Kerstin Schlögl-Flierl

The Concept of Environment in Christianity

Environment as a Significant Issue in Christianity – as a Challenge and Option for the Future

The Corona crisis can be considered a stimulant for a new perception of the environment. This results from a lack of attention to the One Health approach, due to which the environmental side of health has been given little consideration in the past. Thus, the risk of zoonotic diseases has been underestimated. This applies also to a religious, more specifically, the Christian tradition in thinking about environmental issues.

In order to get an initial idea of a Christian understanding of environment, a general approach to the issue of environment in Christianity is to start from an interreligious comparison of the topic of nature. Principally, four elementary religious forms of understanding nature can be found. Firstly, nature is understood "as the work of the Creator, who sustains it and to whom people owe an account (Judaism, Christianity, Islam)"[1]. Secondly, the essential equality of human beings, animals, and plants can be postulated. This results in the need for respectful interaction (Buddhism, Hinduism, and other Asian religions). A third approach takes into account the cosmic harmony of the God-given natural order, which must be recognized and taken as the basis for a successful life (for example in Taoism). The fourth approach is the idea of earth-connected gods that human beings encounter in nature and that need to be amended positively through rites (for example tribal religions in Africa, America, and Australia)[2].

The question will be what characterizes the concept of Christianity in a further manner. On a purely conceptual level, the idea of ecumenism is guiding. It expresses living together in *one house*, that is, it does not refer to the Christian denominations, but to all fellow creatures. It "takes shape [thus] as an interdenominational, intercultural, interreligious and ecological learning process that cannot be concluded"[3].

Ecology, thus, also forms the framework for religious discourse. Here in the present contribution, the genuinely Christian is formulated, whereby the term Christian also offers a wide field. Pope Benedict XVI – as a risk and a crisis –

1 Vogt, Markus, *Christliche Umweltethik. Grundlagen und zentrale Herausforderungen*, Freiburg et al.: Herder, 2021, 268 [translation K.S.F. with the help of Pia Heutling].

2 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 268.

3 Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 283f. [translation K.S.F.].

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110782455-003

pointed to a new covenant between human beings and the environment.[4] This culminated in Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, which will be presented in this article.

In particular, it is a Catholic point of view on Environment in Christianity, which seeks to incorporate Protestant and Orthodox views. This also reveals itself to be a challenge and will be addressed in this contribution.

For the purpose of contextualizing, the discussions about the concept of "environment" and its meaning are taking place in times of the Anthropocene. Are humans considered engineers of the biosphere in this context? The term of human beings as engineers, which already existed before, was mentioned by Paul Crutzen[5]. He also explains the term "Anthropocene" and correlates it with analyses that found air trapped in polar ice. This could be dated back to the late 18th century, where the beginning of growing global concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane began taking place.[6] Crutzen emphasizes the impact of mankind and its behavior towards the environment. Finding environmentally sustainable management tools is crucial for the Anthropocene. Apart from various international programs and large-scale geo-engineering projects, scientists are still largely treading on terra incognita.[7]

The social ethicist, Markus Vogt, points out, that this understanding as human engineers of the environment suggests the human invention (from Latin *ingenium*, invention) of the environment. Dissolving the dualism of man and environment in favor of man and culture, encompasses supposedly everything.[8] This is opposed by a biblical image of the environment.

1 The Bible and the Environment

A glimpse into the biblical text also helps to understand environment in Christianity.

4 Cf. Caritas in Veritate, no. 48–52.
5 Cf. Crutzen, Paul, "The Geology of mankind", *Nature* 415 (2002), 23.
6 Cf. Crutzen, *Geology*, 23.
7 Cf. Crutzen, *Geology*, 23.
8 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 132.

1.1 Paradise Narrative/Creation Account

A central biblical text that gives voice to ideas of the environment is the paradise narrative. Da Silva[9] points out that this is a yearning harmonious image that actively places the task of preservation on mankind. Human beings are, therefore, responsible for the preservation of the divine creation.

Mankind is expelled from paradise and must till the soil there (Gen 3:23–24) as God's punishment. This can be linked to the liberation of the world from chaos outside of paradise, which is, thereby, brought about. Human beings know themselves to be co-creators with God.

The expulsion from paradise is a result of the tensions and conflicts between God and mankind. For Gen 2–3 makes it clear that next to God's divine life-giving power of creation, which has its climax in the fertility of the land and the women as the bearers of life, there is mankind's striving towards being able to distinguish between good and evil. Mankind wants to be like God – Godkind, so to say – hence mankind's task is to protect and to preserve what is given to it. The space to be preserved and protected is provided by the surroundings in the form of soil, water, plants, animals, and people, who all function as bearers of life.

After having focused on Gen 2–3, the attention is now turned to Gen 1. The following verbs are crucial here: The verbs *radah* and *kabash* used in Hebrew can be translated as *to tread down, to kick (the winepress), to stomp, to subjugate, to rape sexually.* They, thus, imply a violent dimension of meaning. In Gen 1:26, however, *radah* clearly means "to subdue", which is to be interpreted as a correspondence to God's rule, which is founded in the likeness of man and, from there, as a mandate of responsibility.

Gen 1:28 has been newly considered and analyzed because of an established aggressive interpretation.[10] Bernd Janowski structures previous interpretations into two interpretive models for the Hebrew root *radah:* "to rule" as "to trample (down)" and "to rule" as "to accompany, to lead along". The first interpretive model, with reference to Joel 4:13, where the treading of grapes in the winepress is described, depicts an action that is clearly directed from above downward and is associated with violence. Consequently, man could be understood as the

9 Cf. da Silva, Jorgiano dos Santos, *Füllet die Erde und macht sie euch untertan! (Gen 1,28). Strukturen einer alttestamentlich begründeten Schöpfungstheologie und deren Konsequenzen für eine biblisch orientierte Umweltethik*, Münster: LIT, 2018, 81ff.

10 Cf. Janowski, Bernd, "Herrschaft über die Tiere. Gen 1,26–28 und die Semantik von רדה", in: id., *Die rettende Gerechtigkeit. Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments 2*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1999, 33–48, here: 33.

