation, the rotting and decaying, the death and destruction that has taken place in nature on a massive scale since the onset of life.²⁴ Nevertheless, our affirmation is this: If God is fully present in such an awful and violent reality as the crucifixion, then God is present and in solidarity in everything that exists, no matter what. We do not need to deny the violent and destructive parts of nature. God is everywhere and in all things seeking redemption and reconciliation.

Justification by Grace in the New Reformation

Justification by grace is at the core of our identity as Lutherans. In the context of our twenty-first century world, justification becomes foundational for our actions in support of Earth.²⁵ Lutherans have tended in the past to think of salvation mainly in terms of the forgiveness of sins. But Luther himself, in the Small Catechism, wrote of a more encompassing redemption as “the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.” Also, biblical and theological studies of justification in the past generation, sparked by the Lutheran biblical scholar and bishop, Krister Stendahl, have helped to distinguish justification from forgiveness as different models of redemption.²⁶

In the justification model, Luther defines sin as being curved in upon ourselves in bondage to religious and cultural standards that we seek to meet in order to justify ourselves. Justification by *grace* means that we have been set right with God by grace apart from our efforts to meet such laws and standards. Hence, justification by grace is quite radical in approach. Justification by grace accomplishes two things: God by-passes and disempowers standards as a basis for justifying us, and it frees us from our project to justify ourselves.

First, by grace, law is eliminated as a basis for justifying ourselves before God (Gal 3:23-4:7). When Paul talks about a fall from grace, he is not talking about falling into some sinful binge or out of favor with people. Rather, he is talking about reverting to living by law as means to justify ourselves (Gal 5:4). By so doing, we “drop out of grace.” By removing law as a basis for justification, God is not simply removing religious law (in Paul’s case, the Torah and, in Luther’s case, canon law). God is removing all the social, economic, and cultural standards by which societies seek to define people and by which people seek to justify themselves, including, for example, the capital market system of economic achievement. Freely-given grace undercuts and disempowers the systems that bind us, systems that demand allegiance, exclude, oppress, and marginalize – and that lead us to dominate and exploit other people and Earth.

Second, by rendering such systems powerless over us, justification by grace liberates me from my project to justify myself. Here sin is understood as bondage (Gal 4:8-11). As long as we engage in a project to justify ourselves, we are curved in upon ourselves. When we are trying to justify ourselves, it is always about *us*. That is true not only of individuals but also of systems. Larry Rasmussen has suggested that humanity as a whole is curved in upon itself as it uses and misuses Earth in the project to dominate and justify.²⁷

However, when the need to justify ourselves and our nation or culture is removed, we no longer need to act out of self-interest. If we are trying to justify ourselves, we love others in so far as they help us in our project to justify ourselves (Gal 6:13).²⁸ If we are already justified by grace, we have no project to do. So we can love others not for our sake, but for their sake. This is how God generates true love and justice that is not based on self-interest. Based on this same freedom, we are also enabled to take the altruistic actions now needed to serve creation.

Once we are justified by grace, everything has to do with relationships. When justification by grace frees us from laws and standards, we are thrown into relationships of love and grace. Justification does not leave us simply with a favorable verdict, as if the main outcome of justification is that God has a favorable *attitude* of acceptance toward us. It is more than that. Justification is the onset of an intimate relationship. God relates to us by becoming *accessible* to us, and we are liberated to receive it in relationship. God reconciles us to the reality of God, such that we experience grace in an ongoing way. And once we are set in this right relationship with God, then we are set right with ourselves, with others, and with all of creation. Luther saw this in spades. Once we are justified freely by grace, we are freed to live for our neighbor, freed to be a productive citizen, and, now, freed to care for creation.

What does all this remarkable freedom from laws and rules mean for our experience of Earth? Once we are freed from the systems that bind us, we have

an open future. There is “new creation!” (Gal 1:4; 6:15). New creation is apocalyptic, not in the sense of the end of the world but in the sense of the end of our way of being in the world and the onset of another way. As Paul says, “... the world has been crucified to me and I to the world” (Gal 6:13). And he adds, “The only thing that matters is new creation.” We are freed to experience the world as new creation. We are freed to address new circumstances, freed to imagine, freed to live for a new world.

Paul makes this connection between redemption and a new world even more explicit in his second letter to the Corinthians: “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Everything old has passed away. Behold, everything has become new” (2 Cor 5:17). This is an astounding statement. For any who are in Christ, *all of creation is new*. The old has passed away. God has made all things new. The whole of the New Testament and Christianity can be seen through the lens of this passage. It is time to claim this affirmation as a clarion call to re-form our church to its possibilities for our day. It is time to reclaim justification in our time and to build on the creation traditions in the Bible and in our Lutheran heritage as means to bring our church into a new age. It is time for creation to be new for us!

Our Human Vocation

As we have said, in this new creation, we are liberated from principalities and powers and we are freed for relationships: new relationships with God, with ourselves, with others, and now with all of nature. What kinds of relationships of love and grace can emerge in our relationship with Earth community?

This new life is spoken of not in terms of living by laws and standards but in terms of vocation. Vocation is God’s call and our response and responsibility. We are freed from a religious vocation to please God and freed for a human calling to love and serve others. In our time, that vocation encompasses a call to care for creation. Justification frees us to recover our “original vocation” – namely, to serve and to protect the Earth (Gen 2:15). We often speak of an “original blessing” that affirms our original goodness as human beings. Now we need to embrace our “original vocation” as earth-keepers, as servants of creation. Christ has redeemed us so that we can join Earth community in restoring creation.

Joseph Sittler once remarked that our most fundamental vocation is not the vocation of a career or a vocation to be a minister or even our vocation to be a Christian. Rather, the true vocation is our “human vocation,” a call to embrace our human vocation to care for our neighbor to care for Earth. Justification frees us for this human vocation. We are freed to be the human beings we were created to be: look after family, be a good citizen, love the neighbor,

take special care for the poor – and care for creation. We have choices every day to love and serve not only our neighbor but also to love and serve Earth.

This human vocation as earth-keepers is a communal vocation as church. The church is rooted in the proclamation of the Word and in the sacraments of baptism and holy communion, because these are the means of grace – the rituals that assure us that we will be rooted in God's grace in all our human efforts. As we have indicated, the Word and sacraments keep us close to earth and God's creation through the ordinary elements of Earth as means of grace.

Rooted in grace, we live for others out of grace and gratitude. In this sense, the church exists not for its own sake but for the sake of the world. Earthkeeping is what the Church is called to do in public ministry both as individuals in our homes and in our congregations as Earth healers. The Lutheran church has always been committed to caring for the poor and the elderly, the sick and those who are mentally ill, the strangers and the marginalized, the poor and the oppressed and people of color subject to racism, people with disabilities and people who are victims of disaster, and, especially, the hungry. Think about the extent of our remarkable legacy of care for the vulnerable people of the world. Now we are challenged to widen the circle and deepen the arena to encompass the vulnerable species of animals and plants and eco-systems. This leads us to re-see all of our commitments as a commitment to the vulnerable of *Earth community*.²⁹ Earth is not one more item or cause on a list of critical concerns. Rather, Earth is the matrix in which all of these concerns are embedded. Earth is the matrix of risk as well as life and salvation.

Two Kingdoms and More

In traditional Lutheranism, our human vocation is played out in two arenas: the kingdom related to the church and the kingdom related to civil society, including both political and economic structures and activities. These identify both the spheres of God's activity as well as the arenas of our human response and responsibility. If the church exists for the sake of the world, we understand this to include all creation. So we need to multiply these kingdoms to include the animal kingdom, the plant kingdom, and the mineral kingdom. These also are spheres of God's activity and arenas of our response and responsibility. This does not mean that they are separate arenas and that care for creation is an addition to our vocation and our stewardship. Rather, the kingdom of God's whole creation is the encompassing orbit within which we carry out our vocation in all these kingdoms – regions of reality that interweave and overlap in one seamless web of creation. And we do so as servants and agents of the cross, whereby we are in solidarity with the least and most vulnerable human and other-kind in creation.

The Ethics and Discipleship of our Human Vocation

Because we are justified by grace, our ethic is based on freedom from laws and rules that bind and enslave and that limit our capacity to respond to new circumstances. While guided by Scripture and wisdom, ours is a radical situational ethic based on relationships of love and grace that are driven by God's relationship of love for us. We can see this in Paul. We can see this in Luther, for example, in his *Freedom of the Christian*, as well as in his catechisms where he focuses at the *spirit* of the commandments. This freedom liberates us to address new problems and changing circumstances in God's world. We are not limited to playing Bibleland. In fact, the biblical writers themselves created new ethics and new theologies as they faced new audiences and social situations and new circumstances. The Bible authorizes us to do the same. This is also what Luther did in his time. So we do not need to play "Reformationland." The way to be faithful to the Bible and to Luther is to relate ethical commitments of love to new situations – in the tension between being faithful to our tradition and at the same time open to what we learn about God's world today and what we can seek to discern that God is doing in the world – so that we can address God's world *in our time*. We are authorized to do this. So we are liberated to address new and complex problems, including the environmental state of the world. We do so not as ones who dominate and exploit but as servants to our human and other-kind neighbors. And we do so with love and with grace.

The ethics of the new reformation sees social justice and ecological commitment as one. We need to speak of *Earth community*, encompassing all of life as a unified whole – human and other creatures, plants, rocks, water, and air. We cannot separate human justice and Earth justice. Our commitment to social justice is doubled by the realization that there is no human justice without clear air and clean water, food for all, and the possibility of an intimate, nurturing relationship with nature. Wars often involve conflict over natural resources, wars often involve the fight over limited territory for ethnic communities, and wars always involve destruction of the natural order. Human justice *is* Earth care, because humans are integral to Earth. The so-called "environment" is not just a backdrop or a setting in which justice or injustice takes places. The environment, whether human-made or fully natural, is all part of the evolutionary context in which peace and justice play themselves out.

The social justice movement and the environmental movement sometimes have been separate and sometimes at odds with each other. James Cone, the well-known originator of Black Theology, has noted that there is a common view by environmentalists that "Blacks don't care about the environment", and, at the same time, there is a common view among social justice advocates that "White people care more about the endangered whale and the

spotted owl than they do about the survival of young blacks in our nation's cities." The truth is, Cone concludes, *we need each other* because we "are fighting the same enemy – human beings' domination of each other and nature."³⁰

Brazilian theologian, Leonardo Boff, has made the same argument: "Liberation theology and ecological discourse have something in common.... Both discourses have as their starting point a cry: The cry of the poor for life, freedom, and beauty (cf. Exod 3:7) and the cry of the earth (cf. Rom 8:22-23). Both seek liberation of the poor... and a liberation of the Earth."³¹ In an effort to see the movements as one, people often speak in terms of ecological justice (or eco-justice), namely, the interrelated and integrated quest for justice for all Earth-community.

Again, an eco-justice ethic involves a radical solidarity with the least. Justification begins by leveling the playing field in principle and at the same time liberating people from self-orientation to make it so in actuality by caring for the poor and the vulnerable – not from a position of hierarchy but of mutuality and solidarity with the weakest members! This was true of Paul in Antioch (Gal 2:11-12), in Galatia (Gal 5:7-12), in Corinth (1Cor 11:17-34), and in Rome (Rom 14:1-23). He always sided with the weaker members who were being disregarded or dominated by others. This was true also of Luther and his commitment to care for impoverished neighbors. And it is true of our history as Lutherans. Just look at the institutions we support: homes for the aged, orphanages, immigrant services, Lutheran World Relief, disaster relief, hospitals, adoption and counseling services, the anti-hunger initiative, and on and on.

As such, in our quest for eco-justice, we note the need to extend this commitment to vulnerable Earth. We know that the two-thirds world countries suffer the most from ecological degradation, and they have the fewest resources to cope with the consequences. We know that when ecological disasters strike, such as hurricane Katrina, those most vulnerable are affected the most – the elderly, the sick, the poor, people of color. Environmental racism is the discrimination made against people of color when it comes to ecological risk, whether it is factories that emit air pollution or the dumping of toxic waste or compromises about clean water. In every case of racial and class injustice, ecology is a factor.³² We know now that the very *lack* of contact with the natural world, such as in inner city neighborhoods, has dire consequences. We also know the tragic parallels between the oppression of women and the degradation of Earth that have led dominant cultures to exploitation and degradation of "nature".³³

Exploitation of human beings usually goes hand in hand with exploitation of land, water, and air.³⁴ Those who despoil the land often also exploit the workers. Those who pollute the land and water with pesticides and herbicides

most often also place those who work for them at risk of health. Those who strip-mine and strip forests put workers at risk and lower the quality of life in those geographical areas. Consider the differences between standard commercial coffee and fair trade coffee. Most coffee is produced by a system in which the coffee plants have been grown on plantations in the global South where the land is stripped, crops are made to grow by toxic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides; the workers (often including children) are paid below-standard wages; they are subjected to long hours in the sun and exposure to toxins; and there are about five middle-people who get most of the profits. By contrast, fair-trade, organic, shade-grown coffee is produced under very different conditions: trees and shrubs are preserved on the land and their foliage serves as fertilizer; the workers are in a cooperative; they are paid a living wage and work under healthy conditions; and there are few middle-people. The production of most coffee is a common example of exploitation both of the poor and of the Earth. The fair-trade alternative is humane to people and sustainable for nature. We need "fair trade everything"!

Giving Voice to Nature

How can we give voice to the most vulnerable? We do poorly giving the most vulnerable humans a voice in decision-making and in law and policy development. They simply do not have a say in decisions that greatly affect their lives. Because there are no animals or plants to speak and protest with their own voices, they tend to disappear from the process when decisions are made affecting their life and well-being. Therefore, we need to figure out how to give voice to animals, plants, minerals, and the ecosystem. This goes to animal rights and the responsibility to give trees legal standing, and to protect the soil, the air and the waterways from being despoiled. So who will speak for creation? If it is indeed true that "not one sparrow is forgotten in God's sight" (Luke 12:6), who will speak for the sparrow?³⁵

How do we give voice to other-kind? Even talk about our concern for the "environment" is anthropocentric. The question is: whose environment? From the point of view of other-kind, *we* are part of *their* environment, the environment of animals and plants – and generally we are not a healthy or productive environment for them. Environmental assessments are critical and indispensable. Such assessments explain the potential impact that our decisions will make on the natural world. But how can we make it personal? How can we get their voice?

Several years ago, I taught a course on "Greening Your Congregation." We used an environmental case study book by James Martin-Schramm.³⁶ He had case studies about all kinds of ecological dilemmas, from deforestation to

blocking salmon runs to putting a Walmart store on a wetlands area. In preparation for each class, we assigned people voices from the case story under consideration – a company representative, a local merchant, a city council member, someone whose job would be affected, an environmentalist, and so on. And we *also* assigned students to be voices for the natural world – animals and plants in the wetlands, the wetlands itself as an eco-system, the soil that would be degraded, the salmon struggling to spawn upstream, the trees in the decimated forest. Even though we were using our human voices to speak for these natural phenomena, it made an enormous difference to do it this way. The process made it profoundly personal to hear from the salmon and the salamanders and the aspen trees depicting, often with great emotion, the impact our decisions would have upon them. Perhaps in all of our decisions we need to do an environmental assessment that hears the personal “cry of the Earth” by speaking on behalf of all living and non-living things affected by what we do.

If we do not do Earth-justice, we will never adequately be doing human justice. Clearly we are about human justice. That is our priority. But if we think purely from self-interest, the problem is this. If we care about the rest of creation *only* for the sake of human justice and survival, it may not work. We may need to do what needs to be done for nature *in its own right* to ensure human survival. Only if we love creation for its own sake, only if we love animals and plants and land and air and water for their own sake, and want them to survive for their sake, will we adequately do what needs to be done also to assure *human* justice and survival. All creation is in this together. If we are interested in Earth justice *only* for human justice, we may not get human justice. That is why our justice work is rooted in justification. It is our redemption through justification by grace that frees us from being turned in upon ourselves and empowers us for the altruism necessary to love creation for its own sake.

The Third Article:

The Holy Spirit Sustains and Sanctifies Creation

In his small catechism, Luther says that “the Holy Spirit calls us, enlightens us with his gifts, sanctifies and preserves us in true faith.” For a new reformation in an Ecozoic Age, we Christians can broaden the work of the Holy Spirit to encompass all creation and to inspire our care for creation. Theologically, then, the Holy Spirit is the giver, sustainer, and sanctifier of life. How much more ecological can this be – the Holy Spirit bringing about a renewed and sustained and sacred Earth?

The Spirit Gives and Renews Life

In one sense, the Spirit is the ongoing expression of grace for the Christian life. It is the ongoing expression of justification in relationship. As we have argued, justification is the onset of an intimate relationship. It is reconciliation with the reality of God, such that God’s grace represents God’s self-giving in grace in an ongoing way. In a sense, the creative activity of the Spirit provides continuity between the giftedness of creation and the giftedness of God’s very self. It is the Spirit that inspires and empowers us to love creation as God does.

The Spirit provides the ongoing urge that renews and sustains life in general. I once asked Joseph Sittler if he thought he could identify evidence for the existence of God. He replied that there certainly was no direct evidence. Then he added, “Recently when the Three Mile Island nuclear plant leaked radiation that completely destroyed life around the nuclear plant, several days later there were flowers blooming right next to the facility!” *That*, he said, represents the implicit urge to life that underlies all things.” We can add that this is the urge underlying life that impels the great diversity of plants and animals to emerge and to organize into greater and greater complex fields of being. I believe we can name this urge to life as the work of the Holy Spirit renewing and sustaining life, all of life.

Furthermore, in this process, the Spirit creates communion and community in diversity. We see this most clearly in the human community. In Acts, the Spirit is given to people of all nations, and they hear the mighty acts of God in their own languages, honoring differences and bridging differences to create unity without conformity (Acts 2:5-11). This reflects the entire movement outward of early Christianity to embrace the incredible diversity of ethnic groups and cultures that spread across the Mediterranean Sea, as Revelation puts it, from “every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev 5:9). It is the Holy Spirit coming upon the gentiles that leads early Christians to embrace them and discover unity with them (e.g., Acts 10:44-48 and Gal 3:1-5). As such, the Spirit pushes outward to encompass greater diversity, including the diversity of creation.

In the New Testament, the Spirit is given to the community as a whole; individuals experience the Spirit by virtue of being part of the community; and all have gifts that contribute to the well-being of the whole (1 Cor 12:1-31). This is similar to the way a sustainable ecosystem works. Just so, the Holy Spirit works in creation to guide humans to see our place in Earth-community so that we recognize the human gifts and the human limitations to cooperate together with the rest of creation so as to be sustainable *as* creation. In this way, it is the *communion* of the Holy Spirit that secures the relationship with all creation as a communion of life. In the new reformation, might we not

understand that the Spirit is present to all creatures? In this regard, might we not explore the idea that a widened view of Earth community may involve a notion of the “priesthood of all creatures”?

In term of our human participation in this Earth community, the Spirit is seeking to sanctify us, make us holy, and in so doing lead us to treat all living things as holy, as sanctified. In our relationship with all living things – indeed our priesthood in relation to nature – we will do well if we are guided by the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22). With respect for life, we can be guided by Paul’s dictum in the hymn to love: “Love does not insist on its own way” (1 Cor 13:5).

Walking by the Spirit

In response to the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, we can also bear the spiritual witness as Earth partners in our daily lives. We in the global North can act in solidarity with those who are less fortunate and who use fewer resources. We can recognize, for example, that our living spaces are connected directly to virtually every ecological issue we face. Consider your home: the emissions from furnaces; the food that has been transported from a distance; beef production which contributes more to global warming than do automobiles; the gas and oil in the car in the driveway; the water that comes in and goes out of the house; paper for office and household use; the cleaning products that enter the waste stream; the pesticides and herbicides used on lawn and garden that leech into the watershed; electricity from power plants; the wood and leather in the products purchased; the garbage that goes into landfills; and on and on. We are connected every day to the ecological problems plaguing our world. We can make choices every day that have an impact for good or ill on the well-being of God’s Earth. We can work to restore creation in our own homes!

And we can see this as a spiritual discipline, as integral to the process of becoming holy – deepening sanctification as a response to the work of the Holy Spirit among us and in all creation. We have difficulty connecting Spirit to such Earthcare. Several years ago, I taught a class on “The Future of Creation.” I asked the students to do an exercise in spiritual discipline by finding and practicing as many ways as they could to conserve water in their daily lives. The next week, I asked them to report how it went. Some of them shared a few things they had done, but there was not much enthusiasm for it. I asked, “Why?” The problem, they said, was that “we could not think of conserving water as a spiritual discipline.” I asked them, “What in your minds constitutes a spiritual discipline?” And they said, “Things like prayer, meditation, Bible reading, worshiping, reflection, talking to a friend.” So for them

the Spirit was not related to the material. They had difficulty seeing “earthly things” like conserving water as a spiritual discipline. They did not expect to encounter God in caring for the water they used. In subtle ways, they had equated spiritual with ethereal rather than with tangible things around them. But if the whole Earth is filled with God’s glory, our tender loving kindness toward the things of nature that we use on a daily basis can be a source of deep spiritual renewal. These are holy acts. Our incarnational theology helps us to overcoming this dualism of spirit and matter.

This problem is connected with what we described earlier as the opportunity to treat life as sacramental, to show reverence, to exercise restraint and limitation, not to take the world around us for granted. A fellow pastor told me a story about an occasion when he served Native Americans who lived on an impoverished reservation. He went into the desert and visited a family in their humble home. It was hot, and before he left, he asked for a glass of water. He took the glass to the faucet, turned it on and let it run until it got cool, filled the glass, let the water run while he was drinking and then rinsed the glass out, put it down and turned off the faucet. When he turned back from the sink, he saw horrified faces. In less than two minutes, he had used up their family’s ration of water for the entire week. If this morning you took a shower, washed your hair, brushed your teeth, letting the water run, washed the breakfast dishes, and flushed the toilet a few times, it is estimated that you used more than forty-five gallons of water! This calls for spiritual discipline in the care with which we use the resources at our disposal every day.

What if we learned to express reverence intimately for all the things we see and use? And what if we Christians brought these commitments to labor – work places, factories, farms, businesses, organizations, corporations – with which we are affiliated? What if we collectively advocated for Earth-friendly laws and policies in the public realm? What if we in the global North saw it as a spiritual discipline to advocate for changes in systems of politics and policies of corporations that serve to exploit people and nature throughout the world? What if we participated in hands-on efforts to restore degraded habitats? What if it became part of our collective consciousness to avoid certain behaviors and embrace others – simply as part of our life together? Our mission engagement with the world must include the deliberate engineering of salient eco-ethics and radical changes of lifestyle, the commitments and the sacrifices – the new ways of living needed – for a just and sustainable world.

The Spirit as the Source of our Life

The Spirit is the source of our love for creation. We need to ask: What will motivate us for this labor of love? What will sustain us for the duration? Will

we be motivated by fear? We have reason to be afraid, but fear would not sustain us for long and it certainly will not motivate others. Will we be motivated by guilt or shame? These emotions might lead us to realize our culpability and make some changes, but, again, these would not sustain us for the long haul. We certainly may be motivated by anger and outrage at how much wanton destruction is happening and how little is being done, especially at the corporate and governmental levels. But anger will exhaust us before long and throw us into bitterness and resentment. What about grief at the loss of life as we have known it? Again, this is an appropriate response but certainly not life-sustaining. We may see all these emotions as alarm systems – fear, guilt, shame, anger, grief – all as appropriate signals in a warning system that alerts us that something is very wrong, but not good grounds for making wise decisions or for providing the nurture needed to sustain us.

In the end, we discover the answer with the very God of creation who impels our mission. What can sustain the whole of creation is the presence of the Holy Spirit in all of life. Gerard Manley Hopkins referred to this presence as the “dearest freshness deep down things.”³⁷ Wendell Berry names it “that fund of grace out by which alone we live.”³⁸ This reservoir of God’s presence and grace, God’s love for all creation does not quit. And it does nothing but generate more love and grace in life. This is the stream of life that empowers and sustains us for a new reformation.

Eschatology: The Fulfillment of Creation

Just as Christians have often reconceived our “stories of origin” in light of what we know about our evolving universe, so also we need now to reconceive our “stories of fulfillment” to reflect what we know about our modern world.

Just as we have learned much from the biblical “stories of origin” in Genesis and other passages of the Bible, so also we can learn much from the biblical scenarios of fulfillment. Just as we do not take the creation stories as scientific description, so also we may consider not taking literally the first-century beliefs about Jesus returning on the clouds of heaven or the idea of judgment as a single final event. Either way, we can learn an enormous amount about God’s vision for creation from these hopes and promises that transformed and inspired the early Christians – the expectation of a Christ who returns *here* to redeem Earth; the hope of all things in heaven and on earth being reconciled in communion; the vision of everything in heaven, on earth, and under the earth praising God in a stirring choir of creation; the image of a renewed heaven and a renewed Earth with peace and justice for the poor and oppressed, every tear wiped away; and a portrait of the Holy City of Jerusalem in which water and the fruits of the earth are in abundance to sustain everyone.

Envisioning a New Creation

The key to eschatology is that we use our imagination to conceive a world of peace and justice in creation. To imagine is to envision. If we cannot envision, we just go through the day accepting what is given us. Or we think that creating a sustainable world is a matter of tweaking what we already have, without boldly seeing and seeking a new world, a new creation.³⁹ Imagine a world in which all energy was renewable energy provided freely by the universe. Imagine the soil and forests restored to sing God’s praises, native plants cultivated everywhere to feed humanity equitably, fresh water rationed so that there was enough for all, the air pure, the water clean, and the land renewed. Imagine a world in which work is safe and meaningful and productive. We can imagine laws and policies and systems in place to foster and promote such a world. And people giving reverence to life and enjoying its beauty and its usefulness as gifts – all of life thriving in harmony. The world would be our sanctuary and God our companion. This is rapture in reverse. Instead of God taking people out of the world, God pitches a tent here, dwelling among us. This would be the ethos of our life together.

Now imagine your congregation as a healing center for creation. Anyone coming to your congregation would instantly see – native trees and shrubs and grass and flowers all around drawing birds and insects and small mammals, a garden and an orchard, a worm compost pile, rain gardens in several places, a meditation area, a gravel parking area, solar panels and a wind turbine, solar-powered outside lights and signage, a bicycle rack, the inside filled with plants that clean the air and give natural beauty to the place, natural light available everywhere, energy saving lights in every outlet, motion sensitive lights in the bathrooms, no-flush urinals, fresh fruit and home baked goods for the coffee hour with fair trade coffee and ceramic cups and plates and cloth napkins, sign-up sheets for habitat restoration projects, plants in the sanctuary and an aquarium, art depicting local scenes of nature, a banner declaring “The whole earth is filled with God’s glory,” a worship invitation to praise God with all creation, local wine for communion, local flowers on the altar, green cleaning products for the communion plates and cups, and many other things not visible, such as insulation, energy-saving windows, green cleaning products, the absence of herbicides and pesticides, and a high efficiency furnace. We could go on. We need such flagship congregations living out a dramatic vision as means to enable us to be prophetic and pioneering.

Now with these visions in mind, we should take bold steps to make this a reality *now!* If there is to be a new reformation of our church, we need to be persistent in our determination, pervasive in our efforts, and comprehensive in our vision. We need to talk about this, preach about this, plan about this, and demonstrate it to ourselves and to the world. It needs to be part of our

identity, our life together, and our mission, pervading the ethos of our community and our world. And we need to do it unilaterally without waiting for the world to go along first.