"down tramper" and spreader of terror among all creatures. The second model of interpretation describes an interpretation based on the context of Gen 1:28 with verses 29f., which speak of blessing: Gen 1:22 and Gen 2:3 coupled with God's resting on the seventh day (Gen 2:2f.). In 1972, James Barr[11], therefore, proposed the interpretation of man as the royal shepherd rather than the conqueror of all creatures.[12]

According to Norbert Lohfink, the *radah* used here corresponds to the Akkadian *redû(m)*, which means "to accompany, to lead (with oneself), to go". This corresponds to the idea and word usage for droving and leading animals.[13] Erich Zenger[14] understands man as a royal agent of the Creator God and, thus, does not empower him to unrestrained rule. Zenger's justification lies in the semantics of the verb as well as in the ancient oriental conception of the divine shepherd. The shepherd cares for his flock, which in this case are the people, and is represented by the king as a living image. This is opposed by Klaus Koch with his royal ideological interpretation based on Ez 34:4, Ps 49:15 and the Akkadian *redû(m)*.[15] Janowski calls his interpretation restrictive, when Koch only speaks of "leading animals", more precisely, for example, in a caravan. Koch's general interpretation of a grazing, guiding, and tending behavior of man originates form this interpretation.[16]

Janowski dared a new interpretation, which became necessary because of the previous interpretation models and critical objections to them. The overall context of Gen 1:28 – together with 1:29f. and 1:31 – contradicts the first model of interpretation by pointing to an overall peaceful mood, which has its opposite in the state of war as seen in Gen 9:1–3 and Gen 6:11f.13.[17] The second model of

---

11 Cf. Barr, James, "Man and Nature. The Ecological Controversy and the Old Testament", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 55 (1972/73), 1–28.

12 Cf. Janowski, *Herrschaft*, 33f.

13 Cf. Lohfink, Norbert, "'Macht euch die Erde untertan'?" (1974), in: id., *Studien zum Pentateuch*, SBAB 4, Stuttgart: Verlag katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988, 11–28, 22.

14 Cf. Zenger, Erich, *Gottes Bogen in den Wolken. Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Theologie der priesterschriftlichen Urgeschichte*, SBS 112, Stuttgart: Verlag katholisches Bibelwerk, ²1987, 90.

15 Cf. Koch, Klaus, "Gestaltet die Erde, doch hegt das Leben! Einige Klarstellungen zum *dominium terrae* in Genesis 1" (1983), in: id., *Spuren des hebräischen Denkens. Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze 1*, Bernd Janowski / Martin Krause (eds.), Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991, 223–237, here: 225, 231ff.

16 Cf. Janowski, *Herrschaft*, 36f.

17 Cf. Lohfink, Norbert, "Die Priesterschrift und die Grenzen des Wachstums", in: id., *Unsere großen Wörter. Das Alte Testament zu Themen dieser Jahre*, Freiburg et al.: Herder, 1977, 156–171, here: 168f. See also: Uehlinger, Christoph, "Vom dominium terrae zu einem Ethos der Selbstbeschränkung? Alttestamentliche Einsprüche gegen einen tyrannischen Umgang mit der Schöpfung", *Bibel und Liturgie* 64 (1991), 59–74, here: 61. And: Link, Christian, *Schöpfung. Schöp-*

interpretation is countered by the accusation of pacification and the subliminal introduction of a modern collective responsibility conception for creation. This is not appropriate to the texts.[18] Janowski makes it his task to develop an understanding of *radah* that considers both the propositional disparity of Gen 1:26–28 and its embeddedness in the context. He proposes the metaphor of the royal man for this purpose.[19]

Janowski understands the meaning of *radah* against the backdrop of the Akkadian *redû(m)*, too. This is syntactically constructed with an object denoting a spatial totality ("all lands") or a totality of living beings ("mankind").[20] Thus, dominion must be understood in terms of the boundaries of creation. According to Gen 1:28, man's task is determined in a twofold sense: claiming the earth and ruling over the animals. The image of God as an originally royal motive in Gen 1:26ff. denotes an image of God acting responsibly in relation to his living space and all living beings in it. The allocation of food in Gen 1:29f. regulates the coexistence of living beings. Community (same habitat) and difference (different food) intermingle with each other here.[21]

In addition, the demarcation of Gen 1:26–28 and Gen 9:2f. emphasizes that Gen 1:26–28 calls mankind not to fail in its humanity, as the image of God is adversatively described in Gen 6:11ff. The mandate to rule in Gen 1:26–28 does not reduce the world to the ideal of a perfect world, but in comparison with Gen 9:2f. calls on man not to leave it at the normativity of the factual, but to limit rule.[22]

In the so-called first creation narrative in Gen 1:1–2:3 the human being is particularly singled out in two ways: once by the so-called "dominion order" and by the God-likeness (imago Dei). Man is created at the same time, as are the animals, by the verb *barah*, and he shares the seventh day with the animals as a distinction by divine blessing. However, what is lacking, is that God evaluates man as good and provides him with this form of approval. The position of man according to Gen 1 is, thus, clearly more ambivalent than commonly received and suggested by the speech of the "crown of creation". This speech can-

---

fungstheologie angesichts der Herausforderungen des 20. Jahrhunderts, Handbuch Systematischer Theologie 7/2, Gütersloh: Mohn, 1991, here: 396.

18 Cf. Ebach, Jürgen, "Bild Gottes und Schrecken der Tiere. Zur Anthropologie der priesterlichen Urgeschichte", in: id., *Ursprung und Ziel. Erinnerte Zukunft und erhoffte Vergangenheit. Biblische Exegesen, Reflexionen, Geschichten*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986, 16–47, here: 32. Also: Uehlinger, *dominium terrae*, 61.

19 Cf. Janowski, *Herrschaft*, 38.

20 Cf. Janowski, *Herrschaft*, 40.

21 Cf. Janowski, *Herrschaft*, 44.

22 Cf. Janowski, *Herrschaft*, 45.

not refer to Gen 1. Gen 1 is understood as a theological concept, not an anthropocentric one, culminating in God's resting on the seventh day. According to Gen 1, the "crown of creation" is the seventh day and mankind a *primus inter pares*.[23]

In summary, the environment is created by God and there is a special relationship between God and humankind concerning the tasks for the environment. But other (biblical) books and authors give an impetus for the conception of environment in Christianity, too.

1.2 Prophets

For example, Hilary Marlow[24] re-reads the Old Testament prophets Amos and Hosea in the context of contemporary environmental ethics. She points out that especially the rhetorical structure of the Book of Amos shows the powerful and all-encompassing nature of God, which finds expression especially in the non-human creation. The Book of Amos invites an environmentally interested reader to understand the cooperation of the non-human world with its creator as opposed to human rebellion against both. This finds expression in a cause and effect pattern: in disasters such as, for example, droughts, earthquakes or floods. YHWH first warns the human beings and then judges.[25]

Hosea – in contrast to Amos, who presents YHWH as a cosmic power and as creator and judge – focusses exclusively on land and its produce when referring to non-human creation. Hosea uses almost no description of cosmic powers or global disorder.[26] More generally, Marlow finds out that the non-human creation in the Book of Hosea is structurally and thematically less important than in the Book of Amos.[27]

---

23 Cf. Schmitz, Barbara, "Der Mensch als 'Krone der Schöpfung'. Anthropologische Konzepte im Spannungsfeld von alttestamentlicher Theologie und moderner Rezeption", *Kirche und Israel* 27.1 (2012), 18–32, here: 22.

24 Cf. Marlow, Hilary, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics. Re-Reading Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

25 Cf. Marlow, *Prophets*, 157.

26 Cf. Marlow, *Prophets*, 158f.

27 Cf. Marlow, *Prophets*, 194.

1.3 Creation in the Book of Psalms

Especially Ps 8 and Ps 104 should be examined in this context. Ps 8 reads as follows:

> 1 To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of David. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.
> 2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger.
> 3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
> 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?
> 5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.
> 6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,
> 7 all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
> 8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
> 9 O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth![28]

Ps 8 suggests itself as a biblical text relevant to environmental ethics because it uses the verb *to crown*, suggesting an association with the formulation of man as the "crown of creation". Ps 8 begins with the invocation of God (YHWH) as Lord, the ruler whose name is mighty all over the earth. Verses 2 and 10 are identical, framing the psalm in an invocation to God.[29] Text-critically, there is even a hymnic explication as majesty in verses 2b and 3. More precisely, God's majesty is not meant in military, economic, or political terms, but it is clearly distinguished from that of worldly rulers. God's extraordinary power, which comes from the "mouth of babies and infants", determines all reality (Ps 8:2). The function of man in this is posited in verses 4–6: there is an anthropological self-determination (not a philosophical discourse) of an individual in prayer before God and in the presence of God. The self-designation of man in verse 5 as *'enosh* is a generic designation and may particularly emphasize his limitedness (in the possible translation as "little man" or the German "Menschlein"). In addition, the designation *ben 'adam* is found, in which references to the individual human being can be made to Gen 2–4 and the son of Adam. The focus here could be on the transience of man and his potential guilt. The continuation in verse 6 crowns

28 Ps 8 (ESV).
29 Cf. Schmitz, *Mensch*, 22.

man with "glory" and "honor", qualifications otherwise ascribed to God.[30] In Ps 21 alone, these qualities come to a human being, a king, however. In Ps 8, though, this qualification happens to all men, making man a king with such a function and basic determination. The king function is opened and democratized.[31]

Contrary to the first intuition of verse 4, according to verses 5 and 6, man is not nothing, he is only slightly inferior to God and crowned with splendor and glory. This appreciative singling out of man makes the question of the distance between man and God important in an exacerbated way[32]: for, what is man, singled out by God and endowed with royal functions, in view of his Creator and the world he has made?

Verses 7–9 explain the kingly function as the function of ruling. Man's being king does not shape up as a privileged way of life, but as the hard and stony task of being a good king. According to Ps 8:7–9, this task does not refer to the world and not to nature and not to other people, but to the animal world. In short, it can be stated that Ps 8 formulates an anthropological concept that humans are to be good shepherds over the animal world. Together with the essential framework of the psalm, Ps 8 is not about the rule of man and his supposed privileged position, but about the hymnically praised rule of God in which man has a function.[33]

Like Gen 1, Ps 8 is not an anthropocentric but a theocentric text. The designation as a creation hymn is, therefore, appropriate.[34]

The 104th Psalm can be classified as a creation psalm. While at the beginning (verse 1) and at the end of the psalm (verses 33–35) the poet or the poetess stands out, in the main part (verses 2–32), YHWH, the God of Israel, is praised as creator and sustainer of the world. The direction of the praise goes from heaven (verses 1–4) to the separation of water and land (verses 5–9) to life on earth (verses 10–24) and the sea (verses 25–26). All life thereby depends on YHWH (verses 27–32). Various conceptions of God become clear: YHWH appears as a weather god who brings rain or symbolizes the sun; that is, as a fighter against primeval chaos. Linguistic signals also point to this, for example the change in address

30 See: Ps 29:3; 145:5, 12; Isa 35:2.
31 Cf. Schmitz, *Mensch*, 23.
32 Cf. Schmitz, *Mensch*, 23.
33 Cf. Schmitz, *Mensch*, 24.
34 Cf. Schmitz, *Mensch*, 24.

between the 2nd person compared to statements about YHWH in the 3rd person. The exact textual genesis and precursors of the text are disputed.[35]

In the 21st century, Ps 104 is particularly relevant because of its framing of man's position in creation. The notion of not understanding animals as fellow human beings and, therefore, understanding them merely as a means to achieve any purpose cannot be based on Ps 104 and the Bible. Human beings do experience a special place in the world – as they do in Ps 104 – but this does not mean that the rest of creation is available for processing and preparation of food. Animals eat what they find (verses 11.14.21). Human beings must prepare, process, and manufacture it (verses 23.14–15). Human beings may at best marvel at the world of animals from a distance according to Ps 104: wild asses, ibexes, klipsheep (verses 11–18), birds (verses 12–17) or the leviathan in the sea (verse 26). God turns to this world while man has no place in the animal world. Rainer Kessler reads Ps 104 as an invitation to mankind to learn again not to be masters and owners of nature, but a part of it. Only in this way, upcoming catastrophes can be averted.[36]

Verse 35, which urges that sinners may disappear from earth, so that there are no more workers of iniquity on earth, is preceded by a final repetition of the beginning ("Bless, my inmost being, YHWH!") and the Hallelujah shout that ties Ps 104–106 together into a triad.[37] The sinners and transgressors here can be identified with those who threaten to destroy the divine creation itself. Therefore, they should no longer exist. Rainer Kessler suggests reading Ps 104 as a self-question whether each and every one himself belongs to the sinners and workers of iniquity as described in the psalm. This question is central and should be answered independently of how politicians like Donald Trump or Jair Bolsonaro act in relation to our planet or that, according to Oxfam's 2020 report, the richest 10% of the earth's population are responsible for over half of the greenhouse gas emissions of the last quarter century.[38]

Peter Riede asks what we can learn from Ps 104 for our understanding of the world today. In doing so, he draws attention to the interdependence of the whole of creation and the guiding principle of "life" in contrast to the guiding principle of progress in the 20th century, where man is the central focus. He understands this concept not as a romanticism of nature or as a naïve "back to nature", but as an understanding of the world as an organism of life with manifold life-perform-

35 Cf. Kessler, Rainer, "'Eine Grenze hast du gesetzt' (Ps 104,9). Psalm 104 im Horizont globaler Krisen", *Bibel und Kirche* 76.1 (2021), 22–27, here: 22f.