In this process, we would see our church property and our yards as little Earth communities. We would name and know the trees and shrubs and flowers and grasses. We would become familiar the birds and insects and small mammals and rodents that share our space. We would see the sacredness of our place. I recently attended a communion service outside. The presiders invited us to remove shoes and socks and feel holy ground beneath us. They invited us to embrace the trees as part of the sign of peace we share with each other – to wish them “peace” and to say “thank you for all that you do for us.” When communion ended, they scattered the leftover bread across the lawn and poured out the leftover wine, saying, “We return you to the Earth from where you came, with gratitude and love” – in effect offering bread and wine to the land. With such worship every week, we would be transformed to live this vision of care and love for God’s beloved creation.

Facing the End of the World

What do we do with apocalyptic expectations of the New Testament? Most early Christians believed that the end of the world as they knew it was imminent and that soon Christ would return for final judgment and salvation. Perhaps, instead of thinking of apocalyptic expectations as otherworldly and irrelevant to our time, we can see it as analogous to our situation. We too are facing a possible end of the world as we humans know it because of drastic changes that may take place in the earth’s environment. Parallels between New Testament apocalyptic expectations and the crises of our own time become obvious and may require of us a radical response.

In the face of a vision of a new world before them, the early Christians did not abandon the present age, nor did they (like we may) expect God to come and clean up their mess. On the contrary, they prepared for the salvation of the new age as a means to enjoy the full blessings of God in the present and as a means to avoid God’s judgment. We are in a similar position. On the one hand, if we are not able to repent and change our destruction of the very ecosystems that sustain human life, the consequences will be a judgment upon us. On the other hand, if we are able to repent, open ourselves to the grace and peace of God, and respond by creating a sustainable life together for future generations on Earth, the results will constitute a transformation that in some sense would represent salvation for all creation.

So, how did the early Christians act in the face of their expectation of the possible end of the world? What can we learn from them? Here are several

characteristic behaviors of some early Christians that were shaped by their expectation of the end of the world.

There was a sweeping global *vision* of what God was doing in the world in raising Jesus from the dead and sending the Holy Spirit to spread holiness and joy throughout the world of nations and nature as new creation.

There was a deep and urgent sense of *mission* to call individuals and nations to repent and change behavior, illustrated by the life of the Apostle Paul and the mission charges in the Gospels (Mark 13:10; Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:47).

Like Jesus, the early Christians were *truth-tellers*. They fearlessly confronted the destructive powers-that-be and challenged their idolatry and hypocrisy, risking loss, persecution, and death. They also made penetrating analyses both of themselves and of their own culture (such as the Sermon on the Mount and the Letter of James), not just in terms of obvious evil, but also in terms of the dark side of goodness and compromises – transforming and replacing these dynamics with life-giving actions and stories.

Like Jesus, they did *prophetic acts*. In a sense, their lives were prophetic symbols – healing the sick, feeding the hungry, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, all prophetic symbols of a new age impinging on the present.

Many early Christians withdrew and dissociated from the behavior and lifestyles of the culture. Mark urged people to *break with cultural values and institutions* that were destructive (Mark 8:27-10:45) while the author of Revelation admonished people to “withdraw” from participation in the social and economic life of imperial and idolatrous Rome (Rev 18:4).

They not only broke from the cultures around them; they formed *alternative communities* of the emerging new kingdom of God, apocalyptic pockets of counter-cultural reality such as those reflected in the Gospel of John, the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:43-47), and the First Letter of Peter (1 Pet 2:9-10). They had a vision of the future and sought to live it now in the present so as to be a light for the world. Perhaps the greatest mission of the church in our own time is to offer the world alternative communities in congregations that are signs of the kingdom of God amidst a world of commercialism and exploitation.

In all of this, the early Christians were willing to *act unilaterally* to create a new world without waiting for the leaders of the nation or the rest of the populace to lead the way or even to agree with them.

We can learn from this behavior of the early Christian communities facing what they believed to be the end of the current world order as a means to discover alternative behaviors for our faith communities as we face ultimate choices for avoiding ecological disaster and for creating a new, sustainable life on earth.

Envisioning New Creation

This is the power of eschatology, the capacity to imagine a new world and to enact it in courageous and pioneering ways. The early church announced an apocalyptic sea-change that occurred as a result of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This apocalyptic transformation continues today. Contemporary churches, in response to the enormity of the ecological crises we face, are challenged to be “transformed in the renewal of your minds to what is the good and perfect and acceptable will of God” (Rom 8:22-23) for our time – the mission to restore God’s creation and to form a sustainable life for God’s beloved Earth community.

This is what the early Christians had: a vision of a new world, a new creation, not the end of the material world but the end of the destroyers of the world, the end of the old order of domination and exploitation, a world of reverence and peace and justice. They entered this new world and lived it out, enacted it then and there even in the presence of the old order. The story about Luther tells it all. We are not sure if this event happened, but it is nevertheless *true*. Luther was asked what he would do today if he knew the end of the world would take place tomorrow. Luther replied, “I would plant an apple tree.” That line represents our commitment to this created world, to the value of its very physicality, and to the fruits of our labor in it. That line represents our faith in the activity of God working for good in all things. That line represents our commitment to live into this new world even now. It is a metaphor for all the actions we can take to enter into this new world, enter the kingdom of God. Let us take actions that trust the future and that invest in the future at the same time. Our affirmation of the resurrection of the body offers hope for new life in this world. Resurrection is an affirmation of the life of Jesus and an assurance of a future in God’s hands.

Life after Death

Now back to personal life after death. I have invited you to bracket it temporarily in order to consider God’s commitment to creation. We cannot speculate what personal afterlife is like, but we live in the confidence that “whether we live or die, we are the lord’s” (Rom 14:8). The resurrection assurance of life after death with God offers profound comfort for the innumerable people in this life who have suffered physical and mental illness, poverty, loneliness, oppression, violence, violation, rejection, grief, torturous death, and so many other forms of human misery and tragedy. The promise is that God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. How this will happen, we do not know. But we have enough glimpses of the love of God and the resurrected reality of

Jesus to know that it is indeed possible. This is something we all long for and pray for – for ourselves and others.

However, the assurance that our life is in God’s hands is not an opiate that leaves us in a quietist state while we wait for death to come. Rather, the assurance of life after death generates in us the courage to live for love and justice, to risk this life in service to others, and to take bold and sacrificial steps to care for Earth. Grace is the main fruit of the first Reformation, namely that we are freed by God’s eternal love to know that we will be loved eternally. Therefore, we can risk and sacrifice and expend our lives to sustain future generations. Understood this way, life after death does not in any way diminish our commitment to the endurance of God’s creation. Rather, it is the springboard for action on behalf of God’s people in service of God’s beloved creation.

Conclusion: What Must we do to Have a New Reformation?

Our hope is that a profound love of Earth and a deep desire to restore and to protect Earth enters the hearts of all Lutherans and transforms the deep structures of the way we live. Our hope is that the new reformation becomes an integral part of our congregational life. Our hope is that the new reformation is integral to our institutional commitments. Our hope is that we claim as an ELCA denomination that our mission to the vulnerable is a mission to *all* of Earth community – a comprehensive mission that so pervades our life together that it becomes a renewal of the entire church, a new reformation for our time.⁴⁰

Editor’s note: See ten points on “Why Lutherans Care for all Creation” directly following this article.

Notes

- 1 I am very grateful to Paul Santmire, Kurt Hendel, and Sandy Roberts for their reflections on and critique of this essay. Despite their best efforts, the theological misconceptions and lack of clarity contained here belong solely to me.
- 2 Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999).
- 3 See five mandates for mission in a new reformation in David Rhoads and Barbara Rossing, “A Beloved Earth Community: Christian Mission in an Ecological Age,” in *Mission after Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission* (Louisville: WJK, 2010) 128-143.
- 4 For ELCA eco-justice initiatives and resources, go to <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Advocacy/Congregational-Resources/Caring-For-Creation.aspx> and <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Advocacy/Issues/Environment-and-Energy.aspx>. More initiatives can be found at www.lutheransrstorngcreation.org.

- Note two important conferences in the summer of 2012: The Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference dealt with “A Challenge to Embrace Creation: Lutheran Higher Education, Sustainability, and Stewardship” and The Convocation of Teaching Theologians was held on the subject of “Eco-Lutheranism?”
- 5 Larry Rasmussen, “Waiting for the Lutherans,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 2009 (37) 86-98.
 - 6 Philip Watson, *Let God be God: An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther* (New York: AMS, 1947).
 - 7 For an in-depth analysis of different religions and their contribution to earth-care, see the Religions of the World Ecology series edited by Evelyn Tucker and John Grim for Harvard University Press. Visit the Forum on Religion and Ecology at www.emergingearthcommunity.org.
 - 8 See *The Season of Creation: A Preaching Commentary* (ed., Norman Habel, David Rhoads, and H. Paul Santmire; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011) 31.
 - 9 Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966).
 - 10 Thomas White, *In Defense of Dolphins: The New Moral Frontier* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).
 - 11 Jorge Luis Borges, “The God’s Script,” in *Labyrinths* (New York: New Directions, 1962) 171.
 - 12 Quoted by John Paarlberg in “The Glad Earth Rejoices” in *Earth and Word: Classic Sermons on Saving the Planet* (ed., David Rhoads; New York: Continuum, 2007) 226.
 - 13 Cited in Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon, eds., *Earth Prayers from around the World* (San Francisco: HarperSanfrancisco, 1991) 357.
 - 14 Mary Frohlich, “Under the Sign of Jonah: Studying Spirituality in a Time of Eco-Systemic Crisis,” *Spiritus* 9 (2009) 27-45.
 - 15 Anthony Weston, *Back the Earth: Tomorrow’s Environmentalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).
 - 16 “Das diese wort Christi (Das ist mein leib etce) noch fest stehen widder die Schwermeister.” WA 23:134,34-136,36.
 - 17 Terence Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005).
 - 18 Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).
 - 19 Wendell Berry, *Given* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2006) 116.
 - 20 Joseph Sittler, “The Care of the Earth,” in *The Care of the Earth and Other University Sermons* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964).
 - 21 John Paarlberg, “The Glad Earth Rejoices,” 226.
 - 22 For resources on care for creation worship throughout the lectionary years and the optional liturgical “Season of Creation,” visit www.letallcreationpraise.org.
 - 23 Joseph Sittler, “Called to Unity,” in *Evocations of Grace: Writings on Ecology, Theology, and Ethic* (ed. Peter Bakken and Steven Bouma-Prediger; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 38-50.
 - 24 Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973).
 - 25 For further development of these themes, see David Rhoads and Sandra Roberts, “Justification by Grace: Shame and Acceptance in a County Jail,” in *The Shame Factor: How Shame Shapes Society* (ed. Robert Jewett; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010) 86-102.
 - 26 Krister Stendahl, “Justification Rather than Forgiveness,” in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976) 23-39.
 - 27 Larry Rasmussen in “Earthbound,” a six-part DVD series sponsored by SELEC of the ELCA and produced by Seraphim.
 - 28 An excellent articulation of this point from Paul’s point of view is in Robin Scroggs, *Paul for a New Day* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976).
 - 29 On ecological ethics, see esp. Larry Rasmussen, *Earth Community, Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996); Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
 - 30 James Cone, “Whose Earth is It Anyway?,” in *Earth and Word: Classic Sermons on Saving the Planet* (ed. David Rhoads; New York: Continuum) 142.
 - 31 Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997) 104.
 - 32 Robert Bullard, *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 2005).
 - 33 Rosemary Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992).
 - 34 Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Systemic Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).
 - 35 David Rhoads, “Who Will Speak for the Sparrow? Eco-Justice Criticism and the New Testament,” in *Literary Encounters with the Reign of God* (ed. Sharon H. Ringe and H. C. Paul Kim; London: T & T Clark, 2003).
 - 36 James Martin-Schramm, *Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case Study Approach* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003).
 - 37 Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur,” in *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) 66.
 - 38 Wendell Berry, “Original Sin,” in *Given* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2006) 35.
 - 39 See Anthony Weston, *Mobilizing the Green Imagination: An Exuberant Manifesto* (Gabriola Islands, BC: New Society, 2012).
 - 40 For an extensive eco-bibliography of matters related to Bible, theology, ethics, worship and spirituality, environment, and ecological primers, click on the following link to the Theology section of the website for *Lutherans Restoring Creation*: <https://sites.google.com/a/lutheransrestoringcreation.org/www/bibliography-of-ecology-and-faith>

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Why Lutherans Care for All Creation

1. *Theology:* We affirm God as creator of all. We have an incarnation theology that cherishes the continuing presence of God in, with, and under all reality. We see redemption as the restoration of creation, as “new creation.” We see the future straining toward the fulfillment of creation.
2. *Cross and Resurrection:* The gospel leads us to see God in solidarity with the human situation in all its pain and agony, especially the most vulnerable – humans and non-humans. A theology of the cross also gives us solidarity with “creation groaning in travail” and stresses that God redeems *all* creation. Our affirmation of resurrection offers hope for new life in this world.
3. *Worship and Sacraments:* We affirm that the material is a vehicle of the divine and that Christ is present in such ordinary elements of life as grapes and grain – the basis for our delight in and reverence for creation. Our worship invites us into transforming encounters with God in the flesh and in the world. We are called to worship God *with* creation.
4. *Ecclesiology:* Our human vocation is “to serve and to protect” Earth. We believe that the church exists for the sake of the world. We do not have an escapist theology. We are called to continual reformation in response to the needs and crises of this life. When Luther was asked what he would do if the world would end tomorrow, he apparently replied, “Plant an apple tree.”
5. *Ethics:* We have an ethic of faith-active-in-love for neighbor and for all creation. Liberated from a legalism that enslaves, we are freed to address new situations, such as the ecological state of the world. We do so not to dominate but as servants to other humans and all creation. We do so not out of fear or guilt or arrogance but joyfully out of grace, love, and gratitude.
6. *Social Ministry:* With a heritage back to the Reformation, Lutherans have a history of social service to the poor, the elderly, the sick, the oppressed, the marginalized – through hospitals, homes for the elderly, social ministry agencies, Lutheran Immigration Service, and Lutheran World Relief. We extend that service to healing Earth community (www.elca.org/careforcreation).
7. *Advocacy:* We ELCA Lutherans have relevant social statements: “Caring for Creation” and “Sustainable Livelihood for All.” We have a staff person in environmental/hunger advocacy in Washington and Lutheran Public Policy offices in many states (www.elca.org/advocacy).
8. *Scholarship and Education:* Many Lutheran scholars have written and spoken on ecology – in theology, ethics, biblical study, and social commentary. Colleges and seminaries of the ELCA have environmental courses that prepare Lutherans for leadership in church and world. Many continuing education events for clergy and laity highlight creation care.
9. *Caring for Creation across the church:* Several synods with creation-care committees have declared themselves to be Care-For-Creation Synods. Many Lutheran congregations incorporate Earth-care commitment in their life and mission – worship, education, building and grounds, discipleship at home and work, and public ministry. Lutheran camps have brought environmental concerns to many people. The ELCA headquarters has a Green Team working to model environmental action. The ELCA offers grants for environmental projects.
10. *Organizations for Earthkeeping:* Lutherans have led in the Green Congregation Program, the Green Seminary Initiative, the Web of Creation (www.webofcreation.org), promoted creation-care worship through the church year (www.letallcreationpraise.org), and organized for Lutherans Restoring Creation (www.lutheransrestoringcreation.org).

Lutherans are in a critical position to listen to the cry of the poor along with the cry of Earth and to take leadership in addressing these critical issues of our day. In whatever context you may be serving, we encourage you to participate in this endeavor.

God's Lovers as "Uncreators": Morality in the Face of Systemic Evil

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:35-9).

The Context: Social, Ecological, Theological

The intimate Mystery that we call God must have an insatiable hunger for life and, moreover, for life that creates ever-more abundant and complex life. This God of cross and resurrection uses even death and destruction, suffering and loss to further... *life*.

Indeed, the monotheistic traditions hold in common one reality: God created a fruitful, life-furthering Earth... a planet that spawns and supports life with a complexity and generosity beyond human ken. Fundamental to Christian faith is the claim that it is "good" (Genesis 1). According to the first creation story in Genesis, "God saw that it was *tov*." The Hebrew *tov*, while often translated as "good," also implies "life-furthering." And God said time and again that this creation was *tov* – a good that is life-furthering.

Here we arrive at a haunting theological problem. The primal, first, and most characteristic act of the God proclaimed in Judaism and then in Christianity and Islam, is not merely to create a magnificent world. This God creates a magnificently *life-furthering* world. The scandalous point is this: we are *undoing* that very "*tov*," Earth's life-generating capacity. We are "uncreating." We – or rather, some of us – have become the "uncreators."¹

Indeed, one young and dangerous species has become a threat to Earth's life-generating capacity. *Homo sapiens* are using and degrading the planet's natural goods at a rate that Earth's ecosystems cannot sustain. The credible scientific community is of one accord about this basic reality, and hundreds of its widely respected voices have been for over two decades. A "Warning to Humanity" issued in 1992 by 1,600 of the world's senior scientists, including a majority of all living Nobel Laureates in the sciences, says it well: "[H]uman beings and the natural world are on a collision course... that may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know."²

They did not make, however, a corollary point of tremendous moral import. It is this. The horrific consequences of climate change, toxic waste, and other forms of ecological degradation are not suffered equally by Earth's people. Nor are the world's people equally responsible. Those LEAST responsible for the Earth crisis are suffering and dying first and foremost from it.

Rise in sea levels will not force you or me from our homes and livelihoods. Not true for many of the world's more impoverished people in low-lying areas. The Maldives, a nation of islands no more than a mile wide at any point, is threatened with loss of its entire land mass. The entire nation may be forced to relocate. Martin Parry, chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on climate Change (IPPC) Working Group II declares: "The people most affected by climate change are and will be those living in developing countries... and within those regions it will be the poor that will be most affected..."³ Even a slight degree of warming decreases the yield of the world's food staples – wheat, corn, barley, rice – in seasonally dry areas.⁴ Subsistence farmers and people with little money will go hungry. We will not.

Yet, as Gus Speth, Dean Emeritus of the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University, writes, the impacts of climate change stem primarily "from the economic activity of those of us participating in the modern, increasingly prosperous world economy. This activity is consuming vast quantities of resources from the environment and returning to the environment vast quantities of waste products."⁵ Economic activity – what we as individuals and as a society extract from the Earth, produce, trade, buy and sell, consume, and discard – determines the extent to which we contribute to climate change. Who dies from the impacts of climate change and who causes it may be the foremost moral issue of the early twenty-first century.

Not long ago I was invited to India to work with a number of seminarians and with the National Council of Churches of India on eco-justice in theology and in ministerial preparation. There I realized more fully the

extent of environmental racism that permeates our lives. The people causing climate change are disproportionately descendents of Europe. Yet, the now nearly 25,000,000 climate refugees are primarily Asian and African. That number will increase dramatically. It will represent overwhelmingly people of Asia, Africa, low-lying Pacific Islands, and Latin America. This is white privilege in arguably its most virulent form.

Climate change is not the only manifestation of environmental racism or the only form of environmental destruction stemming from economic activity. The Coca-Cola plant in India has destroyed the water supply and therefore the crops for thousands of people – dark-skinned people. The peoples whose communities and lives are destroyed by coal and oil production are Africans of the Niger Delta, African Americans in Mississippi, poor whites in Appalachia, the Indigenous of Latin and North America, and other marginalized peoples. Our over-consumption kills. This is a stark and deeply troubling reality of our lives.

It presents a second distressing theological problem: Two millennia of Christians and the Hebrew people before them have claimed that God calls God's people to receive God's love, and then "to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength (Deut 6:5)," and "to love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev 19:18).

What "love" implies for contemporary life, of course, is a matter of discernment. The moral weight of neighbor-love depends upon what is meant by the term.⁶ Here we have not time to explore fully the implications of neighbor-love as a biblical and theological norm. But let us note the obvious. Neighbor-love does not include living in ways that destroy other people's water supplies to produce our Coca-Cola, or in ways that dry up their lakes or flood their lands to feed our fossil fuel addiction. We return shortly to the implications of neighbor love for how we are to live within today's economic and ecological crisis.

Sisters and brothers, I do not say these things in order to blame or instill guilt. Rather I say them because I simply cannot see how I can be a follower of Jesus Christ without admitting these realities *in order* to help change them. In light of these two theological and moral problems, I ask you to journey with me into a moral dilemma that haunts me and then to see a path through it grounded in faith.

Moral Paradox, Moral Challenge

The United States – as all countries – is replete with profoundly caring human beings. Many of us dedicate energy, time, and money to building more humane communities, cities, rural areas, nation, and world. We not

only long to lessen the suffering of others, but work to do so, at times sacrificing much to do so. We take seriously the call to love neighbor as self.

On the other hand, our everyday life, a "good life" in the United States, entails consumption, production, and acquisition patterns that threaten Earth's capacity to sustain life as we know it, and that exploit vast numbers of people worldwide, some even unto death. This I refer to as systemic evil or structural evil.⁷

Our moment in history is breathtaking; it is sacred. The generations of people now living will decide whether or not life continues on this planet in ways recognizably human and verdant. And we will decide if the small over-consuming majority may continue to devour Earth's resources at the expense of countless others and of Earth's life systems. In this context, something new is required of humankind: to forge ways of being human that do not threaten Earth's life-sustaining capacity, and that vastly diminish inequity in access to the necessities for life with dignity. All fields of human inquiry are called upon to contribute to this pan-human interfaith "great work"⁸ of our day.

When something new is required of humankind, something new is required of Earth's long-standing faith traditions. They are called to plumb their depths for relevant moral-spiritual wisdom, and to offer those gifts to the table of public discourse and decision-making. Religious traditions overflow with invaluable contributions to the offer. People located within the various religious traditions are responsible to wrestle with them, demanding and trusting that they will yield guidance for movement into ecologically sound and socially just societies.

For Christians, this means entering the vast constellation of Christian sources – biblical narratives, the lives and writings of faith forebears, church teachings, liturgical practices, moral norms – insistent on seeing both where they have lead us astray (contributed to the ecological-economic crisis) and where they offer sound counsel and resources. Where Christian beliefs and practices have contributed to the Earth crisis, we are called to critique and "re-formation." Where the resources of Christian traditions reflect God's boundless love for creation and offer moral power for the good, we must drink deeply from them and tender them to the broader community. Similar opportunity and responsibility sits on the shoulders of people within the other religious traditions.

The guidance to be found in religious traditions must enter into mutually appreciative dialogue with other sources of wisdom. Among these are the social sciences, physical sciences, and life sciences. Neither the knowledge of science alone nor that of religion alone is sufficient to meet the challenge of building sustainable Earth-human relations and socially just societies.

What then do the religious traditions represented in this gathering offer to this over-arching moral question of our time and place: “How then shall we live?” Responding to that question is the purpose of this gathering and of eco-theology, and is the work of Greenfaith and other organizations represented here. My small part is to probe this question as it pertains to Christian traditions.

Love as an Ecological-Economic Calling

The heart of the answer in Christianity is God’s gracious love for this world. We are called to trust that love and live it into the world. This is our life-work, to be friends of God, empowered by God to receive Her love, and to live that justice-making mysterious and marvellous love into the world. We are here to let God work through us, in us, and among us to bring healing from all forms of sin and brokenness that would thwart God’s gift of abundant life for all.

What does the call to love mean in our context? To what does it invite us and what does it promise us in our time and place? This is the wild question, the unruly question that ought to shape our lives. We could talk about it day and night. So let us dig in.

Neighbor-love serves the well-being of the other. People’s wellbeing, of course, is determined by the many social systems that shape our life in common, our public life. Neighbor-love is, therefore, not only an interpersonal vocation but also a public vocation. By this I mean that neighbor-love is to guide not only our interpersonal relationships but the relationships that we have with other people by virtue of the social systems or structures of which we are a part. These structures include economies, health care and educational systems, political systems, societies and smaller groupings within them, corporations, nations, and more.

Said differently, God’s call to love pertains not only to the impact that I have on family, friends, acquaintances, or literal neighbors. It pertains also to the impact that I have through the collective actions of groups or structures of which I am a part. I am for instance a part of the corporations in which my money is invested. If my mutual fund benefits from an oil company that is desecrating lands, waters, and communities in the Niger Delta in order to increase profits, then I am defying God’s call to love the people of that land.

Martin Luther insisted that neighbor-love is to govern economic life for Christians. To illustrate: A Christian, Luther taught, may not buy up an essential commodity when its price was low and then sell when the price rose, because that practice endangers the poor who might then not be able to

afford the commodity. Nor may a Christian charge what the market will bear when selling products if so doing jeopardizes the well-being of vulnerable people in need of that product.⁹ These practices are at the heart of advanced global capitalism. They are presupposed as “normal” for any of us who own a mutual fund or stocks. In a similar vein, Luther admonishes preachers to denounce economic exploitation of the poor. Luther’s economic norms are grounded precisely in his conviction that Christian life is governed by two sequential norms. The first is to accept and trust the gracious love of God. And the second is to love neighbor as self.¹⁰ The moral-spiritual power to follow these norms is found, according to Luther, in the Eucharist, the presence of Christ making habitation in us, and the courage instilled by the Holy Spirit.¹¹

In response to the economic and ecological exploitation in which we participate – albeit unwittingly – we too are called to embody God’s love in the economic and ecological dimensions of our lives. In the remainder of our time, I would like to explore some implications of this vocation. I will argue that neighbor-love calls us to reconstruct economic life. That is, our lifework of loving neighbor as self is an invitation to reconstruct our buying, selling, consumption, investing, and production of goods and services; our national trade policies; and the values that undergird these.

Economic policies and practices strongly influence who will have food, water, shelter, education, health care, and other necessities for fullness of life. They determine whether fracking will continue in Ohio and North Dakota, whether chocolate will come to us through child slavery on cacao plantations in Africa, and whether toxic wastes will continue to flood from the Global North to the Global South. Levels of greenhouse gas emissions are determined by economic policies and practices. Because they have these life and death consequences, neighbor-love cannot ignore the collective impact of our economic lives.

Peter Pero, of Lutheran Theological Seminary in Chicago, in discussing the global economy puts it starkly. “In ecclesiological terms,” he writes, “if the church is the one universal body of Christ, this body of Christ is divided among active thieves, passive profiteers, and deprived victims. What does it mean for the former two to claim ‘love’ for the ‘deprived victim?’”¹²

We have a problem on our hands, and it is not solved by interpersonal charity and individual “greenness” alone. As people who benefit materially from economic systems that endanger ecosystems and exploit people, we cannot hide from the moral impact of these systems by retreating into morality in our private lives alone. Being as green as we can, lowering our personal carbon footprints, serving the homeless, and giving to charities are crucial aspects of neighbor-love. But to stop there, with interpersonal acts of

goodness, is to flee from the larger moral impact of our collective lives as a society, an economy, a nation.

The question becomes inescapable: What does loving neighbor as self mean for economic life? In secular terms, notes Speth, a “fundamental question facing societies today – perhaps *the* fundamental question – is how can the operating instructions for the modern world economy be changed so that economic activity both protects and restores the natural world,”¹³ and, I would add, so that economic life enables all to have the necessities for life abundant. This claim may sound esoteric, abstract, theoretical, impractical, far from daily life reality. However, it is not. We are fully capable of playing our parts in the worldwide movement to reconfigure economic life on systemic levels, locally, nationally, and globally.

Economies – local, national, and global – are not given by fate. They are constructed by human decisions and actions, and therefore can be changed by human decisions and actions. In other words: the form of advanced capitalism that now shapes the conditions of life on Earth is not inevitable. We – and here I mean human beings from all continents and walks of life – can change it toward relative equity and ecological health. Multiple forms of related action on many fronts already ARE cultivating that change. They are less evident on this continent than on others. Believing that change is possible is the crucial first step toward realizing it.