36 Cf. Kessler, *Grenze*, 25.

37 Cf. Kessler, *Grenze*, 25.

38 Cf. Kessler, *Grenze*, 26.

ances, which makes God's reign over the world clear. Creation is, thus, the place where the healing and saving God wants to be revealed. Within a new ethics of creation, this means turning away from the dominance of the human measure. The non-human creation thereby experiences intrinsic values[39] and rights in the form of protection of ecosystems and species, the preservation and development of the genetic heritage and a species-appropriate life.[40] In this context, Ps 104 helps to put modern anthropocentrism in its place and to emphasize the intrinsic value of nature.[41]

1.4 New Testament

At first glance, creation is not a central theme of the New Testament – especially in comparison to the magnificent Old Testament descriptions. When continuing on from this, however, one can read in the New Testament about the experience of God's new work of creation.[42] Ritual enactment is the baptism that makes Christians Christians. In the Pauline sense, the focus is on overcoming differences that constitute the present world age: "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."[43] "New creation" refers to late descriptions in the Book of Isaiah (Isa 65:17 and 66:20) in order to denote the expectation of a comprehensive reorganization of the entire world. This refers to a change in the identity of individuals, as is expressed programmatically, for example, in the Epistle to the Galatians in the polemic against circumcision to distinguish Judaism from paganism. According to Paul, it is genuinely Christian to overcome ethnic and social backgrounds, as well as the sex of human beings: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."[44] A new way of perception is also part of Paul's new creation thought: "From now on, therefore, we regard no one

39 "Intrinsic value" vs. "inherent value" for German "Eigenwert": according to a short research, intrinsic is more often used for nature in general and inherent is explicitly used in the context of animal rights.

40 Cf. Riede, Peter, "Mensch und Welt in der Sicht des Alten Testaments. Am Beispiel von Psalm 104", in: id., *Schöpfung und Lebenswelt. Studien zur Theologie und Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*, Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2009, 101–117, here: 116.

41 Cf. Riede, *Mensch*, 117.

42 Cf. Vollenweider, Samuel, "Wahrnehmungen der Schöpfung im Neuen Testament", *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie*, 55 (2003), 246–253, here: 246.

43 Gal 6:15 (ESV).

44 Gal 3:28 (ESV), paragraph: cf. Vollenweider, *Wahrnehmungen*, 247.

according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer."[45]

Because of the uncontroversial assumption by early Christians that God the Creator created the world and continues to sustain it, both processes are addressed only in passing. An exception is the Lucan version of Paul's speech on the Areopagus (Acts 17:16–34, compare 14:15–17). Biblical and Hellenistic convictions are brought into conversation with each other, for example temple and cult criticism, the animation of creation with life and spirit, the origin of mankind, the order of spaces and times, the nearness and sonship of God.[46]

Moreover, Christ is identified as the basic figure of creation (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15–20; Heb. 1:2f.; Jn. 1:1ff.). The prologue of John is a central text, in which the beginning of Genesis is used to give weight to the Jesus story in connection with it. Through creation theology, Jesus is given and presented to the world by John. The praise of Christ in the Letter to the Colossians also joins this sequence of texts. The focus here is on the interplay of creation and redemption with recourse to Greek Hellenistic cosmologies. The Church as the Body of Christ growing into the cosmos is the place where the cosmic presence of Christ can be perceived (Col 1:12–14, 21–23). This is a critical interpretation of wisdom theology as well as philosophical cosmologies in Colossians.[47]

1.5 A Summary of the Reflections on the Bible

It can be stated that the entire biblical canon is framed by the notion of creation. Mankind's task on earth can be summarized as striving to create paradise on earth. The attempt to be like God can only harm and destroy what has been created. A paradise on earth appears wherever people succeed in protecting and preserving creation. Gen 2–3, thus, conceives of a holistic ecology including the human being. A human ecology that thinks God and human beings in accordance with each other and assigns a new place to human beings in cooperation with other human beings as well as with God is a challenge.[48]

Considering various discussions on and misinterpretations of the biblical texts, Jürgen Manemann speaks of man's gardening in the world. He takes a close look at the mission of dominion as a basis. The new world gardeners are engineers and geologists: they appear as *anthropocentrists,* who see themselves

45 2 Cor 5:16 (ESV), paragraph: cf. Vollenweider, *Wahrnehmungen*, 248.
46 Cf. Vollenweider, *Wahrnehmungen*, 249f.
47 Cf. Vollenweider, *Wahrnehmungen*, 250f.
48 Cf. da Silva, *Füllet die Erde*, 81ff.

as world gardeners. There is planetary gardening and there are plant gardens that are created by order. Humankind is responsible, also, for the environment remaining wild and 'natural'.

However, the question remains: who determines this? Who makes the decisions? Perhaps the Christian tradition helps to see clearer.

2 The Tradition

Jame Schaefer suggests reading the (Catholic) theological tradition through an ecological lens. In order to do so, she starts by indicating the pivotal role of religious communities to remind their members of traditions that may guide them during the current widespread ecological degradation.[49] For this reason, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment was initiated by Jewish and Christian representatives. Its aim is to care for God's creation throughout religious life through theological reflection, teaching, worship, and public policy initiative.[50]

Jame Schaefer proposes a five-step model, which she calls a modest method for retrieval, reconstruction, and application. The first step explores a certain concept from patristic and medieval texts and estimates its adequateness for ecological concerns. The second step looks at the theologians and their prescientific understanding of the world. Thus, the aim of step two is to reconstruct philosophical and theological backgrounds and a context of the time from which the concepts result. Step three focusses on coherence followed by step four, which ensures the relevance for ecological concerns. Step five finally assesses the helpfulness of the concept in addressing ecological concerns. This method excludes all "is-ought" problems from empirical facts because every process starts in the religious faith in God as creator-initiator and continuous sustainer of the cosmological-biological process.[51] These five steps offer a critical-creative approach for the Catholic, Christian tradition, on how to think and act towards other species, ecosystems and biosphere, beginning with the patristic and medieval texts.[52]

---

49 Cf. Schaefer, Jame, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics. Reconstruction Patristic and Medieval Concepts*, Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2009, 1.

50 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 2.

51 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 5f.

52 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 7.

2.1 Valuing the Goodness of Creation

Valuing the Goodness of Creation – as the first of all nine concepts Schaefer deals with – is part of various teachings of Augustine, Chrysostom, and Aquinas. Augustine (354–430) derives every existence from God, that he calls the "supremely good Creator"[53]. He created the universe ex nihilo. In his controversy with the Manicheans, he states directly that every being is good according to its characteristics and body. In his great work *De Trinitate* he declares:

> The earth is good by the height of its mountains, the moderate elevation of its hills, and the evenness of its fields; and good is the farm that is pleasant and fertile; and good is the house that is arranged throughout in symmetrical proportions and is spacious and bright; and good are the animals, animate bodies; and good is the mild and salubrious air; and good is the food that is pleasant and conducive to health; and good is health without pains and weariness; and good is the countenance of man with regular features, a cheerful expression, and a glowing color; and good is the soul of a friend with the sweetness of concord and the fidelity of love; and good is the just man; and good are riches because they readily assist us; and good is the heaven with its own sun, moon and stars.[54]

The goodness of the existing continues even in a diminished body as long as it exists.