But change to what? If neighbor-love directs us toward ways of living that enable all people to have the necessities for life with dignity, and that nurture sustainable Earth-human relations, what is required of our economic lives? How sweet it would be if the answer were simple or clear. It is not. Debates have simmered, and at times raged, throughout church history.¹⁴ Imagining and choosing economic ways that serve the wellbeing of all is a central moral and political task before our nation and our world, and is fraught with ambiguity and moral conundrums. What is just is not always clear. What serves the well-being of some vulnerable neighbors may detract from the good of others. Fracking, for example, with its devastating impacts, also lifts some people out of poverty. That does not make fracking morally right, but it does make it morally complex. Furthermore, action aimed at the good may have unforeseen and unintended damaging consequences. And while I may be convinced that a particular move is just, your judgments may be the opposite.

How then are we to know, or to gain at least provisional knowing? One tool for perceiving the shape of neighbor-love in economic life is a moral vision for economic life and the basic principles comprising that vision. Let us call them operating instructions. I will suggest four. However, a vision and principles are worth anything only if we also identify how common people

can live them into reality. After articulating a vision and principles, the next task – and we can only begin it here – is seeing how we are to embody them at all levels of life.

Vision of a Moral Economy

“Moral vision is the vision of the good we hold... it is the socialized (or internalized) reflection of the communities we move among...”¹⁵ In general, we assume a moral vision unconsciously. It is shaped by the values, norms, and practices of the society and significant groups in which our lives unfold. It is taught by the narratives of history, advertising, cultural “heroes,” religious traditions, news media and responses to it, and the social structures and practices assumed to be normal. A moral vision – conscious or not – tells us what is good, right, and true.

By “*economic* moral vision,” I refer to the vision of what would be good, right, and true for economic life. An economic moral vision that includes only human beings is quite different, and compels far different actions, public policies, and business norms than does a moral vision that extends to Earth’s entire web of life. An economic moral vision in which people are affirmed or rewarded for accumulating wealth to the extent that they are able within the boundaries of legality, encourages people to do so. If, in contrast, according to the prevailing moral vision, wealth accumulation beyond a certain point was considered morally repugnant, people would be far less likely to pursue it.

A changed moral vision affects how individuals and societies structure their lives. When what is considered in a particular society to be moral becomes seen as immoral, human behaviors, policies, and institutions change. For example, institutionalized race-based segregation moved from being considered moral to immoral in the span of a few decades. It was a shift in moral vision resulting in changed behavior, public policies, institutions, and norms for marriage and other human relationships. As with an overall moral vision, so too with the vision of a moral economy: with a changed economic moral vision come changed behaviors, public policies, institutions, cultural norms, standards of achievement, goals, and more.

The structure of an economy as large as that of the United States – including the power wielded by capital in that society – can determine life or death for millions. Moral responsibility, therefore, requires being aware of what economic moral vision is guiding that economy, and being intentional about assessing and shaping that moral vision. The economic moral vision suggested here is for economies in which all people have the necessities required for a healthy life, Earth’s life systems are sustained and regenerated,

and none accumulate vast wealth at the cost of impoverishing others or Earth's life support systems. For a vision to become reality, people must identify what principles for living (operating instructions) will enable that vision to be practiced. Four principles undergird this vision for a moral economy.

*Four Principles*¹⁶

Sustainability: Situate Human Economies within Earth's Economy¹⁷

The first is sustainability. This means situating human economies within Earth's economy. Ecological economist, Herman Daly, has asserted since the early 1970s that human economies are, in fact, embedded in Earth's natural economy and must be recognized as such in economic theory if economic theory is to reflect reality.¹⁸ Thomas Berry, cultural historian and Passionist priest, averred as much with his renowned assertion that humankind must situate our human economies within Earth's "great economy."¹⁹ Daly's seminal insight has been reiterated and expanded by other eco-theologians and environmental ethicists.²⁰

To the contrary, however, classical and neo-classical economic theory – and the capitalist economies they rationalized – have treated human economies as entirely *separate from* Earth's economy. Mainstream economics and economies assume and depend totally upon the false assumption that human economic activity is not contingent upon the Earth's physical limits.²¹ Thus, the bottom line in corporate activity does not account for much of the ecological and social costs of that activity, or for the use of Earth's services required by the activity. Those costs are "externalized"; they are not paid by the corporation that creates the degradation and benefits financially from it.²²

The horrendous ecological and social costs of mountaintop removal coal mining in Appalachia (poisoned rivers, toxic drinking and bathing water, loss of homes, valleys filled with dumped rock and waste, deforestation, flooding) are illustrative. Externalizing those costs allows the mining companies to increase profits. Hence the ecological destruction can continue largely unchecked.

Consider too the companies pushing fracking. Who will pay the long-term costs of the water used, the energy required, the greenhouse gasses emitted, the soil and water degradation? And who will cover the social costs such as the health of local residents, the disruption of social fabric, the exploitation of women that accompany the rapid onset of this industry? Many of the costs are left to be paid by society at large or by future generations, or are born by the people suffering from the degradation. This is called exter-

nalizing costs. Externalizing costs is the practice of *not* situating human economic activity within Earth's economy.

People in all walks of life – farmers, scientists, theologians, business people, economists, activists, and others – the world over are proposing and developing policies and practices aimed at locating human economic activity within the limits of planet Earth. Concerning large corporations, such policies and practices include, among others:

1. Replacing the financial bottom line with a triple bottom line of ecological sustainability, financial viability, and social impact;
2. Internalizing social and ecological costs that currently are externalized;²³
3. Measuring profit and loss not only by the quarter, but by the long-term future.

Environmental Equity: Reversing Environmental Space "Invasion"

A second principle is environmental equity. It implies an equal right worldwide to the use of "environmental space" – the atmosphere and other of Earth's goods and services. Measuring environmental space use is, of course, an imprecise process at best. Tools being developed include the ecological footprint and carbon footprint measurements that this campus has embraced. When the Gettysburg Seminary community changed to geo-thermal energy, you were significantly reducing the seminary's environmental space use. The world is calling upon the United States to reduce vastly its use of environmental space. This tool may be a vital criterion for household, institutional, corporate, and governmental policy and practice in the Global North.

The principle of environmental equity suggests that greenhouse gas reduction by countries overtaxing the atmosphere with carbon emissions is a human right of people in countries suffering from that imbalance. This idea of course is a matter of debate, and is not widely accepted. In human rights theory, the claim is grounded in the right to life, as well as the rights to food, water, and shelter guaranteed in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights.

Theological and biblical grounding too is strong. In theological terms, the principle of environmental equity is known as the "universal destination of goods," meaning that Earth's bounty is to be enjoyed by all, not just for a few. Fourth century theologian, Ambrose, says it well:

How far, o rich, do you extend your senseless avarice? Do you intend to be the sole inhabitants of the earth? Why do you drive out the fellow sharers of nature, and claim it all for yourselves? The earth was

made for all, rich and poor, in common. Why do you rich claim it as your exclusive right? The soil was given to the rich and poor in common. Wherefore, o ye rich do you unjustly claim it for yourselves alone? Nature gave all things in common for the use of all.²⁴

Moral questions of enormous import arise. They call for public and interpersonal moral deliberation regarding limits to the “right to do what I wish with my material wealth;” the meaning of freedom; and the relative weight of the right to food, water, and shelter vs. the right to maximize profit. The religious community could serve society by “setting the table” for these conversations and inviting people to them.

For the Global North, these two principles – “situating human economies within Earth’s economy” and “environmental equity” – entail the shift from fossil fuel based economies to economies fueled primarily by renewable and non-toxic sources of energy.²⁵ This means changes on the levels of household, institutions, corporations and other business, and public policy. Time allows only mentioning the remaining two principles of a moral economy.

Economic Equity: Prioritize Meeting Human Need over Wealth Accumulation

The principle of economic equity counters the norm of advanced global capitalism – maximizing profit regardless of the cost. This principle would reshape corporate structure and public policy to prioritize meeting human needs over accumulating unlimited wealth.²⁶ The aforementioned move to hold large business corporations accountable to a social and ecological bottom line exemplifies such a shift. So too does the policy of requiring large business corporations to internalize many social and ecological costs that currently are externalized.

This shift is monumental. It will come slowly and is being cultivated on many fronts. I imagine many streams coming together to create a water flow, strong enough finally to move great bodies of earth. Two of those streams are conscious efforts to re-form values (i.e., from “more is better” to “enough is better”), and public policy.

Economic Democracy: Distributed and Accountable Economic Power

Where economic power becomes concentrated in a few hands that are unaccountable to larger communities, so too does the capacity of those

holding that power to serve self-interest regardless of the consequences to others or the Earth.²⁷ Three decades of highly effective corporate-driven effort to deregulate has shifted power in the U.S. from local, state, and national governments to high level management of large global corporations. Power to make decisions regarding water, food, oil, jobs, real estate, and more is increasingly in the hands of a few people who are accountable to no one except corporate shareholders. That is, they are accountable only to the people who stand to gain fortunes if their decisions prioritize profit over all else. Yet, their decisions determine life or death for many people. Concentrated unaccountable economic power threatens the common good. It subordinates rule by the people (*demo-cracy*) to “rule by wealth.” The economic crisis culminating in 2009 is a prime example.

The principle of economic democracy refers less to an endpoint than to a process of piece-by-piece conversion from centralized economic power to more shared and publically accountable economic institutions and practices, and the values and public policies that support them. In different terms, economic democracy describes situations in which people and communities have a role in the economic decisions that shape their lives. A variety of undertakings move toward economic democracy. They include:

popular movements and projects to build more democratic economic alternatives from the ground up, including small and medium sized business and locally owned business;

public policy change toward economic democracy;

legal and constitutional changes in the rights of the corporation; and

changes in values, especially regarding the purpose and role of economic activity

The Four Principles Together

Are these four principles just an idealistic dream, a pie in the sky vision? No. People all over the world – including many present here – are dedicated to enacting them. Assume with me for a minute that economic life as we know it is not inevitable; it was constructed by human beings and can be changed by them. Believing that change along the lines of these principles is possible becomes easier if we recognize that they are being lived out already at all levels of social organization: households, institutions, corporations and other business, and public policy. Change in one of these levels enables change in

others. Countless examples are evident in this gathering and in the lives and work of the people here gathered.

Consider change at one of these levels – business corporations – and more specifically, change in enormous globally-operating business corporations. For U.S. society to operate within Earth's limits, take up less environmental space, prioritize human need over maximizing profit, and democratize power, will require change in the structure and purpose of the business corporation. That change can seem impossible. The power of global corporations to outsource production plants and lay off workers; pay CEOs 400 times what they pay janitors; pollute; endanger the lives of workers in China, Africa, and the U.S.; buy up water supplies and sell them as bottled water; extract oil, minerals and more, sometimes seems insurmountable. *It is not.* The movement – globally and in the U.S. – to gain more democratic control over the power of large corporations is rapidly emerging and is multi-faceted. That is, there are many “gateways” to corporate change and many kinds of people pushing through them.²⁸

In short, our call to “love your neighbor as yourself” and our call to live in ways that do not damage Earth's life-generating systems is a call to reconfigure economic life dramatically.

Moral-Spiritual Power

A looming question accompanies all that I have said. Wherein lies the moral-spiritual power and the hope to live this vision of a moral economy into reality?

My purpose here is to enable among us all, myself included, moral-spiritual power to face faithfully the reality that we are doing terrible harm to the Earth and to vulnerable neighbors by the way that we live, and then to change. Acknowledging this condition of our lives and seeking to change it is an act of moral courage, calling for three kinds of vision.

The first is seeing “what is,” especially social-structural evil where it parades as good or where we are seduced into ignoring or denying it. That is, we are called to see and understand more fully the forms of ecological devastation and economic exploitation that pervade our lives. However, exercising the courage and commitment to do so may lead one toward denial or plunge one into a sense of profound hopelessness. The forces of wrong may seem too powerful for human beings to make an impact. One's efforts may appear futile. Seeing “what is,” is dangerous and unwise unless that form of vision is accompanied by a second and a third.

The second is seeing “what could be,” more just and sustainable alternatives. This means attuning ourselves to the movements, groups, and people –

both distant and near – that are working in multiple ways toward more just and sustainable societies. These efforts remain largely unknown to much of the American public because they are not highlighted in the public discourse. They include fair trade channels, legislative advocacy, vital and growing networks of small local business, “new economy” think tanks, grassroots resistance to specific corporations in specific communities, community-based banks, eco-theology, greening churches and other religious environmentalism, the movement to rescind corporate rights of personhood, boycotts, socially and environmentally conscious investing and purchasing, alternative energy and development use, urban gardening, carbon neutral towns and cities, local agriculture, and a host of other examples. This gathering here at Gettysburg nurtures that awareness.

A third form of vision is crucial. I believe that we ought not dare to see the truth about our participation in systemic evil without also seeing a greater truth. It is the power and presence of the Sacred, whom Christians call God, coursing throughout all of creation, and working within it toward abundant life for all.

This three-fold perception constitutes moral vision. I call it critical-mystical vision. All three of these lenses are essential. The remainder of my comments will explore the third.

I speak now very personally. I am easily tempted toward despair when I acknowledge the insidious nature of structural injustice and the projected consequences of climate change. A subtle but deep voice within me whispers that things will continue as they are despite our best efforts.

However, the cross and resurrection defy that voice and promise otherwise. This I believe with my whole being. The power of God liberating all of creation from the bonds of oppression, destruction, and death is stronger than all forces of evil that would undermine God's promise that all shall have life and have it abundantly. God “will not allow our complicity in ... evil to defeat God's being for us and for the good of all creation.”²⁹ We have heard the end of the story, and it is resurrection. Soul-searing, life-shattering destruction and death is not the last word, in this moment or forever. In some way that we do not grasp, the last word is life raised up out of brutal death. In the midst of suffering and death – be it individual, social, or ecological – the promise given to the Earth community is that life in God will reign. So speaks the resurrection.

I do not know what this promise means for us and for Earth's community of life. It does *not* lessen our call to devote our lives to building a more just, compassionate, and sustainable world; it does *not*, that is, allow us to sit back and let God do the work. That conclusion would be absurd, because God works through human beings. Nor does the hope of cross and

resurrection ensure our survival as a species in the face of climate change. It *does* ensure that the radiant Good beyond comprehension that is above, beyond, under, and within all, ultimately will bring all to the fullness of Love, Beauty, and Life. We are to live trusting in that promise. In Martin Luther's imagery, if the world will end tomorrow, one ought to plant an apple tree. The resurrection promise, then, is one profound source of hope.

The message of the cross speaks in yet another way to those of us who have glimpsed even momentarily the horror of being wealthy Christians in a world of hunger or the horror of what we are doing to earth and what it will mean for our children.³⁰ We may run from this knowledge because it implies too much brokenness and evil present in our lives. Jesus' execution by imperial power, however, demonstrates that even in the furthest reaches of human brokenness and in bondage to structural sin, the saving Christ is present, is healing, and is liberating.

This truth enables seeing the structural brutality of which we are a part without being destroyed by that knowledge. Canadian theologian, Douglas John Hall, says it well: The central message of the cross

is not to reveal that our condition is one of darkness and death; it is to reveal to us the One who meets us in our darkness and death. It is a theology of the cross not because it wants to put forth this ghastly spectacle as a final statement about life in this world but because it insists that God ... meets, loves, and redeems us precisely where we are: in the valley of the shadow of death.³¹

God's presence in the depths of our brokenness means that God with grace is present even where "I" am perpetrator of violence against others. God is present even if I have no awareness of God's presence, and have no faith that God is present. A central message of what became known as Luther's theology of the cross is that where God seems *absent*, there God is. God is hidden in God's apparent absence. The saving power of God is hidden in the form of its opposite (*sub contrario suo abscondita sunt*). *Nothing* can separate us "from the love of God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:39). God's liberating love, working through this world, can move us from doing ecological and economic violence to dismantling it, even if that seems impossible. Salvation is "both from the *affliction* of evil and from the *infliction* of evil."³²

This saving claim makes possible seeing reality, rather than pretending that the economic systems that create our wealth are beneficial to all. When reality seems "distorted and sinful, and seemingly God-forsaken ... a theologian of the cross is not afraid to recognize reality for what it is."³³ In Luther's words, "A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of

the cross calls the thing what it actually is."³⁴ This too is a profound source of hope.

Consider one more wellspring of hope within Christian traditions. Multiple streams of Christianity, from its earliest centuries, have affirmed the *mysterium tremendum* that God, the source of life itself, the One who is saving and has saved, abides within human beings and within the entirety of creation. This claim is particularly striking when uttered by theologians not commonly recognized for it. Luther is one. He insists in various sermons and treatises that God inhabits the things of Earth. "... [T]he power of God, ... must be essentially present in all places even in the tiniest leaf."³⁵ God is "present in every single creature in its innermost and outermost being..."³⁶ God "is in and through all creatures, in all their parts and places, so that the world is full of God and He fills all..."³⁷ "...[E]verything is full of Christ through and through..."³⁸ "... [A]ll creatures are ... permeable and present to [Christ]."³⁹ "Christ... fills all things.... Christ is around us and in us in all places... he is present in all creatures, and I might find him in stone, in fire, in water..."⁴⁰ In these claims Luther is by no means alone. The assertion of God indwelling all of creation has been present in Christian theology since its beginning.

Fascinating to me and relevant here are the implications for moral-spiritual power. According to Luther: "The Word of God wherever it comes, comes to change and renew the world."⁴¹ If God is present within the trees, waters, winds, and creatures – human creatures included – then God is at play within us and our earthy kin to change and renew the world. We are called to hear the healing, liberating, and transforming Word of God in the creatures and elements of this earth. Yesterday, Fletcher Harper mentioned a trend in contemporary Buddhism in which monks are encouraged to find a mountain or other aspect of non-human creation to be a teacher. The Christian claim of God's immanence suggests that very move. Our hope and power for the work of love may be fed by God within the created world.

Christian traditions offer countless wellsprings of hope. We have noted three:

Life in God is more powerful than all forms of death and destruction.

God is present and healing even in the depths of our brokenness as complicity in ecological devastation and economic exploitation.

The life-saving and life-savoring power and presence of God is coursing through all of creation.

In short, moral-spiritual power lies in a trust that the sacred forces of life, known in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions as God, flows within this good creation; is bringing about healing and liberation despite all evidence to the contrary; and is forgiving all forms of human brokenness.

In Closing

No humans before us have had to face and renounce the systemic evil of “uncreating” and the horrible damage it does to vulnerable sisters and brothers the world over whom we are called to love. However, the One who calls us also works within us enabling us to move from death to life, from inflicting ecological devastation to ecological healing.

Christian teachings – at their best – are in the service of hope and life. That word of hope comes in many forms. As professed by Hadewijch of Brabant, a fourteenth-century poet and mystic, God’s love “shall never, never cease in all the endless age to come.”⁴² Nor will that love desist in bringing the entire world into its destiny of life according to God’s reign of love. While the forces of evil are fierce and virulent, the force of good – known in Christian tradition as divine love – ultimately will triumph. All things are reconciled in Christ. The God who called this world into being loves it with a love beyond human imagining that will never die. It is our blessed call to live that love in to the world as individuals and as parts of social systems. That love cannot be taken from us by any force in heaven or Earth. Let us end as we began with a reading from Paul’s letter to the Christian communities in Rome.

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:35-9).

Notes

- 1 Later in the text we encounter the “terminator seed.” A seed developed by Monsanto, one of a few companies that control a large part of the world’s “seed business.” The terminator seed is designed to be incapable of reseeding itself. It enables a company to make more profit from small subsistence level farmers around the globe. Each season, instead of using saved seed the farmer who has been sold the terminator seed must rebuy seed. The terminator seed seems to me to be a quintessential illustration of “uncreating” the life-furthering capacity of life.
- 2 The “Warning to Humanity” is available on-line at many sites.

- 3 In an interview with the International Institute for Environment and Development, “IIED Interviews: Martin Parry on Climate Change,” at <http://www.iied.org/climate-change/key-issues/climate-negotiations-capacity-building/iied-interviews-martin-parry-climate-change>. Parry is chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Task Group on Scenarios for Climate Impact Assessment and member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the United Nations Environment Programme’s Climate Impacts and Responses Programme.
- 4 Parry et al., *Contributions of Working Group II* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
- 5 James Gustave Speth, *The Bridge at the End of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) 6.
- 6 Volumes could be written about the different and conflicting construals of neighbor-love and its moral implications throughout the histories of Christian and Jewish traditions.
- 7 This term does not imply that the evil is beyond the human and that we can escape responsibility for it by locating it beyond our power. Rather, “structural” (or “systemic”) mean that the evil is a function not of what we do as individuals but what we do as societies and other groups.
- 8 “Great work” is a term coined by cultural critic Thomas Berry to signify the task of creating sustainable Earth-human relations.
- 9 See Martin Luther, “Trade and Usury,” LW 45:244-308. See also Luther’s comments on the first, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth/tenth commandments and on the fourth petition of the Lord’s Prayer.
- 10 See esp. Martin Luther, “Two Kinds of Righteousness,” LW 31:297-306.
- 11 These sources of moral-spiritual power as taught and preached by Luther are detailed in Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Healing a Broken World: Globalization and God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002) chaps 4 and 5.
- 12 Albert Pero, Jr., “The Church and Racism,” in *Between Vision and Reality: Lutheran Churches in Transition* (ed. Wolfgang Greive; Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, 2001) 262.
- 13 James Gustave Speth, *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
- 14 Often, in modernity, they have been articulated as a comparison between socialism and capitalism to determine which is the more moral form of economy from a Christian ethical perspective. I do not frame the issue in those terms because I think that they no longer are valid representations of the economic possibilities before us; rather, these terms mystify the possibilities.
- 15 Larry Rasmussen and Bruce Birch, *Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life* (rev. ed.; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989) 60.
- 16 For elaboration of these principles, their theoretical grounding, and illustrations of them in practice, see Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Transformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013) chap. 8.
- 17 The term, “sustainability,” is problematic in a number of ways. It has been coopted as a tool of corporate public relations. It may be inadequate; given the extent of ecological damage already done, “regenerativity” may be the more adequate norm. It often is used as a modifier for “development,” suggesting that development as economic growth can proceed as long as it meets certain environmental criteria. And finally, its scope often is broadened so much that it becomes meaningless.

- 18 The idea of biophysical limits to the planet was suggested by three seminal thinkers: John Kenneth Galbraith in 1956; Kenneth Boulding in *The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth* in 1966; and Herman Daly in *The Stationary-State Economy*, Distinguished Lecture series, University of Alabama in 1971 and in *Toward a Steady State Economy* in 1973. (Daly credits Georgescu-Roegen, one of his teachers at Vanderbilt, with having pointed out that the principle of entropy is incompatible with endless economic growth.) The idea of planetary limits to growth became more publically recognized with *The Limits of Growth* in 1972 and Daly's *Steady State Economics* in 1977. Notre Dame philosopher Kenneth Sayre details the history and theory rationalizing economic growth and an economic approach that does not require continuing growth. See idem, *Unearthed: the Economic Roots of Our environmental Crisis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2010) 166-220.
- 19 Thomas Berry, *The Great Work* (New York: Harmony/Bell Tower, 2000).
- 20 An elegant international appeal to situate human activity – including economic activity – within the limits of nature was crafted by the United Nations in 1982 in its “World Charter for Nature.” The Charter was approved by the General Assembly, and 111 nations approved it. One, the U.S., voted against.
- 21 See Kenneth M. Sayre, *Unearthed: The Economic Roots of Our Environmental Crisis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2010) 166-220.
- 22 “Externalities” are the unintended consequences of a transaction between two parties on a third party.
- 23 This would mean for a production site, for example, that the cost of keeping water clean and preventing toxic wastes in the soil and air would be factored into the financial bottom line.
- 24 St. Ambrose, P.L. 14:731.
- 25 “Recent data confirms that consumption of fossil fuels accounts for the majority of global anthropogenic GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions.” IPCC, “Summary for Policymakers,” in *IPCC Special Report on Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 3. Available at: http://www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session33/doc20_p33_SPM_SRREN.pdf. The 2007 IPCC report separates GHG into its two major forms: “The global increases in carbon dioxide concentration are due primarily to fossil fuel use and land use change, while those of methane and nitrous oxide are primarily due to agriculture.” IPCC, “Summary for Policymakers,” in *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Available at: <http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessmentreport/ar4/wg1/ar4-wg1-spm.pdf>.
- 26 Four features of the corporate legal structure work in concert to promote and enable profit maximization over most other concerns. One is the rights of personhood granted to corporations in 1886 when the Supreme Court ruled that corporations are persons under the law and have all the legal rights of a person, including protection by the First, Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments. A second feature is the “best interest of the corporation” principle. It mandates that directors and executives of a corporation act in its best interests, which means shareholder wealth maximization. Third is accountability only for the financial bottom line rather than accountability also for the social and ecological “bottom-lines.” This allows the corporation to ignore social and ecological costs. The fourth feature is limited liability.
- 27 This holds true whether the economic system is state socialism or capitalism as we have known them. Both have concentrated economic power in the unaccountable institutions
- 28 See Moe-Lobeda, *Resisting Structural Evil*, chap. 10.
- 29 Christopher Morse, *Not Every Spirit: A Dogmatics of Christian Disbelief* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1994) 249.
- 30 Jesus’ execution by Roman officials has been understood differently throughout church history. As I have noted elsewhere, there is good reason to distrust many interpretations of the cross. It is a much abused and controversial symbol of Christian faith. (See Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, “A Theology of the Cross for the Un-Creators,” in *Cross-Examination: Interrogating the Cross for its Meaning Today* [ed. Marit Trelstad; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006] 181-195). Yet in many contexts, the image of the cross continues to unfold dimensions of God’s infinite love and ubiquitous life-saving presence. It holds particular promise for this inquiry into seeing and resisting systemic evil.
- 31 Douglas John Hall, *Lighten Our Darkness* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1976), 149.
- 32 Christopher Morse, *Not Every Spirit: A Dogmatics of Christian Disbelief* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1994) 225.
- 33 Winston Persaud, “Luther’s Theologia Crucis: A Theology of ‘Radical Reversal’: in response to the Challenge of Marx’s *Weltanschauung*,” *Dialog* 29/4 (1990) 265-6.
- 34 Martin Luther, “Heidelberg Disputation,” LW 31:40.
- 35 Martin Luther, “That These Words of Christ, ‘This is My Body,’ etc. Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics,” LW 37:57.
- 36 Ibid., 58.
- 37 Martin Luther, WA 23:134,34 as cited by Rasmussen, “Luther and a Gospel of Earth,” 22, citing Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985) 129.
- 38 Martin Luther, “Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper,” LW 37:218.
- 39 Ibid., 386.
- 40 Martin Luther, “The Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ – Against the Fanatics,” LW 36:342.
- 41 Martin Luther, “The Bondage of the Will,” in *Erasmus and Luther: Discourse on Free Will* (trans. Ernst F. Winter; New York: Continuum, 1990) 108.
- 42 Hadewijch of Antwerp, *Hadewijch: The Complete Works* (trans. Mother Columba Hart; New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1980) 60.

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A Whirlwind Tour of World Religious Teachings on the Environment

Fletcher Harper

In this article, my aim is to provide an introductory survey of the key environmental teachings, themes, and narratives that have begun to emerge out of the world's great religions. I will review the stories, texts, and ethics that leaders of these faiths are using to construct their communities' ecological identities. This article is only the most introductory of overviews of a rapidly expanding field. From a modest beginning, the amount of scholarship on religious teachings on the environment has grown impressively over the past two decades. And as the amount of this scholarship has grown, the range of teachings on this topic has multiplied. It is neither responsible nor possible to assert that a tradition has only one set of teachings on the natural world, and our relationship to it.

Within that context, however, there are three reasons why there is value in an introductory survey such as this. First, within each of the traditions that I will describe, there is emerging a 'green canon' of sorts, a set of increasingly widely recognized 'green' values, texts, stories or traditions. Many leaders of these traditions use this 'canon' as they seek to instruct and shape the adherents and institutions of their own faiths, and as they speak to the societies and cultures to which they belong. In this regard, a survey such as this represents a taking stock of the status of an emerging field, a field which is no longer in its infancy but which has yet to reach maturity.