Aquinas (1224/25–1274), thereafter, draws on Augustine in the affirmation of the goodness of every creature according to the Book of Genesis. The existence of every creature is reasoned in the creation of God, which attributes to every creature its goodness. Moreover, according to Aquinas, every entity is implanted with some kind of innate way of existing that makes it perfect. Criticizing a creature's nature is at the same time criticism on God, who is the creator of nature. However, the ability to comprehend makes human beings distinct, according to Aquinas. Through God's innate way of existing as God intends, goodness receives another dimension: the likeness to God's goodness. "Only intellectual aspects of the human bear God's image, whereas the nonintellectual aspects, those making up the physical body, retain only a likeness of God's goodness through their existence."[55] Schaefer highlights that the goodness, which Augustine and Aquinas attribute to God's creation, is also fixed to God's specificity and his overall plan.

---

53 Cf. Augustine, *The Enchiridion: on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. J.F. Shaw, Henry Paolucci (ed.), Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1961, 10:10.

54 Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963, 8.3.4, 247.

55 Schaefer, *Foundations*, 19 f.

Thus, only rational beings are free to decide, despite it being against the Will of God.[56]

Summing up the first concept Schaefer takes from patristic and medieval tradition, the ethics of intrinsic-instrumental valuing appears as a potentially effective system for the environmental ethics of today. The origin in God attributes to every constituent of the earth an intrinsic-instrumental value, which persists in the ongoing process of existing. In this concept, the idea of a common good, as the sustainability of all constituents in the shared ecosystem and the greater biosphere, solves conflicts between any of those valued beings.[57]

2.2 Appreciating the Beauty of Creation

The second concept Schaefer takes, in particular from eminent theologians of patristic and medieval thought, is an aesthetic concept including affective, cognitive, affective-cognitive, and mysterious dimensions: the concept of "Appreciating the Beauty of Creation".[58] The central theological position was established by Basil of Caesarea (329–379). In his second homily, where he expounds Gen 1, adjectives such as "august, magnificent, wondrous, marvelous, dazzling, pleasant, attractive, enjoyable, and excellent"[59] serve as a means for him to describe the world. In a letter to his friend Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil even proclaims that he found the site to God's providence for example in colorful trees on high mountains, and the evenly sloping plain at the mountain's base where he stays. He compares the site he found to Homer's Calypso Island, which are actually not comparable to one another. His depiction is plausibly given.[60] Aside from Basil's impressions, patristic and medieval theologians find four ways in which they express their aesthetic appreciation for the beauty of God's creation:

> Firstly, "[a]n affective appreciation precipitated by their initial encounter with natural beauty; [secondly,] a combined affective-cognitive appreciation from studying the details of natural beings; [thirdly,] a cognitive appreciation for the harmonious functioning of the world; and [fourthly,] an appreciation that comes with a humble sense of inability to fully comprehend the complex universe."[61] [Annotations K.S.F.]

56 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 27.
57 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 32.
58 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 43.
59 Schaefer, *Foundations*, 44.
60 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 44 f.
61 Schaefer, *Foundations*, 56.

Reconstructing patterns of human behavior by starting not from today's broad scientific findings, but from the context of the patristic and medieval theologians, helps to understand phenomenologically the beauty of natural phenomena, the harmonious function of biota and abiota, and finally the necessity of humble human acting before God's incomprehensible universe in scientific and theological endeavors. The patristic and medieval reflection on the beauty of nature needs to be acquired for today's ecotheological thinking.[62]

2.3 Reverencing the Sacramental Universe

The third concept Schaefer suggests is called "Reverencing the Sacramental Universe". The idea of a sacramental quality of nature means that the visible world, which is nature itself, mediates God's invisible presence and his attributes. Patristic and medieval theologians spoke about a "book of nature" in which he reveals himself.[63] Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–216) addresses God's discernible power, Athanasius (295–373) reflects on God's Activity, and the Syrian theologian, Ephrem (303–373), examines the symbolic creation.

Basil of Caesarea again focusses on the world's sacramental beauty. God's creative act evokes our admiration for God's work at the same time as the world manifests God's "artistic processes of thought"[64]. Basil's understanding of the beauty of God's creation is also expressed in his prayers, with which he usually closes his homilies. This prayer closes his first homily on the six days of creation:

> Let us glorify the Master Craftsmen for all that has been done wisely and skillfully; and from the beauty of the visible things let us form an idea of Him who is more than beautiful; and from the greatness of these perceptible and circumscribed bodies let us conceive of Him who is infinite and immense and who surpasses all understanding in the plentitude of His power. For, even if we are ignorant of things made, yet, at least, that which in general comes under our observation is so wonderful that even the most acute mind is shown to be at a loss as regards the least of the things in the world, either in the ability to explain it worthily or to render due praise to the Creator; to whom be all glory, honor, and power forever. Amen.[65]

62 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 57.

63 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 65.

64 Basil of Caesarea, On the Hexaemeron, in *Exegetic Homilies*, trans. Sister Agnes Clare Way, Fathers of the Church 46, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963, 3–150, esp. homily 1.7, 112.

65 Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, 1.11, 19; quoted from Schaefer, *Foundations*, 68f.

Also, at the end of his sixth homily, he stressed God's gift of intelligence to humans:

> May he who has granted us intelligence to learn of the great wisdom of the artificer from the most insignificant objects of creation permit us to receive loftier concepts of the Creator from the mighty objects of creation ...Truly, it is not possible to attain a worthy view of God of the universe from these things, but to be led on by them, as also by each of the tiniest of plants and animals to some slight and faint impression of Him.[66]

The sacramental character of microcosmic and macrocosmic phenomena was crucial for Basil and he would not regress to any other understanding of God's creation. At the same time, Basil stressed the human acceptance and openness towards natural phenomena and their sacramental quality that is the precondition for their manifestation of God. This is shown theologically and morally in the shape of "God's governance [...] imbedded in the laws of nature telling us how we ought to act"[67]. Observing animals, such as crawling creatures, fish, sea urchins, oysters, sea monsters, and other marine animals is the moral lesson to be learned by human beings, according to Basil.[68]

Augustine presents his trinitarian perspective also related to the invisible God's creation and its presence in the sacramentally qualified nature. According to Augustine, nature and the physical world represent God's wisdom, which is why any approach to the ultimate truth of the universe is only possible through faith in God. For Augustine, knowing God results also in the ability to understand God's self-communication through the world's constituents. The image of God in a human's soul assures the ability to see and understand God. God's self-revelation to the world happens in his trinity, which Augustine concludes from the refrain of Gen 1 "and God saw that it was good". Additionally, every creation manifests a unity, form, and order in itself. All this is God's active, but hidden, governance. God, therefore, works providentially through his created world by a double function of providence: a natural one (provided in the soul and through birth) and a voluntary one (human beings learn and exercise free will and decide on food and clothing). Human beings resemble the Divine Trinity through existing, according to Augustine's reflection[69]. Rejoicing, he prayed and gave thanks to God[70]:

---

66 Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron*, 6.11, 102–3; quoted from Schaefer, *Foundations*, 69.