Second, as citizens of a world where religious diversity is increasingly the norm rather than the exception, it is valuable for religious leaders to have a basic sense of the differences and similarities in the ways that the world's great religions approach the environment – for the sake of the environment and for interfaith relations. As we will see, there are real divergences between one tra-

dition's environmental teachings and the others. Different worldviews and stories underlie each tradition's eco-values. Different views of reality give rise to environmental values that are sometimes similar, sometimes different, sometimes differently emphasized. It is good for religious leaders to understand the teachings of their own tradition and those of others – good for the environment and for the growth of bonds between different faith communities.

Third, a survey such as this, particularly when the subject matter is largely unfamiliar, forces us to think, to learn, and to examine our own assumptions about our faith and about the earth. By examining the teachings of diverse traditions, we are given the chance to re-examine our own beliefs, to have these beliefs deepened, challenged and strengthened, and to grow in the process. As societies and religions face new challenges, they evolve. They develop new ethical norms and moral sensibilities, or they adapt older ethics to meet new circumstances, or both. To understand an introductory range of religious teachings on the environment, then, is to be a religiously engaged person, seeking to discern a faithful response to one of the great challenges that faces us.

Because this article is focused largely on teachings and ideas, I will present what feels like an idealized vision of each tradition, a series of near-perfectly green religions. I am well aware that all the traditions described here have, in numerous ways, fallen short of their own ideals, or observed them more often in the breach than in practice. But that does not mean that the values are misguided, or efforts to promulgate them misplaced. A range of strategies and methods may be needed to help people put belief into action, as is often the case. The good news is that these teachings exist, can be drawn from the heart of their own traditions, and, finally, are gaining the recognition they deserve.

First Peoples

Before there were world religions, "portable" faiths with a global scope such as Buddhism or Christianity or Islam, the peoples of the earth were gathered in tribes and clans, in local or regional societies which relied on their landscape and its non-human inhabitants for both sustenance and revelation. These "First Peoples," whose survival is under grave threat on a worldwide basis today, developed a remarkably close relationship with their beyond-human surroundings, a relationship with several common themes relevant to our overview.

Place and Identity

In Huston Smith's classic book *The World's Religions*, Smith tells a story about a young Native American leader, one of the first in his tribe to go to

college. Several members of his family were determined that he not lose his sense of Native identity. On one of his first visits home, an elder took him in a canoe out onto a lake surrounded by forests, a landscape vital to the tribe's identity. In the middle of the lake, the elder stopped paddling and asked the young leader, over and over, "Who are you?" The youth cycled through a series of responses. "Child of my parents." "Member of this tribe." "Member of my generation." None of these satisfied the elder, who finally interrupted impatiently. "You are this lake. You are these trees," he said, sternly. "Remember that."¹

For many First Peoples, relationship with a specific place, a specific region is vital to their identity. Some have observed that if U.S. citizens think of their own identity as stopping at the boundary of their own skin, that Native Peoples' identity has a much broader reach, and includes the place in which their people have lived, often for millennia.

Living Universe, Extended Family

In addition to identifying strongly with their home region, many Indigenous Peoples see it as alive in all its aspects and manifestations, having consciousness or intentionality or purpose. The natural world is a living cast of real characters, an extended kin network which deserves love and respect. It is common for Indigenous Peoples to recognize some form of "personhood" in connection to the animals, plants, land and weather of their native regions, and to have customs through which they acknowledge, manage, and maintain their relationships with these members of an extended family. This sensibility, which one appreciates quickly when hearing Native Peoples speak about their homeland, could not be farther from the inanimate and anonymous qualities that contemporary US culture ascribes to its landscapes, the "geography of nowhere"² that characterizes so much of suburban U.S. life.

Sustainable Presence

Native Peoples' long identification with their particular regions gives rise to a place-based wisdom, a fact now widely recognized as having value in protecting biodiversity and fostering a sustainable human presence in numerous locations. Groups from the United Nations³ to the World Bank⁴ have come to recognize what Indigenous Peoples have known for millennia – that a people's close relationship with a specific region often results in a human presence that protects a wide range of life forms and that proves sustainable over thousands of years.

This sustainable presence does not mean that Indigenous Peoples leave nature as untouched wilderness – far from it. Researchers such as Gary Paul

Nabhan⁵ have demonstrated that Native Peoples in the Southwestern US, for example, made significant modifications in their landscape to render it more hospitable to human habitation. This kind of intervention can represent a respectful, effective manner of relationship between people and ecosystems that enhances the life of both.

Dharmic Teachings: Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Earth

Hinduism and Buddhism share a number of core teachings on the environment, with themes such as *dharma* (moral duty), *karma* (consequences of action), *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *sanyasa* (renunciation) figuring prominently in the approach of each to the earth. However, these traditions also retain distinctive points of emphasis which their leaders use to promote ecological awareness.

Hinduism

The Omnipresent Divine, Nature as Deity, Interconnectedness

One of Hinduism's core teachings is that the supreme and universal Spirit – *Brahman* – is the essence of everything that is – all matter, time, and space. *Vasudeva Sarvam* is Sanskrit for "The Supreme Being resides in all things," a restatement of this basic tenet. Hindu leaders affirm the ecological significance of this belief, noting that if the essence of all is divine, then all of reality deserves to be treated with reverence. This basic teaching is a foundation of Hindu ecological thought.

Hinduism also enthusiastically embraces the idea that there are many, many manifestations of the divine – many *deva* (gods) and *devi* (goddesses). These deities take many forms, including but not limited to natural features such as mountains and rivers. The Ganges River, for example, is considered a deity by Hindus, as are the Himalayas. This enthusiasm for finding the divine in so many forms is foreign and off-putting to many Christians, some of whom anxiously accuse Hindus of polytheism. In my conversations with Hindus, this criticism misses the point. Hindus see one essential divinity in many forms, each form representing *Brahman* in various guises.

The other corollary to this core teaching is the Hindu emphasis on the interconnectedness of all reality. Whether by asserting this interconnection across space (by describing all material reality as part of the "family of Mother Earth") or across time (through teachings on reincarnation which emphasize that all are related by living countless lives in various forms of being), Hinduism stresses that the web of life is very real, and that it must be treated with respect.

Dharma, Karma, Ahimsa and Moksha

If *Brahman* resides at the heart of all things, then it follows that one's moral duty or path in life (*dharma*) must reflect reverence for all things. If one treats the natural world with respect, one earns beneficial *karma*, a moral momentum that results from every human act. Hindus speak of earning such karma in part through the practice of non-violence (*ahimsa*), manifest through such practices as vegetarianism, through which the killing of other sentient beings is avoided. Beneficial *karma* leads, eventually, to rebirth into a more advanced state of being, a cornerstone of Dharmic beliefs. All people move through millions of cycles of birth, life, and rebirth – on the path to *moksha* (liberation) and *nirvana* – the extinguishing of the changeable human personality with the peace that comes from union with *Brahman*. Good environmental *karma* hastens this process.

Sunyasa

Renunciation (*sunyasa*) plays an important role in Hindu ecological thinking, finding a powerful expression in the life of Mohandas Gandhi. Comparable in certain ways to Christian asceticism, Hindu practitioners have emphasized the impermanence and ultimate unreality of the phenomenal universe, and urged followers to renounce this world to the greatest degree possible. The ecological value of *sunyasa* lies in its implicit critique of wasteful consumerism, on an individual and collective level. Some scholars have noted a tension implicit in teachings on *sunyasa*, noting that if the phenomenal world is ultimately unreal, efforts to protect it are pointless.

Original Tree Hugging

To be called a tree hugger today is not a compliment. However, few people understand the Indian origin of this phrase. In the 1400s, a leader of the Bishnois, a people in northern India, observed that when large numbers of trees were cut down, soil quality was degraded, flooding increased, and food production decreased. He formulated religious injunctions against cutting trees which, over time, led to the Bishnois region enjoying large trees. A king from a neighboring region, in search of timber for his palace, sent soldiers to harvest Bishnoi timber. Consistent with their moral code, Bishnoi women encircled and hugged trees to prevent the logging. After a number of these women were killed, the king relented, formally recognizing the Bishnois' beliefs.⁶

Five centuries later, a sporting goods company sought to log in another region of India. Drawing on the memory of the Bishnois, Chipko women villagers, having observed the economic, ecological and cultural devastation that extensive logging caused for neighboring peoples, formed a human

chain to prevent the logging. Other Hindu activists have used the memory of the Bishnois to inspire acts of civil disobedience on behalf of environmental protection.

Buddhism

Buddhism shares the Hindu teachings described above, while offering its own particular points of emphasis and interpretation.

Dependent Co-Arising

Buddhism echoes Hinduism in understanding reality as profoundly interconnected. In Buddhist thought, the phrase “dependent co-arising” describes this web of causes, forces, and events that inter-relate all that is, that has been and that will be. The Jewel Net of Indra is one commonly-used Buddhist image that refers to this interdependence. A net with a multifaceted jewel at all of its nodes, each jewel is reflected in the others, as each line of the net is attached to and influenced by all others. Tug at one string and all quiver. Cloud one jewel and all are reflected less vibrantly. In another story, the Buddha weeps at the sight of a farmer plowing a field, mindful of the disruption and harm caused to the life-forms in the soil. Understanding the interconnectedness of reality, Buddhists assert, leads to the conclusion that we must live in a manner that causes less harm, less violence (*ahimsa*), less suffering. As in Hinduism, the result of such a manner of life is better *karma*, quicker progress towards liberation and enlightenment.

Craving, Consumerism, and Meditative Practice

Many people believe that happiness is getting what we desire or crave. Buddhists use the term *trishna* – thirst – to describe this fundamental human emotion. Chasing after cravings forms one pillar of consumerism, and an increasingly common view of “the good life” on a global level. From a Buddhist perspective, this is both a spiritual illusion and a recipe for ecological disaster. Buddhism teaches that happiness comes from ceasing to crave, from achieving an enlightened detachment from the misguided strivings of the self. This approach yields both spiritual and environmental benefits, in the form of true inner peace and a smaller environmental footprint. Mindful restraint, not indulgence, is the royal road to a sustainable and sane future. On a methodological level, Buddhism prescribes meditative practice as the way to overcome the enslavement that craving and thirst represent.

Ordaining Trees and the Buddha Nature

Stephanie Kaza writes about “green mentors,” various parts of the natural world – trees, animals, rivers – which, when meditated upon, yield impor-

tant wisdom and insight about the nature of reality. Other Buddhist writers have suggested that “the Buddha-nature” – the essence of the Buddha – can be found in all things, not just in human beings. While this topic is the subject of debate within Buddhism, there has been a movement of Buddhist monks in Asia who have adopted the practice of ordaining trees. They have done this for two reasons. First, ordination affirms and formalizes the “green mentor” role mentioned above. Second, ordination offers some protection from logging, as a number of companies hesitate to harm a being communally recognized as sacred.

Dharma, Self and Society

Scholars have noted that most Dharmic teachings are focused on the transformation and enlightenment of the individual. The Buddhist emphasis on meditation represents one example of this. Environmental problems, on the other hand, are inevitably collective, requiring collective, often political solutions. Buddhist and Hindu leaders respond that an ecologically respectful society can exist only if society’s members are themselves enlightened. Clearly, there have been examples of collective environmental action from within the Dharmic community. But this focus on the transformation of the self remains a hallmark of much Buddhist and Hindu ecological thought.

Taoism and Confucianism: Chinese Religion and the Environment

Home to over a billion people and to the fastest-growing environmental footprint on the planet, China’s two main religious traditions, Taoism and Confucianism, offer a fascinatingly comprehensive view of the relationship between spirit, ethics, and nature, characterized by what scholar Tu Weiming calls a “continuity of being.” I will present several perspectives shared by Confucianism and Taoism before exploring briefly some of their distinctive teachings.

It is Alive

From the perspective of both Taoism and Confucianism, the universe is alive, animated by a vital energy/matter called *ch’i*. The universe is seen as a spontaneously self-generating organismic process, imbued with continuity, wholeness, dynamism, and openness to new development. Yet in the midst of its endless changeability, the universe has a remarkable unity, because *ch’i* is both matter and spirit – the two realms are not separate. Everything that exists – ever has and ever will – is a manifestation of *ch’i*.

It is One

Chinese religions lack a Creation story. Indeed, they lack the sense that “Creation” ever took place, in part because this would require the existence of an external creator, outside of the universe. From a Chinese perspective, the universe is a “web without a weaver,” a reality in which nothing lies outside of an interconnected chain of existence. Interestingly, this lack of an external creator does not stop Chinese religion from believing in the existence of heaven. Heaven is part of an holistic universe, just like earth.

It is Harmonious

Another concept which Chinese religions share is the universe’s underlying harmony, the balance it displays between opposing forces (*yin-yang*). Taoism and Confucianism see opposing forces such as summer and winter, night and day, life and death as examples of an inevitable, powerful, yet ultimately harmonious reality. Chinese landscape painting displays this abiding harmony and order of which human beings are but one small part.

Confucianism and its Human, Social Ecology

As one of the great religions of the Axial period, Confucianism stresses the importance of the cultivation of virtuous leaders, individuals with the wisdom to order society to maintain harmony among peoples and between people and the universe. Within this focus on the cultivation of leadership, nature is seen as critical for sustaining human life, and part of the leader’s role is to manage and oversee human engagement with nature in a way that promotes the wellbeing of each. Confucians view nature and universe as parental figures due filial respect similar to that owed to human elders. While some have criticized Confucianism as too human-centered to be truly environmentally friendly, it is important to note that Confucian thought does not focus on the value of individuality per se, as does much Western thought. Rather, Confucius saw human beings as individuals in relationship with others and with the cosmos, whose purpose is to maintain harmony.

Confucius emphasized the importance of humane government and people’s active involvement in society, with sages, teachers and civil servants working to engineer society in keeping with nature’s deeper rhythms. This tradition’s emphasis is not on originality but on consistent, ethical effort aimed at becoming a *Chun Tzu* (a Mature Person) who possesses *Li*, the knowledge of what to do in all circumstances. Only by effort can one become fit to become a custodian of the earth, a leader who ensures that society remains in conformity with cosmic rhythms.

Taoism – A Tradition for Deep Ecologists

Counter to Confucianism, Taoism and its most influential text – the *Tao te Ching* – place a high value on nature unaffected by human effort. Taoism does not view nature in utilitarian terms. Instead, the natural world is a complex of dynamic life processes that reflects the spontaneity and creativity of the *Tao* (the Way). Human beings grow in wisdom by appreciating, respecting, and seeking harmony with these processes, not manipulating them. Taoism tends towards suspicion of human culture and industry. A common image of the *Tao* is flowing water, which demonstrates utter suppleness and flexibility in the ways it reaches its destination, and which also demonstrates remarkable power in its ability, over time, to wear away even the hardest rocks.

As for humanity's role, the Taoist ideal is essentially a monastic one, a life removed from politics or active social engagement. Taoism values a commitment to meditation in which simplicity and closeness to nature are seen as ways to create a Tao-like spontaneity in individuals and in human relations.

The Abrahamic Traditions: This is the Creator's World

Turning from East towards the West, we enter a very different religious world. Here, a Creator-God calls the universe into being, charges humanity with its care, and holds us accountable for our performance. Here, in the order in which these traditions appeared historically, are some of the distinctive environmental teachings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Judaism

Good, Good, Good

In its very first chapter, the Hebrew Bible asserts, repeatedly, that God is the Creator of every aspect of the universe, and that every aspect of the universe is good. This goodness should not be taken for granted. At a time when life was hard, when peoples would have routinely lost loved ones to famine and disease, when nature could seem arbitrary and cruel as well as generous and sustaining, the repeated assertion of Creation's thoroughgoing goodness stands as a strong statement at the Bible's beginning.

God's, God's, God's

Psalm 24:1 states: "The Earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it." This passage, along with the Creation narratives and other Biblical texts, assert a fundamental aspect of Jewish and Abrahamic faith – that God, as Creator, is also the ultimate owner of the Earth. This teaching serves as a cornerstone of environmental ethics for Western religion; there is a nuance worth drawing out in its regard.

Many religious environmentalists use this passage to support an anti-capitalist sentiment in relation to the ownership of natural resources, stating that Biblical teachings contradict such an approach. I would suggest that this approach fails to appreciate that throughout human history, societies have created different systems and customs through which humans appropriate natural resources for their use. Some of these systems have been collective, familial or clan-based, others feudal, others governmental, and others private. To be human is to make some claim of use, if not ownership, on the earth. Given this reality, the value of the Bible's assertion of divine ownership of the Earth takes on a different connotation. Rather than invalidating private ownership of natural resources (or any other form of human control of these resources), God's ultimate ownership of the earth represents an assertion of accountability to humanity. Do our systems of ownership, use and control of nature represent God's will, or do they run counter to the design of the Creator, who so often emphasized Creation's goodness?

Our Job Description – Powerful, Humble, Responsible

The Bible asserts that human beings, made uniquely in the presence of God, have a unique level of power and responsibility in relationship to the Earth. The Bible is clear in assigning humanity dominion (Gen 1:31) over Creation, an assertion which leaves many environmentalists nervous. Perhaps it is helpful to see this assertion as a statement of fact, not moral value. It is unarguable that humanity exerts a far greater influence over the Earth than any other form of life. Like it or not, we do have dominion. The issue, it seems, is not whether we have it, but how we use it.

At the same time, the Bible places God's granting of human power within a larger context of humility and responsibility. Psalm 8 is a prime example of the tension between our humility and our power. Looking upwards at the heavens, the psalmist expresses awe at the vastness of the cosmos, asking "What are human beings that you are mindful of them?" (Pss 8:4) Then, one verse later the psalmist, wistfully, reminds us, "Yet you have made humans just a little lower than angels, ... crowned them with glory, ... made them rulers over the works of your hands." (Pss 8:5) This juxtaposition of power with humility evokes the tension that is at the heart of what it means to be human in relation to the Earth. We admire, and we consume. How do we find a sustainable balance?

Gen 2:15 seeks to respond by providing a job description for humanity – we are placed in the Garden of Eden to "till it and keep it." Properly understood, this verse has important environmental connotations. Scholars have noted that the Hebrew word for "till" is translated in non-agricultural

contexts into English as “serve,” as in the famous Joshua passage, “As for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord.” (Josh 24:15) The Hebrew word for “keep” appears in Aaron’s blessing, “May the Lord bless you and keep you.” (Num 6:24) In this light, Gen 2:15 suggests that we bear a protective responsibility for the environment, that we are to care for it in a manner that is independent though not exclusive of our need to use its resources.

These three themes – power, humility, and responsibility – represent the key themes regarding humanity’s relationship to the Earth.

The Sabbath as Eco-Spiritual Practice

Many Jewish eco-theologians have suggested that Sabbath observance represents an important method for maintaining this proper understanding of humanity’s role. Sabbath rest serves to remind that our life’s purpose includes more than consuming, that wonder and awe have a place alongside life’s productive and consumptive functions, that setting aside time regularly is vital for these purposes. Other Jewish leaders such as Rabbi Arthur Waskow have offered a similarly ecological interpretation of kosher practices, arguing that if food is set aside and blessed for ritual purposes, it should also boast environmental bona fides.

Thou Shalt Not Destroy

Deut 20:19-20 is, at first glance, an obscure portion of Torah, a law governing conduct during wartime. But this passage – which proscribes the cutting down of fruit trees during a siege – has seen its meaning amplified by some of Judaism’s greatest teachers into a prohibition of wasteful consumption. *Bal tashchit* (“Thou shalt not destroy”) represents a cornerstone of Jewish environmental ethics. Rabbi Lawrence Troster writes: “The underlying idea of this law is the recognition that everything we own belongs to God. When we consume in a wasteful manner, we damage Creation and violate our mandate to use Creation only for our legitimate benefit.”⁷

Repairing the World

Jewish environmentalists often quote a midrash (Rabbinic commentary on the Bible):

When God created the first human beings, God led them around the garden of Eden and said: “Look at my works! See how beautiful they are – how excellent! For your sake I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for if you do, there will be no one else to repair it.” (Midrash Kohelet Rabbah, on Eccl 7:13)

A growing number of Jews understand this passage as a call for *tikkun `olam*, the “repair of the world,” a summary description of the environmental work that lies ahead. Rabbi Troster writes, “In our ignorance and our greed, we have damaged the world and silenced many of the voices of the choir of Creation. Now we must fix it. There is no one else to repair it but us.”⁸

Christianity

While affirming Jewish teachings on God as Creator, Creation’s goodness, Christianity offers an additional range of teachings on the environment.

Head for the Hills

From the New Testament, one could gather that whenever Jesus was stressed, tired, or overburdened by the demands of his calling, his favorite activity was to head for the hills. Kidding aside, the New Testament contains many references to Jesus going outside, alone, to pray and to reconnect with God. But Jesus’ relationship with God through nature was not limited to prayer. For the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus chose a mountaintop, a place of natural majesty, to share his vital teachings with his closest followers. And at his transfiguration, Jesus similarly chose a place of natural power as a place to be revealed as the Messiah. As these examples show, the outdoors figures as an important character in Jesus’ life and ministry. To the degree that Christians practice the “imitation of Christ,” one can argue that the outdoors should assume comparable significance for us.

Cosmic Coherence

In Paul’s letter to the Colossians, the Apostle writes that the entire created order came into being through Christ, that all things are held together and given their form in Christ, and that all things are reconciled to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus as the “Cosmic Christ” represents another Creation-friendly Christian image. If Christ brought Creation into being and sustains its life, how can we countenance its degradation?

Downwardly Mobile Salvation

In recent decades, Western Christianity has seen a resurgence of an apocalyptic theology that interprets the Second Coming of Christ as a time when, after certain favored groups of humans have been swept from Earth into heaven, the Earth and its remaining inhabitants are destroyed by divine judgment, just deserts for an unjust place. But a growing number of theologians are challenging this interpretation of the End of Time, noting that the New Testament clearly supports the notion that the Second Coming

represents Christ's triumphant return to Earth, resulting in the renewal of the Earth and her creatures. Texts from the apocalyptic book of Revelation describe Christian paradise as the "New Jerusalem, coming down out of the clouds," and as a city – the height of human sophistication – into which natural features are seamlessly and thoroughly integrated – the main avenue is a river, banks lined with trees whose leaves are 'for the healing of the nations.' This "downwardly mobile" view of salvation represents a sharp and important corrective to the Christian apocalypticism which, for decades, has been used to criticize the importance of environmental protection.

Renewed Creation

In the 1980s, a Secretary of the Interior gained attention because of his response to a reporter's question about the importance of land conservation. His reply was that as a born-again Christian, he believed the Bible promised a "new heaven and new earth." Because he trusted this promise, he felt justified in downplaying the importance of protecting the Earth.

New Testament scholars have again noted that this reading of the text fails to acknowledge the Greek meaning of the word "new." Biblical Greek contains two words for "new." One means "brand new." The other means "renewed." The Revelation text in question here makes use of the second, suggesting that at the Second Coming of Christ, Creation – and people – will be renewed by the presence of the Messiah, not obliterated and subsequently replaced.

Identify with Us

A final Christian eco-theme is that Jesus actively identifies himself, not only with human beings, but also with the larger Creation. John 3:16 famously begins: "For God so loved the world ..." It is useful to note that this passage does not state, "For God so loved Christians," or "For God so loved humans." The Greek word for "world" – *kosmos* – may be translated as "universe," or "created order." This most popular of verses seems to be saying that the scope of Christ's salvation includes not only people, but the entire created world.

This theme re-appears in two other places. In the beautiful first chapter of John, the text states: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Turning again to biblical Greek, we find that there are two words which can be translated "flesh." One of these is used to refer specifically to human flesh, the other to the flesh of all living beings. And once again, the biblical authors chose the latter word, the one that broadens the scope of Christ's saving love to include all Creation.

Finally, at the Last Supper, Jesus takes elements of Creation, the fruit of the Earth and the work of human hands – bread, and then wine – and makes statements of identification in relation to both: "This is my body. This is my blood." Could this passage, so central to Christian theology, perhaps be read as Jesus' incarnation representing an identification, not only with people but with the wider Creation?

Islam

Like its Abrahamic cousins, Islam holds several core ecological teachings, interpreting them in its own particular manner.

Allah is One; All of Creation is from Allah

The first pillar of Islam is the teaching of the oneness (*tahwid*) of *Allah*. Muslim eco-theologians lift up the environmental connotation of this, noting that if *Allah* is one, then all of Creation comes from *Allah*. This teaching represents a starting point for Islamic environmental thought, grounding it solidly within traditional Muslim belief. Creation's oneness finds expression, in part, through the following of a divine order (the sun and the moon follow courses established by *Allah*) and through its collective worship of the Creator (the trees and the plants all bow in adoration of *Allah*). Animals also are believed to praise God, though their praise is not expressed in human language.

A Sign

The Arabic word *ayat* means "sign," which points to the existence of *Allah*. This term is used in reference to two and only two things. First, each of the 6,236 verses of the Qur'an is a sign pointing directly to God. Second, the world around us, the Creation, serves as a sign that also points to *Allah*. As Ibrahim Abdul Matin, an Islamic environmental writer, has said, "When we stand on a mountaintop, or at the edge of a great sea, or watch a glorious sunrise, we are immersed in the amazement of the signs Allah has spread out before us Our awe is a sense that we are part of the amazing beauty of those signs."⁹

Arabic for Steward

Islamic tradition holds that when the Earth was created, *Allah* sought to identify who should be responsible for its care, who should serve as *Allah's* vice-regent, deputized by and accountable to *Allah* for its wellbeing. *Allah* asked animals, mountains, and other parts of the wider community of Creation to accept this responsibility. They declined, noting the difficulty of the

task. Human beings accepted this role, and were appointed as *Khalifa*, stewards of the planet, answerable to *Allah* at the Day of Judgment for the condition of the planet. Some tellings of this story include the suggestion that human beings accepted this role in a youthfully naïve manner, failing to understand its challenging nature.

Trusted, and Accountable

In assigning humanity the role of *Khalifa*, *Allah* gives humanity the trust (*amana*), the authority to make decisions over the Earth, and holds us accountable for these decisions. As Abdul Matin says:

God has given us the ability to make decisions over the land and the animals, and He trusts us to be responsible with this gift.... Our trust from God is not a license to pillage and destroy or to take from others, be they animals, plants, the ground or the sky, without a just return. Our mandate from God dictates that we must praise the Creator, take care of the planet, and take care of one another.¹⁰

Justice and Balance

Another theme frequently emphasized by Muslim eco-theologians is that of justice (*adl*). Writing on this theme often carries a sense of the importance of responding to oppression – oppression imposed by larger economic forces and corporations on Muslim peoples in the developing world, and on the Earth as well. Exploitation of land is frequently linked with the exploitation of people. Both are enjoined, and humanity's accountability emphasized in strong terms.

Inherent in *Allah's* Creation, and central to a just society, is the concept of balance (*mizan*), a divinely designed order that is an important part of the Earth's wellbeing. Maintaining this balance is an important part of humanity's role.

In addition to its emphasis on justice for humanity, Islam also includes strong teachings about respect for animals. Animals killed for consumption are to be slaughtered in as quick and painless a manner as possible. Muslim teachings forbid the mistreatment of animals, and Mohammed is said to have taught that people are accountable to God for their behavior towards animals.

Conclusion

So at the end of this brief survey, what are the common themes that stand out?

The Natural World Reveals the Divine World

The religions surveyed here all view the Earth as a source of revelation or wisdom about the world of the divine. Whether as a sign of the existence of *Allah* for Muslims or as a spiritual teacher and mentor for Buddhists, the Earth serves to lead us into a deeper understanding of our right path in life.

All Together Now

Though at first this theme sounds more Eastern than Abrahamic, all the traditions we have surveyed assert a fundamental interconnectedness of all the Earth. For the Abrahamic faiths, this is often expressed in liturgical terms – with all Earth's creatures, and features, gathered in a collective praise of the Creator. In the Dharmic and Chinese worlds, the interconnection is felt most strongly in the bonds between people, planet, and past and future generations. Regardless, the essential interconnectedness of the Earth is a fundamental religious teaching.

Restraint

All the traditions we have reviewed also recognize, in their own ways, the importance of human restraint in relation to the environment. Chinese teachings urge us to make our relationship with nature one that flows with natural forces, rather than opposing or diminishing the *ch'i* that animates and orders them. Christian asceticism teaches that spiritual maturity is found only through material restraint. Muslim teachings reflect the moral abhorrence for the oppression – of people and planet – that results when human appetites are not adequately checked by respect for the divine. Judaism's *bal tashchit* enjoins wasteful consumption. In an era of expanding consumerism, these teachings, and the practices used to inculcate their value, gain vital significance on an individual and collective level.

Justice and Compassion

Though the theme of justice in relation to the Earth appears more frequently in Abrahamic teachings, the Dharmic traditions contain a strong emphasis on compassion for all forms of life and, in many ways, are an equivalent, somewhat softer assertion of this same basic impulse. Many of these traditions assert the existence of a divinely-inspired order which, if respected, preserves a just and compassionate society.

The Human Factor

All the traditions have a vision for a human presence on the planet that contributes to its health and wellbeing. The Abrahamic traditions use the steward model most commonly, while the Eastern traditions – both Dharmic and Chinese – place a high value on the transformation and enlightenment of the individual into an ecologically responsible member of society. Whether the focus is inward or outward, the synergies between these teachings are clear. It is also important to note that none of the traditions sanctions the Earth's mistreatment. On that there is perfect agreement.

Notes

- 1 Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).
- 2 See James Howard Kunstler, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape* (New York: Touchstone, 1994).
- 3 See <http://www.fao.org/biodiversity/cross-sectoral-issues/indigenous-people/en/>; accessed Aug 26, 2012.
- 4 See <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTBIODIVERSITY/Resources/RoleofIndigenousPeoplesinBiodiversityConservation.pdf>; accessed Aug 26, 2012.
- 5 See <http://garynabhan.com/>
- 6 For a detailed examination of the history of the Bishnois and other examples of Hindu environmental teaching and practice, see Pankaj Jain, *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability* (Ashgate New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology, and Biblical Studies Series; Surrey, UK and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011).
- 7 From the article, "Ten Jewish Teachings on the Environment," written by Rabbi Troster for GreenFaith: <http://greenfaith.org/religious-teachings/jewish-statements-on-the-environment/ten-jewish-teachings-on-judaism-and-the-environment>
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet* (San Francisco: Berrett Koehler, 2010) represents a useful introduction to the topic of Islamic teaching on the environment. Mr. Abdul-Matin made these comments during a lecture he presented for GreenFaith on Jan 6, 2011.
- 10 Ibid.

The Rev. Fletcher Harper, an Episcopal priest, is Executive Director of GreenFaith, an interfaith environmental coalition that provides environmental programming and resources for diverse faith-based groups nationwide. More information is available at www.greenfaith.org. A graduate of Princeton University and Union Theological Seminary, Harper served as a parish priest and in leadership positions in the Episcopal Church before joining GreenFaith.

Sermon at Gettysburg Seminary Commencement Eucharist 2012

Marty Stevens

Isa 61:1-4

1] *"The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; 2] to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3] to provide for those who mourn in Zion – to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. 4] They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations."*

John 15:1-8

1] *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 2] He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. 3] You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. 4] Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5] I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6] Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7] If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8] My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."*

What a GREAT day! Should we just let out one more hurray for what a great day this is! What a great day to worship the Triune God and celebrate what God is up to in each of us.

And what great timing for this graduation day to be smack-dab in the middle of the spring season. The grass is a deeper shade of green, the trees are regaining their leafy dress, the flowers are blooming, and the birds are singing.

On the neighboring farms, the fields are ready for planting, the smells of spring are in the air. Just last Friday the Student Association sponsored a Spring Garden Party to celebrate spring and bless our community garden.

And it's not coincidental that the grand festival of Easter is in the season of spring. As new life burst out all around us, so Christ burst the bonds of death and is risen to new life. God's word for us this spring day in the season of Easter has a decidedly green tint to it as we consider horticultural imagery in the book of Isaiah and the Gospel of John.

First, the horticultural imagery in the reading from the prophet Isaiah. The translation we heard, the New Revised Standard Version, says: "They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory." People who know about such things say that the Hebrew word translated here as "oaks" is the tree also known as the terebinth. The official Latin name is *Pistachia Terebinthus* – yes, the same genus as the tree that produces the pistachio nut. (Aren't you glad you came here today to learn this?)

The point is that this is a prominent tree. At other places in the Old Testament, the terebinth marks an important place. For example, when Abraham comes to the land of Canaan for the first time, the Lord appears to him at the oak or terebinth of Moreh, the Teacher's Terebinth. After a brief excursion to Egypt, Abraham settles by the terebinths of Mamre, where three men appear one day and announce the birth of a son the next spring. A terebinth, as tall as a 3-story building, can be seen from a great distance. Living for a long time, it can serve as a place-marker for several generations.

Maybe you've seen posters or needlework showing the names for Jesus in the Bible. Jesus is the cornerstone, the lion of Judah, the Morning Star, Messiah, Redeemer, Savior, Alpha and Omega. But nowhere in the Bible is Jesus likened to a terebinth. Too bad, because a terebinth tree would be a great image for the divine: sturdy, strong, hardy, powerful, durable, steadfast.

But the word never shows up in the New Testament! We find the everyday word for tree or wood, but not this word for the majestic terebinth. Jesus is never likened to the terebinth. Instead we hear from Jesus's own lips, **"I am the vine."*

Wait a minute – I think I heard that wrong. The Word of God incarnate, glorified and ascended to the right hand of God, King of Kings and

Lord of Lords – this one says, "I am the vine"? Really??? "I am the bread of life, the light of the world, the gate of the sheep, the good shepherd, the resurrection, the way, the truth, and the life. I am the vine." I mean, really????

As you have no doubt figured out by now, I'm not from around here. I'm from North Carolina. And, I admit, I know nothing about vines. When I think about vines, this is what I picture! Good old Southern Kudzu!

But I'm smart enough to know what I don't know. And I'm smart enough to go talk to someone who *does* know. My friend Jean is a horticulturalist. When I'm in North Carolina visiting my mom, we usually get together to catch up at her house or at a local restaurant. Last month, I went to where she works for a little on-site sermon research. Jean manages a greenhouse attached to a group home for emotionally handicapped juvenile delinquents. The greenhouse there is used as horti-therapy for these boys aged 10-15, and then they sell the plants to local greenhouses, who sell to the rest of us. It looks and smells like any other greenhouse you've ever seen, a big plastic bubble set out from the other buildings, water hoses trailing all over the ground, trays of plants in various stages of growth lined up on wooden tables, wheelbarrows and trowels, big bags of potting soil, fans circulating warm air, and the smell of humid earth permeating everything. All the time we were talking, she was poking tiny seedlings into trays of dirt being prepared by a teenaged boy near us. (It was clear he had never seen on-site sermon research.)

"I've been thinking about vines," I said. Strange look from Jean – she knows my thumb has never been the slightest shade of green. "OK... are you thinking about climbing, trailing, or running vines?" I didn't even know there *were* climbing, trailing, or running vines, so I just said what all good listeners say, "Whatever you want to talk about, I'm ready to listen." As she began to speak, it was as if I could feel the Spirit nudging me. Here's what Jean said.

"Climbing vines are the most interesting, I think. Most people don't really appreciate vines. A lot of folks who don't know anything about vines automatically picture kudzu."

GULP

"Vines are actually smart, adaptive plants." I recovered enough to say "I'm in favor of smart and adaptive." She continued, "Most plants have a thick, main trunk that supports the branches." Even I knew that! "Climbing vines are smart and adaptive in that their tendrils depend on support, benefit from the sun, and focus their energy to be productive. As long as the tendrils remain connected to the vine, the tendrils can be trained to go anywhere under the sun."

That's what she said. I wrote it down. She meant 'sun' S-U-N, but I couldn't help but hear 'son' S-O-N.

Jesus said, "I am the vine. Y'all are the tendrils." Jean said, "Vine tendrils depend on support, benefit from the sun, and focus their energy to be productive. As long as the tendrils remain connected to the vine, the tendrils can be trained to go anywhere under the sun." Wow.

"I am the vine," Jesus said. "Y'all are the tendrils." I suppose we could also think of this community as a Tendril Training Center. As a rule I don't like to characterize what happens here as 'training,' because it brings up images of obedience school for dog training – although I suppose we do say *Stand* and *Sit* a lot! But in the horticultural spirit of the day, perhaps God is using this place as a Tendril Training Center.

The tendrils God is training here *depend on other support – families, friends, home congregations, home synods, donors past and present. Vine tendrils rely on the support of other structures, with gratitude for the abundant life each support provides.

The tendrils God is training here *benefit from the son S-O-N. The life we share together is only possible because Christ lives in us. Jesus is the vine and we are the tendrils. Our baptism into Christ is the source of our life together.

The tendrils God is training here focus their energy. We realize that an academic curriculum, no matter how stellar its design and how stunning its faculty, is only a fraction of the training any tendril gets. CPE sites, candidacy committees, Internship sites, Teaching Parishes, Diaconal Ministry Project sites – all these places help tendrils focus and renew their energy.

The tendrils God is training here bear fruit in the world. Today we celebrate the awarding of academic degrees – for the sake of ministry in the world, for the sake of those other tendrils out there who are also part of the vine.

Connected to the vine, the tendrils God is training here can go anywhere under the Son.

Some tendrils will bloom in their first season, purple and blue and pink, trumpet flowers and sweet honeysuckle. Others will need a season or two of patience as they sort out what's going on around them. Some tendrils will feel like they have run into a blank brick wall and are hanging on for dear life, struggling for the smallest toe-hold. Others will find that their tendrils easily build on what has gone before. Some tendrils will feel unproductive, even dead, wondering if new life will ever come. Others will see the new life attracted to the vine right away.

Jesus said, "I am the vine. Y'all are the tendrils." From this Tendril Training Center, we say, "Go into the world. Climb and Trail and Run.

Hold onto your support. Seek the son. Stay connected to the vine. Bear fruit. Be a faithful, abundant tendril, drawing life from the life-giving true vine, our Lord, Jesus Christ."

And let all the people say Amen.

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A Bibliography of Bonhoeffer Biography Part I: Five Decades at a Glance

Guy C. Carter

It will be recognized by anyone who has read anything at all on the subject that the brief and intense career of this Lutheran pastor and theologian on the cutting edge of history is intrinsically biographical. The record of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's thought and actions were inseparable from his life. That life included his faith, his family, his people and nation. The revolutionary world in which he took a stand that he could easily have avoided, cost him his life and the earthly happiness toward which he looked forward with the passion of a man in love, a man determined to found a family with honor and help rebuild a new Europe with decency. Few figures from the church and political history of the twentieth century have received such intense scrutiny over the decades since WWII as Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The fact that it has taken over sixty years for debunking to begin to appear in print in Germany is a measure of his enduring stature.¹

This two-part essay will examine the contours of this literary creation over time in a variety of media with attention to the interplay between biography, hagiography and polemic characteristic of all attempts to convey the meaning of Bonhoeffer's life.² These works include books, monographs, filmed interviews, biographical novels, and dramatic works devoted primarily to placing the life and work of this man in historical, intellectual and existential context of his time and our own. General introductions to Bonhoeffer's theology, which include substantial biographical chapters and references throughout, fall within the scope of this study. Comparative biographies, in which Bonhoeffer is paired with one other contemporary, e.g., Simone Weil or Etty Hillesum,³ will be included as well, as these offer the chance to see Bonhoeffer in profile contrasted with a contemporary struggling with the same challenges posed by the Nazi terror.

Not included here are the rich store of unpublished university theses and dissertations, periodical articles, and the literally scores of reference work entries for Dietrich Bonhoeffer. These important contributions serve to point up the basic facts of the subject's life and work, and normally not to break new ground. Biographical treatments of Bonhoeffer among several other figures will be excluded, where the focus is on the common denominator among them, rather than on the biographical subjects themselves. A good example of this type of treatment is Hava Kohav Beller's superb 1992 documentary, *The Restless Conscience*.⁴ Though some note will be taken of periodical articles and published lectures dealing specifically with the problem of writing a Bonhoeffer biography, biographical articles as such will not be included in this bibliography of Bonhoeffer biography. These are myriad and, in some cases, repetitious. This selection, practical for the most part, is not intended to settle the question of what constitutes a Bonhoeffer biography and what does not.

My own acquaintance, both occasional and random, with what have become some of the standard biographies of Dietrich Bonhoeffer or biographical introductions to his work has turned out to be but the tip of the iceberg of this body of literature. The growing need to identify and classify Bonhoeffer sources, growing exponentially in mass since the 1960s, called for local organization and international co-operation. The first efforts toward a bibliography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer primary and secondary sources in fact predated the formation of the International Bonhoeffer Society for Archive and Research (the 'International Bonhoeffer Committee' as it was called in Germany and elsewhere) in 1971. Clifford J. Green gives a clear narrative of the phases of the project:

Even prior to the organization of the International Bonhoeffer Society in 1971, plans had been made to produce a multi-lingual international Bonhoeffer bibliography. Delays caused by technical problems led to the decision to publish an interim English language Bonhoeffer bibliography in 1976 (Clifford J. Green, "Bonhoeffer Bibliography: English Language Sources," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 31/4 (Summer 1976): 227-60). This was updated a number of times in the *Newsletter* of the Bonhoeffer Society (See nos. 12 (April 1978), 23 (November 1982), 24 (February 1983) and 29 (January 1985). In the 1980s new projects required attention. First, the Bonhoeffer papers (*Nachlass*) had to be systematically ordered and cataloged and an index (*Findbuch*) prepared (D. Meyer and Eberhard Bethge, eds., *Nachlass Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1987). Above all, the great effort of editing the new sixteen-volume edition of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

fer's works, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke*, was undertaken, and the first two volumes were published in 1986....

The Board of Directors of the English Language Section of the Bonhoeffer Society therefore decided at its November, 1985 meeting to produce a comprehensive bibliography of all works in English, since the attachment of several updates to the 1976 publication had resulted in a cumbersome collection. This culminated in a *Bonhoeffer Bibliography: Primary and Secondary Sources in English*, edited by Clifford J. Green and Wayne W. Floyd, Jr., which was published by the Society in 1986. This second publication was in turn updated by Wayne W. Floyd, Jr. several times in the Society's *Newsletter* (See nos. 34 (February 1987), 37 (February 1988), 40 (February 1989), 43 (February 1990) and 46 (1991). The present publication supersedes these two earlier versions of the *Bibliography*.⁵

I have consulted all of the above, as well as the above-mentioned *International Bibliography on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, which appeared at long last in 1998.⁶ The sources have brought into sharp focus the daunting volume of biographical sources. Individual colleagues within the ever convivial fellowship of the International Bonhoeffer Society have been, as usual, generous, in answering my questions about Bonhoeffer biography being written and published in languages I do not read with any facility.⁷

Beginnings

The first published attempt to present Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life to a public otherwise unaware of who he was, of his role in the German resistance to Hitler, or, for that matter, that there *was a German resistance at all* came in the form of neither book nor monograph, but rather of a script for a brilliant two-act play simple enough to perform in any school auditorium or church basement, *The Cup of Trembling* in 1958 [297]. For thousands in the English-speaking world, this play, originally written as a Union Theological Seminary doctoral dissertation, has been and will be their guide to Bonhoeffer's life and thought. *The Cup of Trembling* confronts audiences with a radical and disturbingly political Christian witness that runs counter to a disengaged American middle class Christianity of 'affiliation.' The play remains a window onto a violent past that, even in the twenty-first century, seems as but yesterday, with all too familiar horrors repeated daily on the world stage. Playwright-theologian Elizabeth Berryhill saw Bonhoeffer's life conform to a model radically different from the one prescribed by the tyranny of hatred under which he, with Germany and most of Europe, was forced to live. As theater crowds in a prosperous post-War United States began to ponder and

murmur about the figure and the faith they had encountered in the small space of two acts, journalist-theologian Wolf-Dieter Zimmermann gathered old university and seminary classmates and other protégés of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in a Germany and Europe still reeling from the destruction of WWII to commit their "reminiscences" to paper, memories and perspectives of the one who had been at the center of their experience of faith, of ministry and of the terrible twelve years of the Third Reich, of the one whose absence from them was now so keenly felt [526-531].

But why this urgency to create a record of memory? The name 'Dietrich Bonhoeffer' was hardly a household word, barely known outside Germany and the ecumenical and academic circles in which he moved. There was no constituency to claim him then, though many would later. Apart from his doctoral and habilitation theses, on Christology and Ecclesiology respectively, and a small but impressive publication, there was of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the late 1950s and early 1960s still just the literary estate of a young churchman and scholar whose life had been cut short. Of the nine books of his literary output, truncated by the state prohibition against public speaking or publishing (*Redeverbot*), none of them were translated from the German until after War's end.⁸ This *Nachlass* was being lovingly sorted through and then meticulously collated by another of Bonhoeffer's student protégés, Eberhard Bethge, who had become his friend and faithful correspondent during Bonhoeffer's imprisonment and who quite naturally thought of publishing that prison correspondence with its spiritually and philosophically explosive content as soon as possible.

Laying a Firm Foundation for Scholarship

In the editing of the prison correspondence, and in all of the subsequent documentary sorting and editing of the Bonhoeffer legacy, Eberhard Bethge was assisted and supported by his wife, Renate Bethge, to whom Pastor and Professor Bonhoeffer was her 'Uncle Dietrich.' Through their lifetime of collaboration, the Bethges enlisted more and more scholars with skills needed for what was to be the work of their life together. The ensuing mammoth undertaking produced an initial six volumes of collected works available beginning in 1965, the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer gesammelte Schriften* (abbrv. *GS*)⁹ and finally issued forth in the past three decades in a sixteen-volume scholarly edition, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke* (abbrv. *DBW*)¹⁰ with an English-speaking twin, the *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition* (abbrv. *DBWE*).¹¹ But, for the time being, in that decade and a half after Bonhoeffer's martyrdom, while amateur thespians interpreted Bonhoeffer on stages throughout the United States and the British Commonwealth, and while

Zimmermann's reminiscences of those who had known and worked with Bonhoeffer were read in both German and English, the Bethges and their growing circle of friends and co-workers made it possible for the reading world to meet this theologian, pastor, martyr, and resistor to the personal and structural evil that very nearly destroyed civilization. Ready or not, meet him we would.

Reading Bonhoeffer Backwards

Dietrich Bonhoeffer would encounter post-War America through the stark, though often hopeful and yet foreboding words of *Widerstand und Ergebung* ('Resistance and Submission'), published in English as *Letters and Papers from Prison*, and for most only later through *Nachfolge* ('Following [of Christ]', or 'Discipleship', first published in English as *The Cost of Discipleship*), books that did seem to readers at the time, especially perhaps to American readers, as though they were written by two authors from two irreconcilable parts of the religious and theological universe. *Discipleship* first appeared in English translation in 1949, and *Letters and Papers* (customarily abbreviated *LPP*) in 1951, followed by other whole books and anthologies in English translation both edited by Edwin Hanton Robertson and many others from 1948 to 1990.¹² But the buzz on this side of the Atlantic was about *LPP* and a 'non-religious interpretation of Christianity' in 'a world come of age.'

As Pat Kelley has astutely observed, that order of acquaintance, with *LPP* jumping the queue in our attention, has made American seekers of Bonhoeffer particularly prone to develop a backwards approach to him. Europeans, and Germans in particular, habitually assume the complexity of any historical source, however recent, and instinctively read and interpret through the lenses of layer upon layer of history and tradition. Americans like to cut to the chase, to get to the point and to know what that point is. The great counterpoint to the seemingly extreme formulations of *LPP*, on which Bonhoeffer had been working while moving from place to place in his *Abwehr* (resistance) assignments and then in Tegel Prison, the *Ethics*, which he considered his most important work, would be translated and published in English beginning in 1955 and theoretically available to readers of *LPP*. Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* is nothing if not complex, intellectually demanding, somewhat socially conservative (as distinct from the National Socialist emptying of all moral and social norms in the name of the totalitarian state), very theological in an orthodox Lutheran way, and quite churchly. But, by 1955, Dietrich Bonhoeffer had become 'popular' not for his theological ethics with its Christological center and its ecclesiological

concretization of the Christian within the incarnate community of Jesus Christ, the Church. Rather, he had posthumously acquired the popular reputation of being existentially *avant-garde* and devoutly secularist, a twentieth-century Kierkegaard for the 'Age of Anxiety.'¹³ No amount of contemporary Continental or post-facto American scholarship could possibly prevent the construction of whole ecclesiologies without religion and theologies without a living God, not to mention the establishment of schools of thought and the careers that earned a living from them.

Solid Food for Thought on Bonhoeffer

Meanwhile Eberhard and Renate Bethge, and in time a much larger circle of dedicated co-workers, coalescing in 1971 around the International Bonhoeffer Society/Committee for Archive and Research, would step up the pace of their patient work with a will. The result was an almost exponential increase in good editions of published and heretofore unpublished primary resources in Bonhoeffer studies. Not all did, or do, or shall acquire the skills, knowledge and discipline to be able to use these. Some may yearn for the relative freedom Elizabeth Berryhill enjoyed when she created so much drama with so little text, though all who truly respect the memory and the achievement of Bonhoeffer should know better, and most do. The work of editing and publishing the German and English critical editions of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's works has required of those who produced them in some cases the greater part of their working lives. Thanks to their efforts and many sacrifices it is becoming more and more possible to hear the message of radical love for which Bonhoeffer lived and died, and it is becoming more and more possible to see him in sharp profile in the world in which it was his destiny to bear witness to the living God. Those who write Bonhoeffer's biography today, whether as straightforward biography, as historical novel, as drama, as musical oratorio or through the visible and performing arts, owe a debt of respect to their subject and to those who have cared for his legacy and have passed it on to the coming generation. That debt is best paid by making thorough and consistent use of the sources now ready to hand.

Bonhoeffer Biography: Truly International and Ecumenical Bibliography is a utilitarian form of writing and can seldom be described as transformative for the understanding of the scholar who uses it. The English language and international Bonhoeffer bibliographies are exceptions to this rule, as is true, I think, of my abridgement of these lists. One sees immediately that Bonhoeffer biography has hardly been the sole province of the German-Anglo-American troika in Bonhoeffer studies. Instead, the Romance,

Nordic, Slavic, and Finno-Ugric languages, the languages of East Asia and the regions, cultures, and societies to which they all give voice are well represented in the following lists and often come to the fore in terms of frequency of translation. To cite but one example, one of the most translated, and presumably most widely read Bonhoeffer biographers is neither Anglophone nor an inhabitant of the German language zone, nor does he share the Protestant identity of most members of my acquaintance in the International Bonhoeffer Society. French Jesuit Father René Marlé [829] began a careful telling of the life story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer through his biography in 1967, in exactly the same year as Eberhard Bethge's long-awaited Bonhoeffer biography was published [765].

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Conclusion

Among the Bonhoeffer biographies listed here, there is an apparently broad spectrum ranging from the scholarly to the almost purely personal. All share the goal to communicate that profound contact that has been made with Dietrich Bonhoeffer at many different levels. Most of the recent outbreaks of *rabies theologorum*, targetting some recent and perhaps reckless, slovenly or biased attempts at Bonhoeffer biography, have to do with the historical and theological sense among those who have walked part or all of the way with Bonhoeffer scholarship from April 1945 to the present that, as in Biblical studies, there is no substitute for hard literary spade work and historical circumspection where Bonhoeffer, his world, his vision of God, the Church and society are concerned. A closer look at the record of Bonhoeffer biography in the forthcoming second part of this essay will try to identify which of the many attempts have made the best use of the resources available at the time they were written, how the availability of good German editions and translations in English and other languages have determined the ebb and flow of Bonhoeffer biography over these past decades, and which of these works, new or old, ought to be recommended for another reading.

Notes

- 1 See *Die Zeit*-online reports of Norbert Weidner's patriotic grumblings about Bonhoeffer's wartime resistance activity with German Counter Intelligence (*die Abwehr*). Thanks to Dr. Reinhard Krauss, UCLA, for forwarding the following: http://blog.zeit.de/stoerungsmelder/2012/08/01/burschenschafter-streit-um-verunglimpfung-bonhoeffers-kommt-vor-gericht_9309http://images.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeit-geschehen/2012-05/leserbrief_weidner.pdf
- 2 Part II of the essay will appear in the Autumn 2013 issue of *Seminary Ridge Review*.
- 3 Vivienne Blackburn, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Simone Weil: A Study in Christian Responsiveness* (Religions and Discourse 24; New York: Peter Lang, 2004); Ylva Eggehorn, *Att ta ansvar för Gud: om hängivenhet som motstånd; en bok om Etty Hillesum och Dietrich Bonhoeffer* ['To take responsibility before God: On submission as resistance; a book about Etty Hillesum and Dietrich Bonhoeffer'] (Stockholm: Verbum/Cordia, 2004).
- 4 Hava Kohav Beller, *The Restless Conscience: Resistance to Hitler within Germany, 1933-1945* (DVD 113-min.; PBS with support of NEH, CPB, GIC-NY and the John D. and Catherine T. McArthur Foundation, 1992; New Video Group, 2009). The film follows key members of the Kreisau Circle, Dietrich Bonhoeffer among them, from their feverish attempts in 1934 to get the Western Allies to act with the German military and political resistance to depose Hitler before hostilities commenced, all the way to 20 July, 1944, and the retribution that followed.
- 5 Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr. and Clifford J. Green, eds., *Bonhoeffer Bibliography: Primary Sources and Secondary Literature in English* (Evanston, IL: American Theological Library Association, 1992). Updates to the 1992 *Bibliography* have been prepared by Clifford J. Green with the assistance of Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr. (1992-2000), Craig J. Slane (2001-2007), and Joel D. Lawrence (2008-present). Entries in the *Bonhoeffer Bibliography*... *English* and updates are not numbered.