67 Schaefer, *Foundations*, 69.

68 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 69; following: Basil, *Hexaemeron*, 7.4, 112.

69 Cf. Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. John O'Meara, London: Penguin Books, 1972, 11.26, 459–60.

70 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 69f.

> Let him who sees this, either in part, or through a mirror, or in an obscure manner, [Cor 13:12] rejoice that he knows God, and let him honor Him as God and give thanks. But let him who does not see, strive to see through His piety, and not raise captious objections through his blindness. For God is one, yet a trinity. Nor are the words: 'From whom all things, through whom all things, and unto whom all things', to be taken in a confused sense, nor as meaning many gods, but 'to him be the glory forever. Amen.'[71]

Schaefer reconstructs the patristic and medieval concept of sacramentality, which is extremely different from a modern scientific concept. Opposed to empirical findings by quantum physicists, cosmologists, evolutionary and molecular biologists, and ecologists who reconstruct a historically emergent, evolutionary, dynamic, holistic, and prospectively opened view on the natural world, patristic and medieval theologians view the natural world as a divinely designed, static, and geocentric organism with a God-given purpose for existing and acting. The teleological view of the world was hierarchically with God outside the hierarchy, but nevertheless present to it. Human beings were on top of the ladder concerning material beings. The view on the natural world was qualitative rather than quantitative and, above all, of a sacramental nature.[72]

Schaefer calls for the training of sacramental sensibilities, which she deduces from patristic and medieval texts. Because of the modern scientific view since the Enlightenment, this task might seem formidable; however, it is crucial in order to understand the significance of ecological concerns.[73]

God's power, wisdom, and goodness become obvious through a theological reflection on and faith-based approach to the sacramentality of creation in patristic and medieval texts. People who believe in God should be prompted by this concept "to revere the diverse species, ecosystems, and biosphere that constitute Earth. They are means through which God can be experienced and known when they are existing and functioning according to their natures."[74]

2.4 Other Approaches

Another concept that Schaefer cites, and which is relevant to the current contribution, is the concept of "acknowledging kinship and practicing companionship". It serves to explore a Christian ethic on the bases of a metaphysical hy-

71 Augustine, *Trinity*, 6.10.12, 241–15, citing Rom 11:36; quoted from Schaefer, *Foundations*, 71.
72 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 80 f.
73 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 86.
74 Schaefer, *Foundations*, 92 f.

pothesis of presumed biophilia in order to rethink the human relationship with other species and the natural environment.[75] The terms kinship and companionship are central and part of a process that targets a range of various roles, from kinship to companionship. The idea was presented by the Lutheran theologian Joseph Sittler (1904–1987) and the Catholic theologians Michael J. Himes (1947–2022) and Kenneth R. Himes (*1950). Other species and nature are thought of together, as companions (including an intrinsic value), rather than as strictly instrumental for human beings (only instrumental value for human beings). This is expressed also in the language they use: terms of intimacy, dignity, and equality.[76] An example of such an approach is the demonstrating of piety towards creatures which can be found in Francis's of Assisi and Bonaventure's writings. This piety substantiates in loving the creatures for themselves, devoting themselves to their interests, showering them with affection, being kind to them, standing up for and with them before others, showing compassion for their suffering and acting generously toward them without interfering with their self-expressions.[77]

The seventh concept Schaefer offers is the use of creation with gratitude and restraint.[78] The US Catholic bishops and Pope Benedict XVI have called attention to climate change and the challenge of preserving the earth as a livable place. Several and various consequences of the global warming have been predicted by many scientists: physically, ecologically, economically, socially, and in terms of health. The earth and its inhabitants will be threatened by high risks of extreme weather, the destruction of most of the Amazon rainforest, a decrease in freshwater availability, the need to grow new crops, because old crops will not grow anymore, hunger and malnutrition, an increase in infectious diseases, and an increase in poverty.[79] At this point, only a short summary of the effects have been mentioned, previously undiscovered effects might also occur. They demand gratitude to God for the use of his creation. In an analysis, Patristic-medieval teaching suggests at least seven ways of using God's creation: acknowledging and thanking God for the blessing of the earth, recognizing human accountability to God, reasoning carefully about the appropriate use, limiting use to the necessities of life, ensuring availability for future human use, use in order to gain knowledge about God's creation, and use in order to know God. "In these [at least seven] uses, the faithful will be thankful to God for the many blessings

75 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 149.
76 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 173.
77 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 175 f.
78 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 193 ff.
79 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 208 f.

of species, land, water, and air that God empowers forth from the cosmological-biological evolutionary process and calls to completion."[80] [Annotations K.S.F.] The actuality of the instructions, which can be found in patristic and medieval writing, is still high. They transcend time and cultures because they "present serious challenges to the ways in which too many humans are over-using, over-consuming, and wasting the goods of Earth today".[81]

Her ninth and last concept, Schaefer calls "Loving earth".[82] An image for this concept might be the hazelnut in Julian of Norwich's (1342–ca. 1416) hand. The little hazelnut, that exists like every other creature on earth because God loves it, envisions three characteristics: God made it, God loves it, and God preserves it. God, therefore, appears as creator, protector, and lover in Julian's words.[83]

Finally, Schaefer entitles the various models of human behavior that can be concluded from the nine concepts analyzed before in her research. She is modelling the human in an age of ecological degradation.[84]

Now, that the biblical and patristic foundations have been consulted, systematic considerations must be made.

3 Systematic Approach

Describing the environment in Christianity is first done by describing the relationship between human beings and the environment. It is a core issue of environmental ethics[85] to consistently think human beings as part of nature without levelling their responsibility as moral subjects.[86] However, to separate the social or natural environment is only theoretically possible but not practically.

80 Schaefer, *Foundations*, 215.

81 Schaefer, *Foundations*, 215.

82 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 255.

83 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 258. See also: Norwich, Julian of, *Showings*, trans. Edmund Colledge / James Walsh, New York: Paulist Press, 1978, 184.

84 Cf. Schaefer, *Foundations*, 267 ff.

85 For an overview see: Ott, Konrad / Dierks, Jan / Voegt-Kleschin, Lieske (eds.), *Handbuch Umweltethik*, Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2016.

86 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 24.

3.1 Models of the Relationship of Humankind and Nature

The central term in this context is *anthropocentrism*. It means, that environmental ethical concerns are always traced back to human concerns. In contrast, there are nature-centered or physio-centered approaches, which focus on environmental protection not only for the sake of human beings but directly for the sake of other natural entities, as well. Additionally, those approaches also ascribe a moral intrinsic value to natural entities.