- 6 Ernst Feil, ed., with Barbara Fink, co-ord. ed., *Internationale Bibliographie zu Dietrich Bonhoeffer – International Bibliography on Dietrich Bonhoeffer* [abbrv. *IBDB*] (Munich and Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser and Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1998). Co-editors responsible for specific languages were José J. Alemany (Spanish, Portuguese, Catalan), Adrian G. Baas (Dutch), Jørgen Glenthøj (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish), Clifford J. Green and Wayne W. Floyd, Jr. (English), Imre Janossy and Ferenc Lehel (Hungarian), Maria Cristina Laurenzi (Italian), Raymond Mengus (French), Josef Smolik and Ján Liguš (Czech, Slovak), Kyoo-Tae Sohn (Korean), Kazuaki Yamasaki (Japanese). An update (*Ergänzung*) of the *IBDB* is being prepared by Ralf Wüstenberg, Joel Burnell, et al. Like the *IBDB*, entries in the updated international bibliography will be numbered consecutively but are still subject to revision. While using the *IBDB* index to search under 'Biographie,' 'Leben,' and 'Leben und Werk,' I noticed a number of missing entries. These are nos. 2037, 2449, 3315 and 3332, and discovered in other searches further missing entries nos. 206 and 3358. In my bibliography of Bonhoeffer biographies, *IBDB* entry numbers will be given in brackets at the beginning of the entry. A reference back to the first published edition will be given with the device '↗,' e.g., '[894↗765]' This device will be used with titles not listed in the *IBDB*, but with reference only to the year of first edition. E.g., a title entry under the year 1984 first published in 1967 will bear the annotation '↗1967' at the end.
- 7 To Clifford Green, for helping me to see both the big picture of Bonhoeffer scholarship and the details, of which he is an indispensable part, and to colleagues abroad for their generous help in identifying and evaluating Bonhoeffer biographies in Japanese, Kazuaki Yamasaki, in Portuguese and Spanish, Carlos Caldas, Jr., in Swedish and other Scandinavian languages, Karina Juhl Kande, and in Polish and other Eastern European languages, Joel Burnell, all active members of the International Bonhoeffer Society in their respective regional and linguistic Sections, I express my sincere thanks.
- 8 *Sanctorum Communio* ['The Communion of Saints'] 1930; *Akt und Sein* ['Act and Being'] 1931; *Schöpfung und Fall* ['Creation and Fall'] 1933; *Christologie* ['Christology'] 1933; *Seelsorge* ['Spiritual Care'] 1935-39; *Nachfolge* ['Discipleship'] 1937; *Versuchung* ['Temptation'] 1939; *Gemeinsames Leben* ['The Common Life' or 'Life Together'] 1939; *Das Gebetbuch der Bibel* ['The Prayer Book of the Bible'] 1940.
- 9 Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer gesammelte Schriften* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, vol. 1: 1965; vol. 2: 1965; vol. 3: 1966; vol. 4: 1965; vol. 5: 1972; vol. 6: 1974).
- 10 Eberhard Bethge, et al, eds., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke (DBW)* in 17 Bänden + 2 Ergänzungsbände (Munich: Chr. Kaiser; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1986-1999).
- 11 Genral Editors Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr., Victoria J. Barnett and Barbara Wojhoski, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works (DBWE)* in 16 volumes (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996-2012). The 15 volumes now published are also available in digital form through Logos Bible Software.
- 12 For a chronology of these pre-DBWE translations, see Floyd and Green, *Bonhoeffer Bibliography: Primary Sources and Secondary Literature in English*, 1-7.
- 13 James Patrick Kelley, "Bonhoeffer Studies in English: How Theologians Become Popular," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 3/1 (January 1968) 12-19.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Muhlenberg's Ministerium, Ben Franklin's Deism, and the Churches of the Twenty-First Century: Reflections on the 250th Anniversary of the Oldest Lutheran Church Body in North America

John Reumann, editor, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011)

Reviewed by Mark W. Oldenburg

This book is a fine resource for understanding one of the main source-streams of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and some of its distinguishing characteristics. While subject to the weaknesses of any work with sixteen authors, and limited by the long gap between its writing and its publication, there are some real jewels to be found within it. It is worthy not only of reading, but also of discussing with churchly friends.

First, a word in service of full disclosure: I was involved in the genesis of this book. As its subtitle indicates, it is the product of the 1998 celebration of the 250th anniversary of the establishment of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania. I was invited to be a member of the planning group for this celebration (apparently as the General Council representative on the Gettysburg Seminary faculty), attended most of the events which were a part of that celebration, and provided a response to one of the public lectures (which was not included in the book). My name appears a few times in the work, occasionally spelled correctly. Despite that, I'll try to be disinterested in this review.

The work is divided into three major parts. At the heart of the first is the foundational summary of four characteristics of the Ministerium of Pennsyl-

vania and their present parallels: mission, church organization, personal Christian experience, and ecumenism. This summary was written by Robert Marshall, president of the Lutheran Church in America (1968-1978) and at the time of the writing Senior Scholar at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. A church historian of significant repute responded to each of Marshall's descriptions, and these responses are included in the book. Since Marshall needed to provide an overview and the responders were free to be focused and idiosyncratic, it is no surprise that these responses are both more interesting and more evocative than the major presentation.

At the heart of the second section is a major paper by John Reumann on Muhlenberg's ministry and its ramifications for the present. Reumann was, of course, best known as a New Testament scholar. He was dauntingly knowledgeable, however, in both American Lutheran history and Lutheran confessional theology as this article fully demonstrates. He re-visits some of the same territory as Marshall, but at greater depth of scholarship and story, and distills four more significant characteristics of the Ministerium in Muhlenberg's time with implications for the next quarter-millennium: poverty and hence poor support for the church; hopes for institutions of education and human care (which the poverty slowed but could not stop); a sense of social inferiority; and a commitment to a theology which is pastoral and confessional, but solid rather than spectacular. Again, three church historians provide responses to this article.

The third section is an *omnium gatherum* of presentations and productions from the main convocation in 1998 and elsewhere. These include a dramatization of the confrontation between Muhlenberg the pietist and his orthodoxist contemporary Johann Casper Stoeber, and an imaginative re-creation of letters of Muhlenberg's wife. Herman Stuempfle is represented with the hymn text commissioned for the occasion. Unfortunately the type and music in which it is printed is so small as to make its use difficult. The section is book-ended by its most enjoyable and useful articles: a call from H. George Anderson, then bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, to avoid both anamnesia and nostalgia on such anniversaries, but to make them occasions for recommitment; and a characteristically pithy and personal address by Charles Glatfelter at the dedication of the Muhlenberg family home in Trappe.

The work ends with yet another fine article by Reumann using the Ministerium's experience in the context of powerful contemporary Deism with our own experience in the context of its continuing power in civil religion.

It was planned that this work would have been released soon after the celebrations of 1998. That it was not is one of the many tragic results of John Reumann's failing health and death – that he was able to give this work so much time and attention, as well as finish his commentary on Philippians in his final months is testament to his dedication and ability. The work was

taken up by the organizing force behind the celebration, Kenneth Senft, who with his customary modesty omits his name from the work but cannot hide his light from the *cognoscenti*. The delay in publication, however, makes this a strange work. So much has happened in the ELCA between 1998 and 2011 that the articles seem to be describing a different church. Not only the actions of the church on human sexuality, and the responses to it, but the publication of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, the growth in service and visibility of Lutheran Services in America, the explosion of student debt and other issues facing theological education have had significant impact on the life of the church. The parallels between Muhlenberg's day and ours, and between the Ministerium of Pennsylvania and the ELCA, would have been no less striking and important, but they are quite different now.

That being said, this is still an important and useful book. Among other things it is a gift to the ELCA from many of the movers and shakers of the LCA, and if you want a taste of the liveliness, churchmanship, and scholarship of Reumann and Marshall, Bost and Wentz, Anderson and Shoemaker, you'll catch it here. But of even more interest are the parallels and characteristics that the authors find between Muhlenberg's church and ours. This would be a fine book to read with some friends while solving the problems of our times. Why is it, for instance (using two of Reumann's implications) that Lutherans have in general lost our poverty but not our sense of social inferiority?

A more important point, however, is raised by one particular legacy of Muhlenberg and the Ministerium of Pennsylvania (and of the institutions at Halle from which they arose): Lutherans of the Muhlenberg tradition have generally not fallen into the trap of assuming that the Spirit and structure are at war. Among the many characteristics of the Ministerium is that it was an institution, one which did not only benefit from its members' faith, but which in fact nourished it as well, and one which long outlived its founder. That pattern of binding together beyond the congregation in cooperative ventures is one that explains the explosion of social ministry organizations in the Muhlenberg tradition (and why American Lutherans are as over-represented in human care as they are under-represented in political power). This book could spark some late night conversation (and, *deo volente*, mid-morning action) on how certain legacies of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania could be passed on for the next several generations.

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Take My Hand: A Theological Memoir

Andrew Taylor-Troutman (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2012)

Reviewed by Brent A. R. Hege

The first year in the parish, fresh out of seminary, can be an experience that is at once daunting and exhilarating for any new pastor. The same might be said for the parishioners who welcome the new pastor into their midst to begin their ministry together. The first year of ministry is an opportunity to build relationships, to experience the joys and frustrations of shared ministry, to discover strengths and weaknesses, and to put into practice years of valuable seminary training. For pastors and parishioners alike this can be a time of great anticipation and excitement as they embark on their journey into the future together.

Many church bodies, including the ELCA, offer opportunities for newly ordained pastors to gather together during their first years in ministry for continuing education, practical workshops, and what Luther called the mutual conversation and consolation of the saints. What is perhaps less common in the first year of ministry is cultivating a discipline of reflecting and writing about these experiences of first-call ministry in all of its many ups and downs and sideways turns. In addition to settling into a new community, adjusting to the rhythms of life in a new parish, establishing ties with parishioners, writing sermons, visiting the sick and homebound, teaching Bible studies and attending council meetings, the thought of writing about these experiences would surely seem to most new pastors to be one burden too many.

But for Andrew Taylor-Troutman, recent graduate of Union Presbyterian Seminary and pastor of New Dublin Presbyterian Church in the mountains of southwestern Virginia, the discipline of reflecting and writing about his first year in the parish has enabled him to integrate the various threads of his training and experiences into a cohesive narrative that throws into sharper relief the complex, challenging, immensely rewarding and indeed sometimes poignantly beautiful moments of ministry in his small-town parish. Taylor-Troutman has carefully chosen the title *Take My Hand* to grace the cover of what is a deeply personal and honest portrayal of his experiences in a small congregation in a small town, very much like the small congregations in the small towns inhabited by so many readers of the *Seminary Ridge Review*. The guiding metaphor of the book, first shared in

the introduction, is taken from a statement by the twentieth-century philosopher and theologian Martin Buber, who said, with no small measure of self-effacement, "I am no philosopher, prophet, or theologian, but a man who has seen something and who goes to a window and points to what he has seen" (xviii). In the pages that follow, Taylor-Troutman invites readers to take his hand and embark on a journey through the window, to discover together what God is doing and what God is calling us to do.

The book is arranged in chronological order by the date of sermons Taylor-Troutman preached at New Dublin Presbyterian Church over the course of his first year as pastor of that congregation. Each chapter begins with a personal anecdote, either recounting something that had happened in the parish or something more personal that had happened in Taylor-Troutman's life. These anecdotes then give way to a deeper theological reflection on a particular aspect of life and ministry in the parish and include such diverse issues as pastoral visits, administering the sacraments, evangelism, death and dying, responding to natural disasters, teaching Bible study, reflecting on interreligious dialogue, eschatology, and difficult theological doctrines, and coming to terms with the unanswerable questions that, almost inevitably, turn out to be the most important questions of all. Each chapter then closes with a sermon delivered at New Dublin that incorporates many of the themes of the chapter. These sermons concretely illustrate Taylor-Troutman's gift of thinking deeply about the relationships between the Bible, ethics, and the church's theological tradition as these issues are lived in a particular community of faith. Each conversation, episode, and encounter is drawn into a deeper theological commentary on what it means to be a pastor in a community with very deep roots and earnest questions about the future. Taylor-Troutman draws from his rich relationship with the Bible, his considerable knowledge of the theological tradition, his passion for issues of justice and ethics, and his obvious love and respect for the people he is called to serve. Furthermore, the sermon at the end of each chapter illustrates just how intertwined these perspectives are and ought to be in the work of parish ministry; by including these sermons, Taylor-Troutman offers a model of how preaching, at its best, grows organically out of the rhythms of daily life among the people of God in a particular time and place.

Readers will find much of the book familiar, even if they have never been to southwestern Virginia and even if they have never set foot in a Presbyterian church. The rhythms of parish life come alive in the pages of the book and one grows to appreciate and respect the people of whom Taylor-Troutman speaks so fondly. What becomes clear after only a few pages is that Taylor-Troutman values relationships above all else; the word itself

appears dozens of times in the book and infuses his reflections with heart and soul. The relationship between the human being and God, the relationships we build with one another, the relationship between past, present and future, the relationships with neighbors near and far, with structures and systems larger than the sum of their parts, and with the natural world itself, all form the matrix out of which life and ministry are born and thrive. In several of the chapters these relationships themselves become a character in the narrative; Taylor-Troutman's wife, his dog, his family, his colleagues in ministry, his parishioners, his forbears, and the whole communion of saints, past, present, and future, all have starring roles in his memoir. He describes first meetings with pillar members of the congregation, learning valuable lessons from wise old farmers and precocious children, sharing a moment of holiness as his grandfather lay dying in a hospice, and forging a new relationship with a Sunday morning visitor thanks to a misplaced offering plate and the hasty passing of a baseball hat. These relationships are not treated as peripheral to the task of ministry; rather, they form the foundation of everything that follows, as Taylor-Troutman makes clear in his introduction: "Despite the risks of disclosure, this book must be personal because I preach to people I personally know. As the eternal Word became flesh in Jesus Christ, so our faith as his disciples is embodied in our community" (xviii).

Readers looking for heartwarming stories of life and ministry in a small town will certainly be rewarded by reading this memoir, but it would be a mistake to assume that there is nothing more on offer here than a collection of touching anecdotes and some self-effacing tales of first-year gaffes and Sunday morning bloopers. Rather, *Take My Hand* is what it purports itself to be: a theological memoir. Each chapter includes an anecdote or two, not as ends in themselves, but as invitations to think more deeply about the theological issues that bubble up from the quotidian moments, glimpses of the sacred shimmering within the mundane, intimations of the infinite always borne in, with and under the finite. It should therefore come as no surprise that Scripture, too, plays an essential role in Taylor-Troutman's reflections on life and ministry in his first year in the parish. Drawing on a wide range of biblical texts and images, Taylor-Troutman's reflections on ministry never stray far from the Bible as the beating heart of his ministry with the people of New Dublin. But as Karl Barth famously said, the preacher ought to prepare sermons with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Taylor-Troutman lives this model of engaged preaching and ministry and this practice clearly informs the thinking that culminates in his memoir. The sermons are particularly rich and rewarding examples of thinking critically and faithfully about Scripture and tradition as they inform, shape, and guide the Christian life.

The Christian life means being and acting in concrete situations, always open to the promptings of the Spirit and never satisfied to rest comfortably on the false assurances of knowing all the answers. What makes this possible, quite simply and quite improbably, is grace. Grace permeates the pages of *Take My Hand*, both as a theological concept and as a recipe for daily life. Grace appears as a thunderbolt, a still small voice, a sudden memory, a way where there is no way, a stranger's gesture, a selfless act of love, a child's boldness, a good death, a walk through a cemetery, an autumn afternoon spent pressing cider, caring for victims of a tornado, passing the peace, sitting in silence, sharing a meal. Accompanying this profound awareness of the extravagance of grace is a healthy dose of humility and an invitation to remain open to the unexpected, the surprising, the discomforting, and the unforeseen. It is grace that fuels the Christian life, grace that opens up the future before us, grace that keeps us pressing on without all the answers or a clear map to point the way.

To get to where we need to go, it helps to have the company of fellow travelers, someone who will extend a hand and walk with us on our journey. From beginning to end, *Take My Hand* is an invitation to do just that. Despite the rather specific nature of the book's genesis, it taps into something profoundly true and important across the lines that threaten to divide us and will accordingly appeal to a wide range of readers: seminarians curious about what awaits them after graduation, first-call pastors who will no doubt be comforted by the familiarity of many of the stories and encouraged by the sermons and theological reflections, and pastors now several years past first call who will remember fondly those first years of ministry. But perhaps most importantly, *Take My Hand* will appeal to lay women and men eager to follow the journey of a young pastor on his first call, to learn from his experiences with the people with whom he shares his ministry, and to find refreshment and rejuvenation for the work to which we are all called together: to be the body of the crucified and risen Christ, in and for the world.

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Power, Politics, and the Missouri Synod: A Conflict that Changed American Christianity

James C. Burkee (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011)

Reviewed by James Childs

As a former Missouri Synod “moderate” who experienced many of the events narrated in this book as a concerned and anxious observer and eventually as a participant, I found Burkee’s work to be engaging and engrossing in its responsible scholarship.

James Burkee believes that the “civil war” of the 60’s and 70’s within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod played a major role in the development of an increasingly polarized – theologically and politically – American Christianity.

Burkee’s account of this conflict centers for the most part on the relationship between Jacob “Jack” Preus and Herman Otten, who were, together with their allies, the main characters in the drama of the conservative victory in Missouri.

Preus was the choice of the burgeoning conservative movement as the candidate for Synod president who could return Synod to its historic tradition of “pure doctrine” grounded in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Indeed, with the help of a well organized conservative machine, Preus was elected in 1969, beginning a presidency that focused its purge of false doctrine primarily on the majority faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The climax of the events and actions associated with the investigation and castigation of the seminary faculty “moderates” was reached on February 19, 1974 when, after the suspension of seminary president, John Tietjen, the faculty majority and most of the students walked off the campus. They declared themselves in exile. The action led to the founding of Concordia Seminary-in-Exile or Seminex.

Herman Otten was a disaffected man, whom Burkee rightly describes as a tragic figure and whom he considers to have been the most influential single figure in the conservative movement up to the time of Preus’s election in 1969. As a seminarian in 1958, Otten made accusations that Concordia Seminary faculty members were guilty of heresy, questioning the historicity of

certain biblical accounts and undermining the doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of scripture. When he refused to admit that these were false allegations the faculty denied his certification for ordained ministry. Embittered, he continued his crusade in his publication *Christian News*. It was a crusade that fueled the conservative movement, did much to empower its leaders, and in no small measure contributed to the election of Jack Preus. Preus and other conservative leaders profited from Otten’s work, they often kept him informed, and they sought his support. However, they publicly distanced themselves from him and even condemned him in certain cases. His appeal to have the denial of his certification reversed was never granted, despite the ascendancy of conservative leadership he did so much to foster. Meanwhile, moderates underestimated him and made the mistake of dismissing him as a strident purveyor of yellow journalism, lacking in credibility.

While the major events and actions of the Missouri conflict are well known and well documented, Burkee’s account lets the reader in on the private conversations, correspondence, and recollections that take us behind the scenes of the political maneuvers in which Preus and other leaders of the conservative movement were engaged. There is also brief discussion of the moderates’ efforts in response, but this is not the focus of the book; it is simply a part of the story.

Beyond his research in voluminous public records and publications, Burkee had extensive interviews with Herman Otten, and was given access to his files. Among others he had interviews with Preus ally and conservative leader, Waldo Werning, and with Ralph Bohlman, who succeeded Jack Preus as president of Synod in 1981. He was also given access to Jack Preus’s recently unsealed files. Quotations from these sources are throughout the book and make for some fascinating and often disturbing reading.

A major revelation, at least for some, is the fragmentation of the conservative movement. For many who were on the receiving end of the conservative purge the movement seemed monolithic. However, even though, as Burkee notes, the attack on the seminary kept conservatives united, they were in reality divided over how to proceed with the remaking of Synod. The disagreements and attendant frustrations were in no small measure exacerbated by Jack Preus’s own duplicity. His use of and rejection of Otten is illustrative. Preus is clearly revealed as a political pragmatist whose supporters were often unhappy that he did not move against the moderates with more dispatch and, though they supported him, did not always trust him. He did not want to see a mass exodus of congregations that were moderate sympathizers and he was keenly aware that giving to Synod was in decline. He tried more than once to offer John Tietjen a deal. He was upset with his brother Robert over his support of the organization, Balance, Inc. and the

publication *Affirm*, expressions of the conservative cause whose tactics Jack rejected, even though they help keep him office.

There are lessons to be learned from Burkee's book beyond a more detailed account of the plays and players. First of all, Burkee makes it clear that, while the conservative cause rallied around the inspiration and inerrancy of scripture they also associated the moderates with liberal social causes.

Those disagreeing, insisting that the conflict was solely theological, must ask themselves this: Would the schism have happened in the absence of the great convulsive event of the 1960s? Would America's conservative "silent majority" have been so frightened of "liberals" had there been no civil rights and antiwar marches, no riots, no black radicalism, or no welfare state? Jack Preus's resonant call for order in the LCMS in 1969 paralleled what most conservatives, Lutheran and secular, were saying: liberalism has gone too far. And liberalism meant more than just theology. (p.5)

Forty years later, theological orientation continues to be linked to orientation on social issues in the secular arena.

Secondly, the unethical political maneuvers of the conservative power brokers, if even acknowledged as such, seemed to them acceptable as righteous ends which justified the means. This is a rationale so often characteristic of those who believe they are absolutely right.

Thirdly, it has often been thought that the political success of the conservative movement was due to its ability to marshal the support of a disenchanted laity. Burkee's research shows that this was not the case; the laity was not that enthused and, in fact, membership began to decline. It was, as he observes, a battle fought by "elites." I might add that this is a situation that smacks of the sort of paternalism that has no place in servant leadership.

In 1975 the LCMS held a theological forum on the issues dividing the church. I had the paper for the moderate side on inspiration and inerrancy opposite Robert Preus who addressed that topic for the conservative view. Memorable as that was for me personally what stands out in my mind is the memory of a remark made by a pastor in response to Ralph Bohlman's paper in which he set forth the multiple requirements of holding to pure doctrine. The pastor in question simply stood up and said, "This is a blueprint for everlasting controversy." Burkee's observations of how the conflicts continue even after the moderates have gone have proved that pastor's comment to be prophetic. In fact Bohlman himself was later to be a victim.

This book is an important contribution to the historical record of this sad story.

James Childs served 22 years as Academic Dean at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. During his thirty-four years there he was the Joseph A. Sittler Professor of Theology and Ethics and later the Edward C. Fendt Professor of Systematic Theology. He continues to serve at Trinity as Senior Research Professor. His Ph.D. is from Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Childs's most recent books are Ethics in the Community of Promise and The Way of Peace and the forthcoming The Eloquence of Grace: Joseph Sittler and the Preaching Life co-edited with Richard Lischer.

POETRY + THEOLOGY

Aftermath Ambassadors

Katy Giebenhain

From my office I can see a cannon. It's parked on Seminary Ridge, where fierce fighting took place the summer of 1863 when this town, and this campus, found themselves in the midst of the Battle of Gettysburg. Depending upon which moment I look out the window, I may also see a neat line of segways rolling with their guide like ducklings on wheels, a passing tour bus, cross-country runners, bikes, motorcycles, a pram with kids from the YWCA daycare, students, neighborhood dogs walking their owners or cars. Plenty of cars. Construction equipment has now been added to the mix. The transformation of Schmucker Hall into what will be the Seminary Ridge Museum (opening July 1, 2013 on the 150th anniversary of the Battle) and creation of the historic walking path on campus is underway.

Voices are a big part of what will be the Museum's central exhibit "Voices of Duty and Devotion." Efforts are being made to lift up voices not often heard because others have been given more attention and legitimacy. Stories of nurses in the building and accounts from children of the Seminary steward are examples. We'll also look at broader issues of war, faith, slavery and identity. Right now I'm thinking of a voice of more contemporary history. This spring semester, Gettysburg College had a writer-in-residence in the German Department. The award-winning author Utz Rachowski grew up in the GDR, the former East Germany. He is best known for his creative nonfiction. Rachowski is also a poet, and it was his poetry that landed him in prison as a dissident.

In March I attended Rachowski's German Studies lecture at the College and a screening and discussion of the documentary *Jeder schweigt von etwas anderem* or *Last to Know* [Rachowski is in the film and was present for a Q&A with one of the directors from Berlin, Marc Bauder]. One of the

slides he showed in the lecture describing his time as a political prisoner in Cottbus was of a solitary cell. "This is where I lost my faith," he said. It's where they put people who spoke out. Rachowski was frequently put in the cell. He was never shy about voicing his opinions. I asked Rachowski if he could come to the Seminary for a brief chat about poetry, wars hot and cold, and being a visitor in the U.S. He came, and he very kindly agreed to let *Seminary Ridge Review* reprint two of his poems in German. Michael Ritterson translated them into English for us (p. 140).

In 1979 Utz Rachowski was imprisoned for five poems he wrote, and for distributing works by authors including Wolf Biermann, Jürgen Fuchs, Reiner Kunze and Gerulf Pannach. After 27 months including forced labor and no knowledge of how long his imprisonment would last, he was released with the help of Amnesty International. Rachowski had been "in the files" of the Stasi (Secret Police) since he was a teenager for organizing a group with other students interested in discussing philosophy and literature. He experienced his first interrogation at age 16. It lasted six hours. At 17 he was kicked out of school as a "troublemaker" and trained as an electrician. Later he was allowed to study at the university where he initially enrolled as a medical student because that major was considered "safe."¹

Many books and geographical moves later, including studies in East and West Germany, in subjects such as art history and philosophy, Rachowski has returned to the Vogtland, in the State of Saxony where he grew up. "I have three jobs" he explains. "The first is as a freelance author, the second is working full-time for four months of the year counseling victims of the former communist regime about their legal rights to compensation. The third job is as an eyewitness speaking at universities etc. I like to do this – but not too often – you can end up being a talking encyclopedia repeating the same stories and that can keep you isolated in your own head."² There is much talk of our "calls" to ministry here at the Seminary. The longer I spoke with Utz Rachowski the more apparent it was to me that he lives out a call of his own, in three distinct ways.

On the road, Rachowski assists former GDR citizens who still do not trust city halls enough to even visit the buildings. He goes to them. "I travel every day to a different town to offer help. The next day I travel to the next town. 12-14-hour days with train travel. The position is in the Department of Justice... I don't have training in psychology or law but supervisors closer to the kind of work I do say I'm the right man for this because of my history. They say 'he was exmatriculated from school, he was kicked out of university and went to prison for political reasons and he also has experience from West Germany, about what is possible for former victims to do.'"

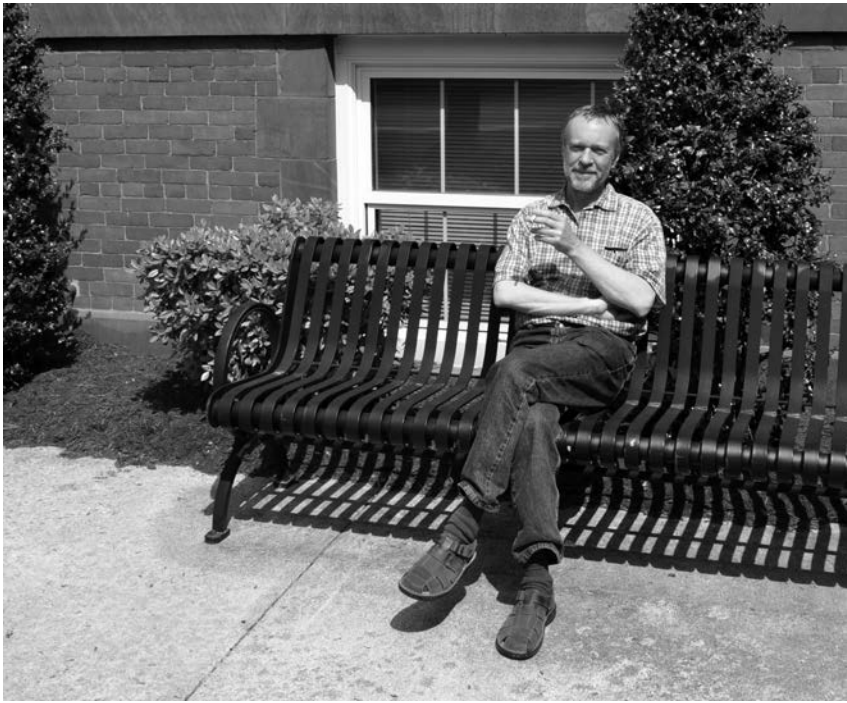
Rachowski listens, he brings forms, he advises. He plans to keep doing this work until he retires – as long as his back holds out. "It is strenuous... I carry about 20-25 kilograms of brochures, forms, etc. with me."

Rachowski is not a soldier-poet like Wilfred Owen or Bruce Weigl or Brian Turner (p. 134). He is another kind of war poet/author who grew up surrounded by people who had lived through both unthinkable World Wars. He absorbed the aftermath of war with his Muttermilch [mother's milk, as the Germans say]. Rachowski's writing is known for its attention to the distress and suffering of others.³ In our conversation Rachowski emphasizes his commitment to showing how war changes the lives of everyday people. Critics frequently refer to his "poetic" prose. At first I glossed over this, because the term poetic is overused. But once I began reading *Red' mir nicht von Minnigerode (Don't Talk to me About Minnigerode)* that is exactly what came to mind. He uses a brevity, authenticity, and attention to word-ing associated with poetry in these marvelous short stories.