One specific type of anthropocentrism is *normative anthropocentrism*. It addresses the question, for the benefit of which beings we actually want to bind our actions to normative restrictions. Such beings could certainly have unconstrained moral values or a moral intrinsic value themselves. One might distinguish three variants of the normative anthropocentrism: one position accepts its only normative restrictions for the sake of human beings. It is called the *exclusive anthropocentrism*. The second position identifies the human interest in the environment also as an aesthetic appreciation or the admitting of the *value of experiencing nature*. A third possibility to think normative anthropocentrism includes positions that accept moral restrictions also for the sake of other entities. But they give greater weight to the moral value of human beings than to the moral value of non-human entities. One might call this position *anthropocentric in a weak or inclusive* sense. Moreover, there is a *metaphysical anthropocentrism*, which depicts the teleologically understood ultimate purpose in this world. It is, therefore, a form of teleological thinking that fundamentally assumes that everything in the world has a purpose in contrast to a modern scientific worldview that denies this approach. Anthropocentrism, in general, defines that all our knowledge and values are always of human origin, including human language and human concepts. A non-human perspective of knowledge and evaluation is simply not accessible to us. The approach called *epistemic anthropocentrism* focusses on this fundamental realization.

There are several alternatives to anthropocentrism, which offer other perspectives on environment than the different anthropocentric approaches. The *pathocentrism* (from Greek *pathos*, engl. suffering) or the *sentientism* (from Latin *sentire*, engl. feeling) claim that the interests of all sentient beings are to be taken into account. Sentient beings are not only human beings, but certainly animals and perhaps even plants may count as sentient beings.

The biocentrism (from Greek *bios*, engl. life) attributes moral intrinsic value to every living being and is, therefore, classified as the broader term in comparison to pathocentrism and sentientism. Even broader is the holistic approach (*Holism*), which regards the whole ecosystem, the biosphere, the entirety of earth, nature, or world as morally and intrinsically valuable.

Accordingly, the more things acquire moral intrinsic value, the more difficult the question of prioritizing those moral claims and duties from which they derive necessarily. Each position mentioned so far, contains hierarchical-gradualist as well as egalitarian variants itself.

The holistic thinking of process theology turns out to be its unique feature and shall be discussed hereinafter.

3.2 A Theological Approach: Process Theology

The philosopher Reinhart Maurer[87] demands that in ecological ethics, basic attitudes should be recognized, which are part of the ecological crisis and are mostly accepted without reflection, also in science. He demands that the extra-human nature should also be included in ethics and not exclusively the inter-human part of ethics. Based on this, Degen-Ballmer makes it his task to point out other models of thought that are based on such alternative experiences of nature. A holistic thinking as an ideal of orientation guiding knowledge and action is decisive for him. This begins with a holistically oriented knowledge about nature and creation and functions communicatively. A learning attitude towards nature is suggested, which, in principle, is open to different approaches towards creation and nature. Methodological plurality instead of a mechanistic-analytical-dissecting ideal of knowledge is leading, which, at the same time, dismisses a fragmentation of reality and the analysis of the individual.[88]

The natural sciences hold on to this fragmentation of reality for the time being, but Degen-Ballmer points out the lack of reflection on this approach to nature and creation. Holistic thinking can also include particular, fragmentary thinking, but it is equally valid as sensing, feeling, thinking, and intuitive cognition. Holistic thinking is also a heuristic endeavor that is never fully completed. Possible descriptions of an objective start are, for example, "peace with nature" or "natural togetherness". Theologically, this is the idea of the kingdom of God, as described, for example, in Isa 11:6–9 or Rom 8:18–25. In its precise quality, this can be realized differently, for example, as an individual-ethical spirituality

87 Cf. Maurer, Reinhart, "Ökologische Ethik als Problem", in: Bayertz, Kurt (ed.), *Ökologische Ethik*, München/Zürich: Schnell & Steiner, 1988, 11–30.

88 Cf. Degen-Ballmer, Stephan, *Gott – Mensch – Welt. Eine Untersuchung über mögliche holistische Denkmodelle in der Prozesstheologie und der ostkirchlich-orthodoxen Theologie als Beitrag für ein ethikrelevantes Natur- und Schöpfungsverständnis*, Frankfurt a.M. et al.: Peter Lang, 2001, 17.

of creation or as a scientific dialogue between the humanities and the natural sciences.[89]

In order to introduce American process theology, Degen-Ballmer discusses the philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead. His organismic philosophy had a strong impact on theology. The main representative of process theology is John B. Cobb. He dealt with a clarification of the relationship between God and man as well as the concept of natural theology. The idea of an event happening in order to describe and grasp nature is methodologically leading in process theology. Not only the understanding of nature, but also the epistemology is determined by this thought. For it leads to the questioning of the common dualisms man vs. nature, God vs. man, or spirit vs. matter. The approach can, thus, be qualified as relational and, thus, as non-substantialist, which directly evokes an ethical relevance. On the Orthodox side, Degen-Ballmer draws on works by Paulos Gregorios concerning the Church Father, Gregory of Nyssa, and statements by various theologians active in ecumenical dialogue. There, nature is to be understood as a system of symbols and, as such, as an expression of God itself.[90]

American process theology, also known as the Chicago School before the end of the 1950s, is a socio-historical theology that sought to provide systematic theological support for church related social commitment under the impact of the movement that became known as the "social gospel". This was done, for example, by reading the biblical scriptures in light of the idea of the "social mind". Henry Nelson Wieman and Charles Hartshorne brought to the Chicago Divinity School the teachings of the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, which caused a shift towards the question of God. Both theologians elaborated a theology that was characterized by a strong reference to reality in systematic theological questions. They recognized God in the immediate experience of reality and, therefore, called their theology empirical theology. Wieman characterized God as a "creative event", which Hartshorne understood panpsychically as totality.[91] Theologians who followed the two included Bernard Eugene Meland, Daniel Day Williams, Wiliam Temple, and William Norman Pittenger.[92]

Whitehead's organismic philosophy opposes all dualisms on which natural philosophy is built according to the physical worldview of Descartes and the mechanistic one of Newton: subject vs. object, spirit vs. matter, space vs. time,

---

89 Cf. Degen-Ballmer, *Gott*, 18.

90 Cf. Degen-Ballmer, *Gott*, 22.

91 Hartshorne, C., *Beyond Humanism: Essays in the Philosophy of Nature*, Chicago: Willet Clark & Co, 1937.

92 Cf. Degen-Ballmer, *Gott*, 60.

universality vs. particularity. He presented his outline in 1919 in a lecture in Cambridge, which was published in 1920 under the title "The Concept of Nature". Nature, for Whitehead, is not a substantial collection of static, isolated objects. He refers to the permanence of bodies as a derived quantity due to the organized process of becoming real individual beings in a society. Material nature, as well as our consciousness, are products of this becoming of a process. Nature, therefore, consists of innumerable events, which constitute themselves by processes. Therefore, nature is a process, which can also be called the course or progression of nature.[93]