We swapped anecdotes about how we've observed that Americans are viewed by Germans from the former "West" and "East." It is easy to take one negative or positive experience (as in an encounter with one person) and judge an entire country by it. When the experience is intense it seeds stereotypes. I am reminded that we are often wrong about how we think our country is perceived. This is relevant with the impending opening of the Seminary Ridge Museum to a national and international public. We'll be hosting visitors with differing assumptions about the U.S. Civil War, American church history, this denomination and many other topics. In her address at Gettysburg Seminary's 2012 Opening Academic Convocation, the Museum's founding executive director Barbara Franco emphasized the roll of public history in the project. "It is not just about seeking truth but making it accessible to the public."⁴ When speaking of the larger context of what this building and project can do she also stressed opportunities for healing communities and individuals. I thought of Utz Rachowski right away and his dedication to doing this in his context.

A Rocket of the Imagination

"My first American experience was pro-America" Rachowski explained, "because my rich aunt (I had two aunts and uncles; one rich aunt and one poor aunt), in West Germany sent me a gift from the *Quelle Catalog* [like Sears], an American toy rocket. This was for Christmas, 1967; I was 13. It had American stars and flew, I'd say, about 14 meters up in the air and a capsule opened into a parachute. For all of my friends this was a sensation. An



Utz Rachowski, Valentine Hall, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, April 20, 2012.

American rocket! Americans were, of course, the devil in school. The Vietnam War had already started. A week later the teacher asked me to describe my favorite Christmas present. Naturally, I described the rocket.

“My mother and father had to come to school. I was accused of making imperialistic U.S. propaganda, but I stood by it and my parents did too, although my father was a bit of a strategist and tried to slink through proactively. He was torn between [how to act in] private and public spheres. But my mother said ‘the boy was so happy, why shouldn’t we let him enjoy the rocket?’ Anyway there was a great uproar. The other students were still thrilled”⁵

In an article about Rachowski receiving the Hermann Hesse Award, Andreas Laich holds that in books such as *Der letzte Tag der Kindheit* (*The Last Day of Childhood*) and *Namenlos* (*Nameless*) Rachowski tries to maintain a balance between the political and unpolitical. Even if horror and sorrow over the circumstances of a story are the initial impulse for writing, Rachowski sees the step to making a book as a more “Lutheran” decision: “you stand there and you cannot do otherwise.”⁶

Something else Rachowski said reminded me of how stereotypes are strengthened unintentionally. When he travels to other countries he visits libraries to see what kind of East German books are in their collections. No matter where he goes, he finds that they predominantly carry books bearing communist ideology. “This kind of literary cannon is what was exported from the GDR and socialist countries until late into the 1980’s.”⁷ The assumption was that such books represented the scope of what was being written in these countries. It was not, however all that was being written. So when Rachowski teaches, he eagerly introduces other authors to his students. This leads “fairly quickly to the topic of the Stasi and the betrayal of intellectuals by their peers.”⁸

Rachowski gave the Gettysburg College students a brief piece he had written when he was 24. It was a story about a soldier, who had read Heinrich Böll, throwing his uniform and belt holster on the ground in an attempt to free himself from this military coercion. “Parallel to this we read three text examples. One was from Paul Auster, a scene from “Felix Krull” von Thomas Mann und one from Jürgen Fuchs (my friend who wrote so much about the GDR army, several novels, and who named taboos). Basically, this was to prepare for the thematic topic of war and peace. That was my goal: war and peace.”

This story is about individuals and how they suffer in military regimes. “After spring break we read a story from Wolfgang Borchert ‘Nachts schlafen die Ratten doch,’ (‘At Nights the Rats do Sleep’) It’s a post-war story. Always – examples about the effects of war on individuals.” “...war and – any kind of political violence. Man-made violence I would say. Then came the film and the topic was, again, the destruction of individual families through violence.”⁹

He’s referring to the documentary *Last to Know*, which follows three families where one or more of the immediate family members were political prisoners in the GDR. Rachowski, his mother and his daughters are one of the three families. “It showed this traumatization of people and families. I talked about this in Senegal, too, [when the film was shown there] where a civil war had erupted in the south.” And then I allowed myself a little detour. I brought in a story from Hemingway – “The Old Man at the Bridge” – about the Spanish civil war... And that corresponded with the story from Borchert. A man on his first day of vacation (he has just finished his apprenticeship for an office job), gets a letter with a little red seal on it. His mom must sign for it. It is his orders to the Eastern Front, just before the attack on Poland. August 1939. How this piece of registered mail changes his life and how this episode takes away his belief: he believes in nothing, not his career, not his marriage, not the fake consumer life after the war. This small

piece of paper is the decisive thing in his life. It is the reason why he cannot be happy, and why he can't participate in life – the others can't understand it."¹⁰ [a story about aftermath].

The class went to the Gettysburg National Military Park. "A Civil-War studies student gave a very good overview of the Battle," said Rachowski, "and the effect it had on regular residents. He also talked about the Germans who fought in the Civil War who all came over in 1848-49 after the lost revolution in Baden.

"Then I gave them a longer biographical text, *Last Day of Childhood*, where the central character is my grandmother. She was born in 1898 and she experienced the Soviet-Polish War, this war of aggression of the Bolsheviks against Poland right after WWI. And she experienced WWII in Germany. In 1923 my German family left Poland – and it's interesting because my great grandfather was an *absolute* pacifist. He did not want to serve in the Polish army and at that time in Germany there was no general draft. This is why they came to Germany in the 20's, when miners went to the Ruhr areas. My family were mostly textile workers, like master weavers, so they went to Saxony. But it ended tragically as they were 'stateless' even though they were of German heritage. In 1930 my father voluntarily signed up for the army so he could get German citizenship. He had to fight against Poland. It was tragic. I didn't write about that in this story. So the story is about these three wars. It ends with the occupation of Czechoslovakia. In this part of the story, I am 14 so it is from the eyes of a youth who constantly hears the reactions and commentary of his grandmother. For example, she fell in love with a lieutenant in WWI and saw him ride out to the field on his horse and he came back, laying across his horse with his skull bashed in."¹¹

When writing about war and other political violence, in poetry and prose, Rachowski's work still has a certain buoyancy. "I try not to write in a way that is propaganda" he said, "but also with jokes... flowers come up frequently and dogs and the landscape and food..." I asked what his advice, as a writer, would be for *Seminary Ridge Review* readers who write sermons, prayers, papers, etc. He immediately said "beware of big words." Then: "when you say the word 'garden' make them smell the tulips and the apples – [make them feel] the different seasons – and when you say 'God,' say it as if you are wearing sandals and walking – when you say 'God' you should say it as if you are walking through dust in sandals und not standing around statically in golden shoes. I feel strongly about that."¹²

Rachowski was interested in the possibilities open to us through the Seminary Ridge Museum for learning about war and its long-term effects on individuals. When he walked down the hill I pictured him making his visits around Saxony loaded with paperwork and patience. I hope that we can take

a bit of that sense of being entrusted with a task to give voice to untold stories here.

We Welcome our Poets

In this issue we are pleased to share poems with you from Utz Rachowski (Germany), Nina Forsythe (Maryland), Ray Givans (Northern Ireland), Julia Spicher Kasdorf (Pennsylvania), Robert Cording (Connecticut), Philip Kolin (Mississippi), Abby Arthur Johnson (Virginia), G.C. Waldrep (Pennsylvania), Jeff Gundy (Ohio) and Stephen Schroeder (Illinois). Book Recommendations are for *Leaving Fingerprints* and *The Terrorist at my Table* by Imtiaz Dharker and *Here, Bullet* and *Phantom Noise* by Brian Turner.

Notes

- 1 "Are you still from back then, or can we speak openly?" German Studies Colloquium at Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, Pa, March 28, 2012.
- 2 Utz Rachowski, interview by author, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, Pa., April 20, 2012.
- 3 Matthias Zwarg, "Poesie und Widerstand," *Freie Presse*. May 7, 2007.
- 4 Barbara Franco, "Public History as a Calling," Opening Convocation at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, September 5, 2012. The Seminary Ridge Museum is a joint venture of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, the Seminary Ridge Historic Preservation Foundation and the Adams County Historical Society. Visit www.seminaryridgemuseum.org.
- 5 Rachowski interview.
- 6 Andreas Laich, "Utz Rachowski – Calwer Hermann-Hesse-Stipendium," March 26, 2008 © Sparkasse Pforzheim Calwe www.hermann-hesse.de.
- 7 Rachowski interview.
- 8 Rachowski interview.
- 9 Rachowski interview.
- 10 Rachowski interview.
- 11 Rachowski interview.
- 12 Rachowski interview.

Book Recommendations

Two by Turner

Brian Turner's M.F.A. is from the University of Oregon. He served for seven years in the U.S. Army including a year as an infantry team leader in Iraq. Prior to that, he deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Turner has received many fellowships and awards, most recently a Fellowship in the NEA/Japan-US Friendship Commission Creative Artist Program (2012). His work has appeared on *National Public Radio*, the *BBC*, *NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer, *Here and Now*, and on *Weekend America*, among others. He directs the creative writing M.F.A. program at Sierra Nevada College.

The first stanza of the first poem in Turner's newest collection, *Phantom Noise* gives us a trigger ("VA Hospital Confessional"). The last stanza in the last poem is a return home ("The One Square Inch Project"). Let's start at the end:

When I return to California,
to my life with its many engines – I find myself changed,
the city somehow muted, frenetic and fully charged with living, yes,
but still, when gifted with this silence, motions have more
of a dance to them, like fish in schools of hunger, once
flashing in sunlight, now turning in shadow. (93)

The scenes and subjects Brian Turner writes about are not comfortable, but I found a sense of ease when reading his poems, because I feel like I'm in the hands of a reliable narrator. Obviously, poetry is not journalism and being an objective narrator is tricky if not impossible. There is something you can feel, however, when someone is trying to get it – some part of it – right. This entire collection is steeped in that sense of intended reliability. That's worth a lot. It's neither understated nor sensationalized.

Phantom noise, like the sensation of an amputated phantom limb is a perfect way to get at the unending acts of assimilation when returning home after a deployment. Even places we once knew inside-out are not the same. This collection takes us through the aisles of a hardware store, a lover's bed, an exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum, a pool barbecue – ordinary settings – a changed person. We move back and forth between the streets of foggy Mosul and California.

The scene in "Zippo" (39) could come from a number of wars. The technology is different, but the set-up is familiar. Isn't there always a prankster like this? One who "unscrews the tanker's fuel cap, grinning / the

way he always does, a cigarette / dangling from his lips, a feigned concentration / on his forehead..." (39)

Turner reaches back, taking us with him as in "Ancient Baghdad," where he asks what we have to say of loss after placing us into the ash-blackened sky of 1258 where " / blood / ran in the rivers of Dajla and Farat, / the House of Wisdom burned to the ground / and the caliph was trampled to death by horses." (56) It's not only bodies filling the river but texts and scrolls "the old stories burning around us" (57)

"Al-A'imma Bridge" first catalogs people falling from the bridge. His letting the horrific be ordinary allows it to be that much more powerful. In the middle of the poem

the Babylonians and Sumerians and Assyrians join them,
falling from the bridge with the Ibn Khaldun's torn pages,
The Muqaddiman – that classic Islamic history of the world,
and Sheherazade falls too, worn out, exhausted
from her life-saving work, made speechless by the scale of war,
and Ali Baba with an AK-47 beside her; (28)

And after bombs of all kinds

Gilgamesh can do nothing, knows that each life is the world
dying anew, each body the deep pull of currents below, lost,
and lost within each – the subtle, the sublime, the horrific,
the mundane, the tragic, the humorous and the erotic – lost, (30)

This collection is both bold and sensitive. Turner's lifting up, over and over, of immediate details and sliding them into perspective works wonders. Guilt, pain, bewilderment, the enormous scope of fighting – it's all in here.

You should know about Turner's first book, too. *Here, Bullet* was published in 2005. It won the Beatrice Hawley Award from Alice James Books and other awards, and was a *New York Times* "Editor's Choice" selection. He confronts us with texture, sound and images from burlap sacks to duct tape, to Baghdad Zoo, homemade napalm, feral cats, sunshine, playing volleyball, flame throwers, ruptured eardrums, malaria pills, women harvesting salt and a Leupold scope. A Leupold is a long-range scope with very high resolution. This is what Turner's writing does. It puts us at the safe end of that scope but lets us see in extremely sharp, up-close detail.

The poem "Katyusha Rockets" stands both at a Veteran's Day parade in Fresno and Hamman al Alil with the narrator's sense and memory and his need to search the crowd

the way the bomb disposal tech
walks tethered and alone down Divisadero Street,
suited-up as if walking on the moon's surface
as the crowd watches just how determined he is
to dismantle death, to take it apart
piece by piece – the bravest thing I've ever seen. (32)

In "*Mihrab*" (Arabic for gateway to Paradise) the once-garden is now "wind scorpions and dust, crow-like jays / cawing their raspy throats in memory / of a song, a ghost of beauty / lingering in the shadow's fall. (51)

The title poem "Here, Bullet" is powerful stuff – a distilled example of what Turner can do. The collection is a witness never abandoning the mud and blood reality. He describes in a way that is not wordy or decorative, but it also never feels too spare or lean. He gives us enough. His scope of words adjusts to clarity over distances the naked eye simply cannot manage.

Here, Bullet (2005) and *Phantom Noise* (2010) are published by Alice James Books in Farmington, Maine. Visit www.alicejamesbooks.org. Visit Turner's website at <http://www.brianturner.org/>.

Two by Dharker

Imtiaz Dharker was born in Pakistan. She grew up a "Muslim Calvinist" in a Lahori household in Glasgow and eloped with a Hindu Indian to live in Bombay. She now lives between Mumbai, London and Wales. A poet, artist and documentary filmmaker, she has published five books of poetry. Her poems stand tall and look us in the eye. Dharker is an expert navigator taking us from the present to the past and to other identities with a smooth confidence and physicality. "Sari" from *The Terrorist at my Table* opens

The street stretches its back.
Its spine cracks with satisfaction.

There's no bustle, no sense of rush,
just the determined slip and slap
of soap on slate
and cloth on stone,
morning light thrashed out
on the wet step
above the water-tank. (109)

She continues to describe washing clothes with a grounded immediacy and no tidying up of its reality "the sweat of yesterday, / the cooking smells / the dribble from the baby's mouth," (109). The tone is similar in "If," a poem grappling with prayer and gratitude.

"Mine, Yours" goes straight for our territorial points of view: "Is it our news or your news?" and staking claim

this mud is my feast days
and my celebrations
my food, my animals, my grain.
it is my songs and dances.
I tell you this for years.
You say it is too late.
You say this mud is your sons and daughters
and their children, your sweat and blood
your cities and your orange groves
the pain you carried through so many centuries,
your prayers. (16)

The Terrorist at my Table is a substantial book with 101 poems. The pace in "Rickshaw Rider" fits with an overall momentum in the book. It also shows

Dharker's very physical scene-setting and references to bigger things. We ride with a mad rickshaw driver through "the markets at Mulund / Malad and Kandivali, Khar / and Borivali to Bandra Bandstad." (125) Here are the eighth and ninth of its 12 stanzas:

lost in our sputtering
puttering wake. My whole life
is history. By any standards
we're not moving fast,
not like an Enfield,
not even at Ambassador speed

But unstoppable, with a kind of a
hop
and a kick in the wheels,
a laugh in the fact
of a world gone mad.
I steal a look at him in the mirror. (126)

Several poems from a more recent Dharker collection, *Leaving Fingerprints*, have appeared on the BBC Radio 3 *From Fact to Fiction*. The poems "What She Said" and "What She Said Later" are displayed on loo doors around Britain as part of The Poetry Treatment, an initiative of the Poetry Trust working in hospitals.

"Luz Eterna" (after a triptych by Ana Maria Pacheco) "These incidents have been / spliced together. They are not / disconnected events" (44) goes on through barbed wire, illumination, a screaming crowd and ends in a stanza fitting for all kinds of aftermath:

This is happening in three frames
and in three hundred frames.
Are you watching?
This will go on happening. (44)

"Digging up the Bones" has a great first two lines "The mud in this country / has a long memory." (38) She also brings in aesthetically lovely pieces and spaces them amongst threats. She brings us raisins, figs, armored trucks, *Yellow Pages*, jazz café music, the breath of a woman being "walled in" alive felt on the hands of the man laying the stones with mortar to make her on-the-spot, individual prison.

In "The Room With two Doors" and many other poems, Dharker emphasizes the precariousness of identity and the complicated notion of home and welcome... "It would be a mistake, however, / to imagine we are free to stay / in this room with two doors, / drinking and eating, telling jokes / (109) Dharker has much to remind us of. She has a wide basis for comparison.

One of my favorite poems in *Leaving Fingerprints* is "Hand of Fatima, Hand of Miriam." This is it in a nutshell – identities unclear and dependent as an enamel pendant with the shared hand of two women "Prophet's daughter, Moses' sister, I don't see / you fighting over this small light or over me / when you offer me your one shared hand." (17) The stanzas end with an evolving couplet asking Miriam and Fatima for protection for a "me" and an "us all." The link becomes very matter-of-fact "These things happen in the desert, where sand can stir / and open a single eye of water, where two saviors / between them can muster just one hand, / where tin becomes a talisman." (17)

Leaving Fingerprints (2009) and *The Terrorist at my Table* (2006) are published by Bloodaxe Books Ltd. Visit www.bloodaxebooks.com. Listen to Dharker read some of her poems at the Bloodaxe site, including the very fine "She Must be From Another Country."

Mein Lieblingstier

Utz Rachowski

Jetzt
haben Sie die Katze aus dem Sack gelassen

schrie der Richter

Jetzt
fällt sie auf die Pfoten
denke ich
sieht in der Dunkelheit
durch
hat sieben Leben

Jetzt
nenne ich sie
Wahrheit

My Favorite Animal

Utz Rachowski

Translated by Michael Ritterson

Now
you've let the cat out of the bag

cried the judge

Now
it'll land on its feet
I think
see clearly in the
dark
and have nine lives

Now
I'll name it
Truth

Letzter Brief von Hamlet

„Nur meine und deine, die Stimmen...

Enträtseln wirst dies alles du allein.“

– Anna Achmatowa

Ich schreibe dir schreibt Hamlet
ich habe gesehen
das Vogtland die Sonne den Himmel
nachts ab elf die Sterne manchmal
ertrunken über dem Januarschnee
der vogtländische Himmel dröhnt
ich habe gesehen immer ab elf
den Krieg über meinen Kopf hinweg

Hamlet schreibt einen Brief

Morgen achtuhrfünf fliegst du
von Klotzsche nach Sharm El Sheikh
die Seele führt Blut kann essen und sterben
schrieb Moses im dritten Buch dein Krieg in mir
schreibt Hamlet in dieser Nacht

„Zweifel’ an der Sonne Klarheit
Zweifel’ an der Sterne Licht“
sagt tags der Buchhändler:
heute Nacht haben sie Truppen verlegt
über uns waren die großen Transporter

„Zweifel’ ob lügen kann die Wahrheit
Nur an meiner Liebe nicht“
schreibt Hamlet non stop
morgen achtuhrfünf fliegst du
von Klotzsche nach Sharm El Sheikh

Hinauf zum Berge Mose willst du steigen
und dein Karma finden auf dem Sinai
denn dein Leben sei auf Sand gebaut
auf den Kaßberg von Karl-Marx-Stadt

seit die uns von damals trennten
und ich in Walter Jankas Zelle saß
überm Urteil dieses Volkes Namen
dessen Schweigen wir gebrochen
wußt’ ich nichts von andrer Schuld
damals sprach ich dir vom roten Dornbusch
der wie meine Schwüre nie verbrannte
um den Fuß jenes Berges treibt der Sand nun

meine Worte deine Hand wird sie begreifen
morgen fliegst du ab von Klotzsche
achtuhrfünf nach Sharm El Sheikh
schreibt Hamlet in dieser Nacht

Dein Krieg der in mir dröhnt
über mein Herz hinweg
Schatten ziehen am Himmel
ertrunken über dem Januarschnee
gegen die Sterne sah ich
so weiß wie mein Gesicht
die großen Transporter flogen
Richtung Persischer Golf
schreibt Hamlet in dieser Nacht

Im Osten fällt wieder der Schnee
vom vergangenen Jahr aber du
willst es warm haben
auf dieser Welt ich weiß
morgen achtuhrfünf fliegst du
von Klotzsche nach Sharm El Sheikh
und geh’ ins Kloster wenn auch in Klotzsche
Krieg ist ich habe dich nie geliebt
schreibt Hamlet eine andere vielleicht
eine Göttin vom Roten Meer in andrer Zeit
aber in mir scheint die Sonne nicht mehr
im Vogtland hörten die Sterne zu leuchten auf
die Dornen die wir setzten unserem Volk sind Asche

Ich habe nur noch Angst um mich selbst
 schreibt Hamlet und einer wie dir
 passiert vielleicht nichts aber mir
 beides – in deinen Augen sah ich die grünen Schiffe
 ziehen gemächlich nach Arkadien hinauf ohne Hast
 schrieb ich dir
 der Krieg über meinem Kopf dein Krieg in mir
 morgen von Klotzsche
 nach Sharm El Sheikh fliegst du
 um achtuhrfünf
 von einem in den anderen
 schreibt Hamlet in seinem letzten Brief

Der Rest ist wenn du dich erinnerst
 und meine Worte je dir etwas sagten Schweigen

“Letzter Brief von Hamlet” by Utz Rachowski first appeared online in Poetenladen www.poetenladen.de/utz-rachowski-lyrik2.htm. 2006. Reprinted with permission of the author. “Mein Lieblingstier” first appeared in the poetry collection Mein Museum published by Hellenau-Verlag Dresden GmbH and is reprinted with permission of the author. Utz Rachowski has published ten books to date. An award-winning dissident writer in East Germany who spent one and a half years as a political prisoner in the former socialist state before he was released to West Germany through the efforts of Amnesty International, he is a vocal advocate for victims of East Germany’s secret police. He was awarded the Andreas-Gryphius Prize, the Eduard-Mörike Prize, the Hermann-Sudermann Grant and the Alfred-Döblin Grant. His work has been translated into several European languages. Rachowski is one of the main characters in the documentary Last to Know. Visit Bauder Film at: www.bauderfilm.de.

Final Letter From Hamlet

Only two voices: yours and mine.

All this you alone will decipher ...

– Anna Akhmatova

I’m writing you writes Hamlet
 I have seen
 the Vogtland the sun the sky
 after eleven the stars sometimes
 drowned above the January snow
 the Vogtland sky drones
 I have seen always late at night
 that war passing high above my head

Hamlet is writing a letter

Tomorrow at 8:05 you fly
 from Klotzsche to Sharm el-Sheikh
 life runs in the blood who consumes it shall perish
 wrote Moses in his third book your war inside me
 writes Hamlet this very night

“Doubt thou the stars are fire
 Doubt that the sun doth move”
 the bookseller says next morning:
 last night they were moving troops out
 those were cargo planes overhead

“Doubt truth to be a liar
 But never doubt I love”
 writes Hamlet non-stop
 tomorrow at 8:05 you fly
 from Klotzsche to Sharm el-Sheikh

Up Moses’ mountain you want to climb
 and find your karma on Mount Sinai
 for your life you say is built on sand
 on the Kassberg heights in Karl-Marx-Stadt

ever since they parted us from time now past
 and I served out in Walter Janka's cell
 a sentence passed in the name of this people
 whose silence we had broken
 I knew of no other guilt
 back then I told you of the burning thorn bush
 that like my oaths was not consumed by fire
 at the foot of that mountain sand drifts now

my words your hand will comprehend them
 tomorrow you fly out of Klotzsche
 the 8:05 to Sharm el-Sheikh
 writes Hamlet on this night

Your war that drones in me
 off above my heart
 shadows cross the sky
 drowned above the January snow
 against the stars I saw
 as white as my own face
 the cargo planes were flying
 headed for the Persian Gulf
 writes Hamlet on this night

In the East the snow of last year
 is falling again but you
 want the warm places
 in this world I know
 tomorrow at 8:05 you fly
 from Klotzsche to Sharm el-Sheikh
 and to a nunnery go if there is also war
 in Klotzsche I loved you not
 writes Hamlet another perhaps
 a goddess from the Red Sea in other time
 but inside me the sun shines no more
 in the Vogtland the stars no longer shone
 the thorns we held up to our people are ashes

I now fear only for myself
 writes Hamlet and someone like you
 may have nothing to fear but I

must fear both – in your eyes I saw the green ships
 sailing languidly up to Arcadia unhurried
 I wrote you
 the war passing over my head your war inside me
 tomorrow from Klotzsche
 to Sharm el-Sheikh you fly
 at 8:05
 from the one into the other
 writes Hamlet in his final letter

The rest is if you still remember
 and my words ever meant anything to you silence

The epigraph is taken from lines from two poems by Akhmatova: Два лишь голоса: твой и мой. from Cinque, 2 (Dec. 20, 1945); and Всё это разгадаешь ты один... from (untitled, 1938).

Vogtland: Rachowski's home region in southwest Saxony.

Klotzsche: main airport serving Dresden.

Sharm el-Sheikh: resort on the Red Sea coast of the Sinai Peninsula.

Kassberg: district in Karl-Marx-Stadt (now again named Chemnitz), site of a holding facility for political prisoners being expatriated to the West, especially during the 1980s.

Walter Janka (1914-1994): one of the best-known political prisoners in the GDR. With the frequent changing of cell assignments in Kassberg, there is a good chance the poet spent time in a cell that Janka had occupied.

third book: Leviticus (17:10-14; cf. also Gen. 9:4).

Michael Ritterson is professor of German emeritus at Gettysburg College and a freelance literary translator. His work has appeared in New European Poets (Graywolf, 2008), International Poetry Review, and Foreign Policy magazine online. His translation of Das Odfeld (The Odin Field), by Wilhelm Raabe (1831-1910) was runner-up for the 2002 Helen and Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize. His English translation of the Utz Rachowski short story "The Wild Huntsman" appears in the Spring 2012 issue of The Literary Review.

The Key is of Fire

for Elena Shvarts

G.C. Waldrep

The key is of fire. You want it, you need it
to open the door, which appears to be made of
oak, ancient and solid. But if you pick up
the key, it will burn your hand. *It will*
burn your hand. It may burn the door. It may
destroy the door before you can wrench it open.
And what if you try: what if, in spite
of the pain, you manage to take hold of the key,
fit it in the black lock – little skyblot –
turn it, hear the tumbler catch and, like a slow
planet, revolve. What if, somehow, you
find this courage? What if you open the door?

More keys, more light, more clay, more flame.

G.C. Waldrep is an Associate Professor of English and Director of Graduate Studies in English at Bucknell University (Ph.D., Duke University; M.F.A., University of Iowa). He is the author of four collections: Goldbeater's Skin; Disclamor; Archicembalo, winner of the Dorset Prize and Your Father on the Train of Ghosts, with John Gardner as well as Southern Workers and the Search for Community, a monograph about Southern textile workers during the early twentieth century. Waldrep has received many prizes and residency awards; his work is widely published in journals and was included in Best American Poetry 2010. He edits the literary journal West Branch. Elena Shvarts is considered one of the greatest and most influential Russian poets of our time. She died in 2010.

The Gifts of the Conquistadors

Nina Forsythe

Diseases, of course,
and horses. Amazing
inventiveness in death
dealing. A riveting
study in obsession;
we never saw gold
the same way again.
The smell of foreign
sweat and gunpowder.
Metal skins like a beetle's.
Cathedrals and candles,
organs and strange music
that stirred in us
strange longings
they seemed armored
against.
The lady in blue
and the child in her arms –
the naked infant god.

Advice about Angels

They are not yours,
not your guardians
nor your better selves,
and if you get in their way
they know how to fight dirty.

Don't presume –
they don't dislike you
but they have a job to do.

If they visit you,
it's best to be hospitable.
Offer them a drink,
the best meal you can afford,
your daughter,
everything you own.
They will take
only what they need.

They are not like you,
so don't expect to understand them.
You will have difficulty
distinguishing their voices
from the wind, the waves,
or thunder, but always
do exactly as they command.

If they tell you *fear not*,
It's best to be
a little afraid.

Nina Forsythe's M.F.A. in Writing is from Bennington College. Her poems, translations and reviews have appeared in a variety of magazines including Nimrod, 5 AM, Chiron Review, Taproot, Puerto del Sol, Review Revue and the anthology Knocking at the Door. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and was awarded the 2010 and 2012 Backbone Mountain Review Poetry Prize. Forsythe conducts creative writing workshops in western Maryland.

Change Your Tune

Robert Cording

The wind droning in the larches tonight
reminds me of a news story I read –
that each planet gives off its own peculiar sound
and the physicists in charge of listening
say the sound of our earth is sad.
No surprise there, real sorrow and suffering
everywhere, insistent, and without relief.

But perhaps because I am an American,
and have a good job, plenty of food,
a nice house, and disposable income, I thought
of the sad whining of those like myself
striving to be happy. Our oracles:
the self-help shelves at *Barnes and Noble*
where you can learn meditation, prayer

and how to achieve the ageless beauty
of Demi Moore; where you can find ways to eat
yourself to health, massage away the long hours
at work, and power your way to the top
by dressing right and getting a chin implant;
and, if your sex life is brittle, there's yoga
to breathe life into your pelvic region.

Some of us truly think we're not loved,
gratified, or rewarded enough. We feel bad
about feeling bad. Is it because we believe
happiness is our right? We want so badly
to flourish, to feel the spirit in heart and body,
but, unhappily, we mope about like teenagers
on the pleasure boat that is America.

When I moped about my childhood house,
my mother would say: *You need to change*

your tune. I'm moping now, lying
 face up on the couch, waiting for Sunday
 night football, one of the millions happily
 postponing Monday, when our planet
 will spin a new day's sad music.

Mint

This morning's rain roused
 root smells of dirt and flowers
 and now the sun
 is tugging blue sky from
 between some clouds.
 I take hold of a sprig of mint,
 crush it in my hands,
 and wave it under my nose,
 breathing in – a ritual
 of sorts I have performed
 for some thirty odd years
 since coming to this house,
 its wall-side garden overtaken
 by mint planted, the former owner
 told me, probably more
 than a century ago to cure
 indigestion and headache.

I toss a few minty leaves
 in ice tea now and then,
 or a bourbon around the time
 of the Derby, but mostly
 I just break open a few leaves
 and let myself be dazed
 by the clean, sweet smell,
 believing for a moment
 that the past can be present
 again, and history says more
 than nothing lasts, and somehow
 my life, unfinished, uncertain,
 like a secret inside a secret,
 is part of what is, like this mint,
 pulled upward by the light,
 by the day which only knows
 again and again, to begin.

Robert Cording teaches English and creative writing at College of the Holy Cross where he is the Barrett Professor of Creative Writing. He has published six collections of poems: Life-list, which won the Ohio State University Press/Journal award; What Binds Us To This World; Heavy Grace; Against Consolation; Common Life; and his newest, Walking With Ruskin, which was runner-up for the Poets' Prize. He has received two National Endowment for the Arts fellowships in poetry and two poetry grants from the Connecticut Commission of the Arts. Cording's poems have appeared in numerous publications such as The Nation, the Georgia Review, the Hudson and Southern Reviews, Poetry, Orion, and The New Yorker.

That Story

Julia Spicher Kasdorf

In this story, the Garden of Eden is the Valley;
Adam and Eve are the parents who left
all those fine holsteins and the swallows
darting under the barn beams at dusk.
Once out of the Garden, they had to find jobs,
so Eve became a nurse, silent witness to the world's ills,
and Adam was doomed to office work. In the evenings
he pushed a plow in his garden's poor soil,
while his children stooped over the furrows
behind him, trailing pebbles of fertilizer
from their fists, dropping seeds
painted pesticide pink.

In this story, Cain is a woman
who slays with words. She moves to the city
where she fusses over a Christmas cactus
and African violets in pots. Her garden is only as wide
as a sidewalk; stray cats pee on her ragged
tomato stalks. Sometimes she thinks back to the nights
she and her father, tired together, sat
on the edge of their patch. Now she knows
his silent longing for that Garden.
It is easy to believe that story
and to grow as weary
as Israel's children
by the waters of Babylon.

"That Story" from Sleeping Preacher by Julia Kasdorf, © 1992. Reprinted by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press. Julia Spicher Kasdorf is associate professor of English and women's studies at Pennsylvania State University. Her Ph.D. is from New York University. In addition to Sleeping Preacher she is the author of the poetry collections Eve's Striptease and Poetry in America. Other books include The Body and the Book: Writing from a Mennonite Life and Fixing Tradition: Joseph W. Yoder, Amish American. Her poems have appeared in journals such as The New Yorker, Paris Review, and Poetry, as well as numerous anthologies. Visit the University of Pittsburgh Press at www.upress.pitt.edu/.

Seven Sorrows

Steven Schroeder

1
Soul-pierced Mary, homeless, has nothing
to say. In the light a child sheds on the whole
Simeon sees all he's hoped for. Seeing,
he is ready to go and says to Mary
*for this child many will fall and many
will rise and the child will be a sign
rejected and this will pierce your soul
again and again.* But Anna, who is
a prophet, silent, turns, sees, says
nothing to Mary, says all there is to say
to all whose minds are stayed on freedom.

And having done what they were called to do
they all went home, and the child grew
as children do, wise in god's grace.

2
As children do, wise in god's grace,
they say Joseph spoke with angels too
but did not pause to ponder what they said
in his heart. And so without a second thought
he flew to Egypt when one whispered
*wise children may be better dead
to powers that be whose power lies
uneasy where many rise, where
many rise, as many are rising.*

Come again, this angel said,
when I say the word. And
soul-pierced Mary, homeless
again, said nothing,
like the prophet.

3
Like the prophet,
Jerusalem every next year
at Passover, and in his twelfth year,
the child is lost. Seeing this, Mary and Joseph
need no angel to turn them, and, turning,
they see the light seeing their child
lost in questions, and they say
what have you done?
And he says *Why*
did you turn?

I have always been at home.

4
I have always been at home.
Joseph is gone, Mary is just one
of the daughters of Jerusalem
weeping. Sentenced to die,
the wise child says *do not cry
for me, but for yourselves
and for your children.*
*The day will come when
you will say it is a blessing
to be childless, when you will
long for a mountain to fall on you,
a hill to cover you. If all this is done
when the wood is green, surely, surely
the fire will burn hotter when the wood is dry.*

5
The fire will burn hotter when the wood is dry.
Mary and Mary and Mary in the shadow
of the cross, weeping in the long shadow
of principalities and powers Simeon saw.
To his mother, the wise child, ready to go,
says *your son is the friend who is
standing there with you.* And to his
friend, he says *your mother is
the woman weeping.*

And soul-pierced Mary,
homeless again, says
nothing, like the prophet.

6
Nothing like the prophet,
a secret disciple petitions powers,
takes the body to a tomb. Seeing her child
lost, Mary does not need an angel to turn her,
turning, she sees the light in the absence
where her child is and has been
always at home.

And soul-pierced Mary says
nothing, like the prophet
homeless again.

7
Homeless again.
At the place where he was killed
there was a garden and in the garden was
a tomb and the tomb was near at hand and it was
time to rest, so they put him there, and he was gone.

Soul-pierced Mary, homeless, has nothing.

Every Step

Ὀλιγόπιστε, εἰς τί ἐδίστασας;
you of little faith, why did you doubt?
– Matthew 14:31

Haze half softens half moon
light hours before sun
rise. Light moves like water
at the pier. Tower of blue neon
blends with pale, swims
out to meet a boat passing.

At this hour
weathered wood
is the color of water,
every step a confession.

Steven Schroeder is a graduate of Valparaiso University. He holds a Ph.D. in Ethics and Society from the University of Chicago. He is the co-founder, with composer Clarice Assad, of the Virtual Artists Collective (vacpoetry.org). After teaching and working in the peace movement in several states, he taught philosophy, poetry, and peace studies at Shenzhen University in China. He currently teaches at the University of Chicago in Asian Classics and the Basic Program of Liberal Education for Adults. Recent collections are Turn and (with Debby Sou Vai Keng) a guest giving way like ice melting: thirteen ways of looking at laozi, Four Truths and Raging for the Exit, a forthcoming collaboration with David Breeden. Visit <http://stevenschroeder.org/>.

Home Parish

Abby Arthur Johnson

Not just coffee, but egg coffee,
 Not just linoleum, but polished linoleum,
 Buffed until your face reflected at your feet;
 Egg coffee brewed with the practice of ages,
 Linoleum shined with the inborn industry
 Of the peasant, given new life.
 St. Mark's had both the buff and the brew
 And it brought me sharply back.

Then, my father was pastor of Pilgrim.
 Then, my mother and the others
 Steeped the coffee black with the
 Clear, soft water of Lake Superior.
 While they poured it from the steaming urns,
 I raced along the gleaming corridors.
 I was protected by my parents, by the church,
 By the linoleum floors and the fresh egg coffee.

Abby Arthur Johnson was raised in Wisconsin and Minneapolis, Minn. where her father was a Lutheran pastor. Her Ph.D. in English is from the University of Illinois. She is on the Liberal Studies faculty at Georgetown University, teaching courses such as Detective Fiction and Cultural Values and Immigrant Literature and the American Experience. Johnson's publications include essays in Journal of American Studies, Studies in the Twentieth Century and Theology Today. She coauthored a book with her husband Propaganda and Aesthetics: the Literary Politics of African-American Magazines in the Twentieth Century. Her poems have appeared in Theology Today, The Poet, North American Mentor Magazine and elsewhere.

Katherina von Bora flees the Cistercian Convent at Nimbschen, 1523

Future wife of Martin Luther

Ray Givans

Black-gowned, in twilight, twelve of us hunch
 beside the rear portal. I clutch the hand
 of Aunt Lena, trust her guiding steps
 past the clouded forehead of the moon-faced
 driver, and up into the canvas-covered wagon.
 Aunt shushes the younger nuns, pushes
 our heads behind fat wooden barrels.
 The wagon rocks forward, clunk of wheels
 as they bump against stones, sink into ruts.
 On the floor, by light of a gap in the canvas,
 I see the silver back and protruding jaw,
 smell the pungency of a pickled herring;
 dead man's black eyes stare up, accusingly.

Ray Givans is from Belfast, Northern Ireland. His degrees are from Queens University and University of Bath. His poetry has been published in four pamphlets and one full collection, Tolstoy in Love from Dedalus Press, Dublin, which was shortlisted for the best first Irish collection for 2008 (Eithne and Rupert Strong Poetry Prize). Visit www.dedaluspress.com/.

Paging Dr. Seuss

Philip Kolin

The worse coughs come
After dark, every shadow speaks

With a torturous tickle, a small voice
Begging for water, light, breath

Why can't Dr. Seuss cure a fever
Just by leaping off

The page. Even when tiny animals
Sneeze, he is right there

With his sugar cure words
That soothe throats and lower

Temperatures. There is a bonfire
Tonight in his eyes and toes

The bed sheets are ready
To burst into flames.

Call the fire department
The newly appointed chief

Of the red wagon orders.
But 911 does not answer

The plastic phone. It rings
But does not talk.

Not all the ice cubes
In his Gatorade IV's can cool

Him down. She rolls up
The window shade hoping

The street iced with sleet
Might make him feel better

But all he sees is
Dr. Seuss leaving town.

Philip C. Kolin is the University Distinguished Professor in the College of Arts and Letters at the University of Southern Mississippi. He is editor of the Southern Quarterly and the publisher/ editor of Vineyards: A Journal of Christian Poetry. Kolin has published more than 30 scholarly books on Shakespeare, Tennessee Williams, African American women playwrights and Edward Albee. His poems appear in numerous journals. His most recently published collection is Reading God's Handwriting: Poems by Kaufmann Publishing. Visit: <http://kaufmannpublishing.com/>.

That There Is Quiet But Not Silence

*listening to Rudy Wiebe on "The Seven Words of Silence,"
April Fool's Day, 2012*

Jeff Gundy

He rises to muse for us, brilliant as always, and at once I resist:
not silence, but quiet, I want to claim. And indeed his first word

is *sound*. He grew up largely alone, he says. I grew up alone among others.
From the vast spaces in books I learned of the spaces within me.

I learned that I carried them through dinners and crowds, and that they
were secret until I spoke of them. His second word is *death*.

From the sky I learned of the spaces beyond me, transparent
but not empty, changeable and dangerous, hot and cold. These spaces

could be navigated but not diminished. They would not be depreciated
even if ignored. *Creation comes out of seamless silence*, says Rudy.

Sometimes I laugh out of recognition, not amusement. When God
breaks his silence we are suddenly afraid, and the third word of silence

is lost in fear. When the great boat of a cloud broke the summer sun
we would look up, grateful, and lean on our hoes, just a moment,

for the fourth word of silence is joy, and sometimes joy is a cloud,
and sometimes the cloud clearing away. And since the first great word

was spoken there has been no silence, only the great slender rustling
of the worlds which is often too quiet for us to hear. Perhaps I am

too cranky, but I am tired of words that claim to speak of silence.
I want to climb into the quiet and listen. The fifth word of silence

is song. The word silence first appears in 1225, says Rudy, in
the Ancrene Rule: *She may also hope that she may sing through*

her silence. The sixth word of silence is stone, and it means entering
the holy city. The donkey, the palm branches, the shrieking crowds,

and the heavy streets beneath them all, so that it can be said,
The very stones would cry out even when the stones have not cried out.

Teaching the stone to speak is very slow work. Better, perhaps,
to teach ourselves to listen. Perhaps the stones are not silent

but quiet. For suddenly Jesus is weeping, and saying *Your enemies
will dash these stones to the ground*, and surely it remains

in our power to tumble these stones, to disarray and break them.
And it is in our power to gather the rubble, with hard and costly labor

to build something new. The seventh word of silence is writing,
says Rudy, but must the words come to an end, even in writing?

Does silence measure time, does it require an end and a beginning?
Can we dip and dive within the silence as if it were a stream,

travel its depths and reaches, sip its sweetness, break on its shoals?

Inventory and Interiority at Merry Lea

Many geese. Only one swan. And the windmill churning, churning
like a desperate signal, as if turning and getting somewhere

were the same, as if any mother's son could sit on a yellow canoe
and be at home in the world. And the turtles and muskrats I will

never see, the deer carcass I will not find at the edge of the woods,
the birds I can't name and their songs I can only call lovely,

shreds of the great song, real and passing, warm and breathing,
slender and spiky as the heron gliding to the far shore.

What am I missing? What did I used to know, six or seven
lives back? Does something still curl against some wet spindle

far inside, a shiver, an answer in a lost code, a word
like *crepuscular*, like *sister* or *thank you* or *yes*?

2.

The bat knows plenty about dusk, not much about us. The moon
and Venus are not looking down, though I am looking up.

The wide scud of cloud, like a first sweep of mortar for tile,
has gone gray already, the fire banked. Even the wind is resting

at last, and the blades of the windmill have stopped, off kilter,
like a child asleep on his feet. The birds want only to rest now,

and to wake with their mates beside them. The raccoon wants dinner
and a good muddy shore for washing. The moon would be a bowl,

if what I see could be trusted. If what I knew became solid, or true,
or even a dream in the mind of the world... If I were the mind

of the world I would send the cars to bed with no supper, I would
skim like a flat rock into the sky, slip between the last cloud

and the last tree, circle and turn and fly unlaced and golden
into the dawn inside the dark. There's time for that and everything,

time to close the book and load the car, time to hurry north
and find our beds, soft and weary, lucky, lucky as we are.

Jeff Gundy is professor of English at Bluffton University. His Ph.D. is from Indiana University; his M.A. is from Goshen College. He is the author of Scattering Point: The World in a Menonite Eye, A Community of Memory: My Days With George and Clara, Rhapsody With Dark Matter: Poems, Flatlands and Inquiries: Poems, Spoken Among the Trees and Deer-flies as well as several chapbooks. Gundy is included in Making Poems: Forty Poems with Commentary by the Poets edited by Todd Davis and Erin Murphy. Visit www.bluffton.edu/~gundyj/.

A few Thoughts on Fracking

Picking up on our Spring Convocation theme and the July 13 Summer Institute session on faith and fracking as well as the fact that hydraulic fracturing in this region has a direct impact on many of our synod congregations, I was keen to include a few fracking comics in this issue. Why in the poetry rubric? The artist happens to be a very fine poet as well. Nin Andrews is the award-winning author of several books including *Southern Comfort* by CavanKerry Press. She kindly gave us permission to reprint these from her Environmental Comics blog. Visit www.ninandrews.com. For fracking information visit <http://lutheranadvocacy.org/marcellus-shale-resources/>.

Questionnaire:

What kind of water would you like to drink?

1. Clean water
2. Water that contains benzene and other known and suspected carcinogens as well as methane gas, metals, and other chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing.

What kind of water would you like to bathe in?

1. Clean water
2. Water that contains benzene and other hydrocarbons as well as methane gas, metals, and other chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing.

What kind of air would you like to breathe?



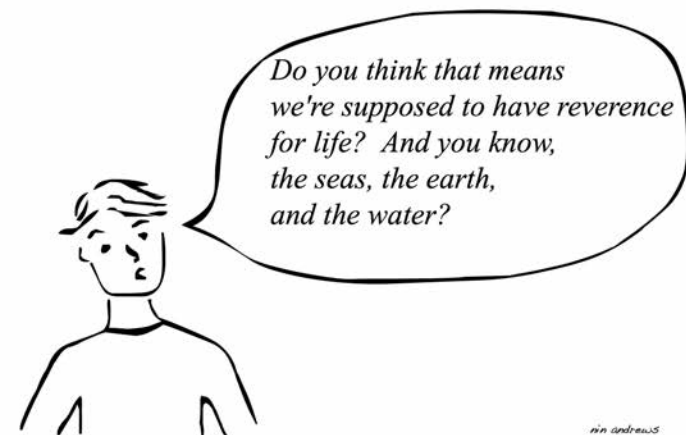
The Book of Job & fracking

Job 12:7-8 But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish of the sea inform you.



Psalm 24

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
for he founded it on the seas
and established it on the waters.
Psalm 24:1-2



GETTYSBURG SEMINARY FINE ARTS

A Veil Marks Creative Redemption, Redemption of Creation

John Spangler

Even the most forward-leaning artistry brings history along with it. Old traditions can find new outlets of expression, and even long dormant artifacts occasionally get a new life. Take Misereor, a German Roman Catholic organization devoted to development, specifically combating poverty and hunger, violence and discrimination in Asia, Latin America and Africa. Misereor, based in Aachen, Germany, has for more than three decades used a traditional artifact, long left behind, in a new and rather edifying way.

Taking its name from “Misereor super turbam” – “I have compassion on the crowd” (Mark 8:2), Misereor brought back to the church a long dormant tradition of the Lenten Veil, a medieval practice of covering the altar area during the Lenten season. A semi-transparent (sometimes painted) screen was used to curtain the rood screen that distinctly separated the assembly from the altar area. This practice was intended to remind worshippers of a somewhat subtle theological assertion that the true identity of Jesus as the Christ of God was hidden from the world in his earthly ministry and fully revealed in his suffering, death and resurrection. Remnants of this veiling remain in the modern practice of covering of crosses, icons and other works of art in worship spaces during the Lenten season. Misereor followed the tradition of using unbleached cloth and re-developed an historical practice in which communities painted scenes on the cloth to articulate scriptural stories in the Lenten cycle. This painting exercise was dubbed the “poor man’s Bible” because of its accessibility for those who could not understand Latin, before the Reformation launched the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the vernacular.

This mid-1970’s renaissance recaptured a multifaceted educational tool for contemporary Christians. Misereor’s creative twist was to commission



The Misereor Lenten Veil print “Protect God’s Creation So That All May Live” hangs on the first floor of Valentine Hall, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. The original painting was created in 2009 for distribution in Lent 2010 by Tony Nwachukwu.

artists from Africa, Asia and South America to paint mural-like images for these modern Lenten veils. About every two years, Misereor produces small (about 1 meter in width) and large scale (roughly 10 feet wide) prints by an artist from one of these regions to bring biblical, cultural and sometimes social imagery to the theme of the Gospel. In recent years, the subject matter has taken on themes that the relief and educational mission highlights. Since 1976, Misereor has commissioned artists from Peru, Haiti, India, Latin America, Ethiopia, China, Cameroon, and the Middle East among many other places. At any given time, the Seminary displays several of these works of art in hallways and other spaces.

Called a “Hungertuch,” literally ‘hunger cloth,’ the name invokes the hunger of the seasonal fast and the sacrifice called for in Lenten practice. Part art and part textual object, the Hungertuch pulls together the active engagement between the tradition and the world, expanding awareness and giving opportunity (and plenty of curricular material) for education and Christian action in response to the challenge of the visible word.

This particular Lenten Veil (see illustration above) was created in 2009 for distribution in Lent 2010 by Nigerian artist Tony Nwachukwu. His stated intent is to “build bridges” in an increasingly “globalized” world,

which turned out to be a good fit for both Misereor and the chosen environmental theme. The Hungertuch went on display at Gettysburg Seminary for the first time this fall, coinciding with the seminary community’s attempt to continue growing in its pursuit of greener habits, policy and lifestyle.

A painter, sculptor, and designer, Tony Nwachukwu lives in Owerri, Nigeria, where he operates an art gallery. He often works with batik and designs liturgical garments. His work often incorporates religious themes (e.g. stations of the cross created for churches in southern Germany and Austria). Moreover, Nwachukwu displays an interest in natural science and provides advice and design ideas on alternative energy projects from a separate office in Owerri.

His mural-like painting, entitled “Protect God’s Creation So That All May Live” has three distinct sections and offers up three scenes of creation: First is the creation story from Genesis, spanning the top of the work. To the left is the endangerment of this creation and third is a vision of global protection of creation in the lower right hand area of the painting.

In his creation imagery, Nwachukwu draws from both testaments. He employs a scroll to draw attention to the way creation unfolds with the sacred word (John, chapter 1), with divine direction and makes explicit the way in which the spirit moves over the waters (Genesis 1). Unfolding from a scroll with a bone at its center, a human figure stands among the rows of animal life below the heavens. The spirit in the form of a dove seems to move the creation toward its redemption, away from the endangerment of polluted rivers flowing from smog-producing industry. A Nigerian would be familiar with the violent explosions and fires from oil and gas pipes extracting the fossil fuels pumped on their way to port. Rampant news stories report the dangerous and sometimes fatal attempts of the poor to tap these pipes. An African would see in this painting the wealth leaving and the poverty of dark houses remaining, nearly tilting into the river. And so Nwachukwu places a child on a barrel floating in the lifeless chemical soup, with soil erosion and brown fields in the background. You might now begin to notice that images of air pollution intermingle with the creation.

My eye lands on a dominant arc in the lower part of the painting which is meant to lay the claim of God to include the redemption of the world. A global gathering of faces bearing fish and flower focus upon the paschal candle around earth that has become the table itself. In the details is a green, natural growing world, with an industrial image that appears to be in balance with the environs around it. This arc of humanity has fulfilled its role as steward of plant and animal life, with all eyes upon the light of the world. Approaching sustainability in this lower third of his painting, Nwachukwu ties the animal and plant world together, as all of humanity is necessarily together around this global table. One of the depicted flowers is an endan-

gered medicinal herb called the “African Devil’s Claw.” If you look closely, you will also see that a figure is fishing in the waters by the redeemed version of an industrial complex; the water lives.

Yes, environmental sustainability is held up as a way of survival, of course and more than that, the salvation of the people of God (actually all of humanity). But the artist would go further to suggest that sustainable stewardship is also a proper way to love God, holding the creator in the highest esteem, led by the same spirit that was there at the creation of the world. The plant and animal world is a part of the redemptive scope of God’s intentions.

The day this Hungertuch went on display did not pass before members of the community were asking questions about what they were seeing. Art helps create and sustain faith, but we hope that this art will move people to respond, act and change how they live. Nwachukwu leaves quite a bit of scroll out of view, implying that the creator hasn’t fully rolled out this source of that which is good.

See the Hungertuch

Misereor has a gallery of its Hungertücher on the web, in German only, www.misereor.de/aktionen/hungertuch/galerie.html where you can see most of the biennial prints. A few of them remain available for purchase. View Gettysburg Seminary’s copy of the 2009 Hungertuch on the first floor of Valentine Hall, around the corner from the Coffee Shop.

Writing About Nature

A Lutheran Writers Project Symposium at Roanoke College

Our third annual symposium will feature authors discussing nature and the spiritual imagination.

If you would like information on this symposium, and other Lutheran Writers Project offerings, including sermon writing workshops, residencies, the Lutheran Writers Festival at Luther College, and more, please visit LutheranWriters.org and subscribe to the free newsletter.

The Lutheran Writers Project at Roanoke College provides resources and gathering opportunities for writers, readers, and institutions. Our mission is to engage and renew the imagination of the Lutheran church; to serve those who create, read, and publish literature that strives for spiritual and literary depth; to recognize and celebrate the gifts of writers; and to enable dialogue among writers, readers, and Lutheran institutions.



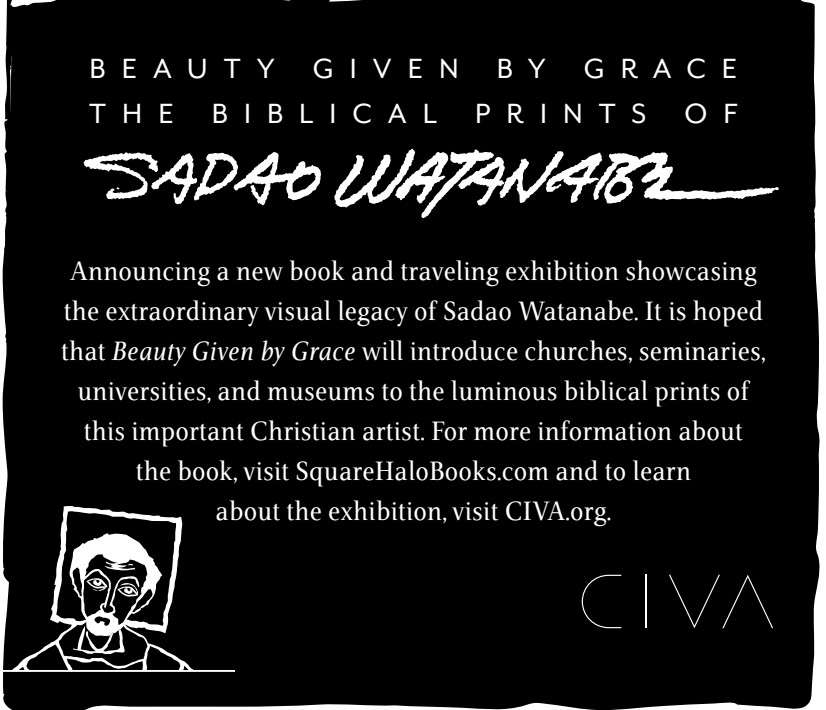
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PHILIP C. KOLIN is a University Distinguished Professor, University of Southern Mississippi, Editor of the *Southern Quarterly* and Publisher/Editor of *Vineyards: A Journal of Christian Poetry*.

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