Whitehead describes nature as an expansive process of development and as a structure of evolutionary processes. Thus, different structural principles interact and are characterized by interactions. For example, gravity, amino acids or an electromagnetic field. Therefore, speaking in terms of natural philosophy, nature is considered as reality. It is a reality that functions as a network of relationships. Nature can be determined as the reality that will come into being. Therefore, nature also refers to the creative and, thus, describes the reality of coming into being (central are principles of order and structures). Creation is the newness of coming into being (dynamics are central). Both poles – nature and creation – equally belong to the process and have an inner relation. By this determination, it succeeds neither to identify the two manifestations nature and creation nor to separate them from each other. Thereby both are scientifically and spiritually connected and secured.[94]

Process theologians often refer to themselves as panentheists, in that they relate creator and creature closely to each other, but do not identify them with each other. A precise definition of the terms "nature", "creation", and "world" is not available in process theology, so that they seem to be used interchangeably. The basic prerequisite is that world and nature are related to God, as a fundamental theological thought. Therefore, nature is creation. As an ethical consequence, it follows from this definition that nature cannot be neutral, as the natural sciences claim. Nature is assigned an intrinsic value that is independent of man. Such a thinking together of nature and creation also contributes to the joint work of natural sciences and humanities. Up to now, there has been, for the most part, a division of scientific research, which is not conducive to scientificity.[95]

---

93 Cf. Degen-Ballmer, *Gott*, 65.

94 Cf. Sander, Hans-Joachim, *Natur und Schöpfung – die Realität im Prozess: A.N. Whiteheads Philosophie als Paradigma einer Fundamentaltheologie kreativer Existenz*, Frankfurt a.M. et al: Peter Lang, 1991, 221f.; paragraph: cf. Degen-Ballmer, *Gott*, 88.

95 Cf. Sander, *Natur*, 223, paragraph: cf. Degen-Ballmer, *Gott*, 89.

L.S. Ford understands God in the context of process theology as a "dynamic source of increasing freedom and intensity of experience"[96]. H. Reitz describes God concretely with a terminology of "constructive", "stringent", "coherent", "relevant", "intelligible".[97] Along with the question of God, process theology also poses the question of evil in the world. It is answered with the ambivalence thesis, according to which suffering, along with enjoyment, is an inevitable consequence of creaturely freedom within creation's process of becoming. This is also reflected in our everyday experience with nature, because becoming and passing away as well as birth and death go into each other here. Because of this, in process theology, when dealing with evil, it is not spoken about in terms of eliminating it, but of overcoming it. What is meant by this is that the creaturely freedom can be used to keep the evil as small as possible. Therefore, according to Degen-Ballmer, a complaint about suffering in the world is also justified. The existence of suffering is unchangeable, but the exact constellation of suffering is not. It is worth pointing out an objection to process theology by W. Pannenberg. He criticizes that in process theology God is ascribed a limited power, which leads to the fact that evil and suffering can be dealt with more easily (in dependence on powers other than God), but at the same time the trust in God's overcoming of evil is devalued.[98]

According to this, there are various consequences for human beings in the context of ecological ethics: human beings are themselves part of the ecological problem and are called upon to act consciously as highly complex beings and in their freedom. Every human being can encounter evil, since evil is not presented as a counterpart to the divine. However, this also makes evil difficult to grasp, especially in relation to natural disasters or the suffering of uninvolved people in wars. Process theology offers a potential for change through human intervention alone and suggests that hope for such change is helpful.[99]

This is a fundamental modern approach for understanding the role of environment in Christianity today. Nevertheless, especially concerning certain fields, the Christian approach is important.

---

96 Ford, Lewis S., *The Lure of God. A Biblical Background for Process Theism.* Fortress Press: Philadelphia 1978, 63.

97 Reitz, Helga, "Was ist Prozess-Theologie?", *Kerygma und Dogma* 16.2 (1970), 78–103, here: 78.

98 Cf. Degen-Ballmer, *Gott*, 130f.

99 Cf. Degen-Ballmer, *Gott*, 131.

3.3 Conclusion: Suffering

Another aspect of the systematic-theological question that deals with the significance of the environment in Christianity is reflected in the concept of suffering. With an understanding of creation as sustainable, that is, as existing under constant change, the suffering given by nature also goes along with this existing. The destruction of habitats as well as corrective statements towards previous generations must be avoided. This is especially true against the background of the self-interpretation of the creature. Examples are the intensive agricultural use of former rainforest areas, which are considered destroyed as a result, or the excessive use of groundwater and the resulting salinization of the soil. Also, permanent nuclear wastes are to be mentioned here.[100]

Moreover, and from a different perspective, theological research is not particularly known for quickly taking a position on current issues. But especially in the climate crisis there is a need for such a quick reaction. For this, theology must rethink its basic concepts in order to be able to take into account the signs of the times. One of these basic concepts is expressed in the term "God". Starting from the understanding of God as the alterity that interrupts immanence and supposed normality and, thus, paves the way for the Other, the question is obvious where God remains in the crisis. However, he is not explicitly missed among students who take to the streets in the Fridays for Future protest movement. Surveys among these young people revealed that God is not to be found at the demonstrations. Rather, the young people are afraid of losing their own future and demand fair and just life opportunities from governments and those in power.[101]

4 Contemporary Topics Concerning Environment

Below there are two issues that are addressed in the discussion about the environment in Christianity: biodiversity and sustainability.

100 Cf. Anselm, Reiner, "Schöpfung als Deutung der Lebenswirklichkeit", in: Schmid, Konrad (ed.), *Schöpfung*, Themen der Theologie 4, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012, 225–294, here: 277.
101 Cf. Bederna, Katrin / Gärtner, Claudia, "Wo bleibt Gott, wenn die Wälder brennen?", *Herder Korrespondenz* 74.3 (2020), 27–29, here: 29.

4.1 Biodiversity

Firstly, a central topic of environmental ethics is biodiversity. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), that was ratified in 1992, now counts 196 states that signed the 42 articles. One of the most central articles of the CBD is article no. 6 that claims:

> Each Contracting Party shall, in accordance with its particular conditions and capabilities:
>
> (a) Develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity or adapt for this purpose existing strategies, plans or programmes which shall reflect, inter alia, the measures set out in this Convention relevant to the Contracting Party concerned; and
> (b) Integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programs and policies.[102]

Therefore, biodiversity is a global requirement that shall be addressed by any state around the world. Because of its global necessity, it needs to be defined precisely. Biodiversity refers to a biological diversity and variability among living organisms from all sources, including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part. It includes diversity *within* species and *between* species as well as diversity of ecosystems.

"Conserving biodiversity is a challenge, first because – according to the scientific consensus – biodiversity is declining at a dangerous rate. It should be noted that despite all the research efforts, many of the scientific statements on the development of biodiversity are characterized by a high degree of uncertainty. For example, the total number of existing species is unknown."[103] The most important indicator for the biodiversity loss is species extinction, but also natural, non-human-induced species extinction. In the history of the earth, there repeatedly have been major collapses. "In the long term, species extinction has been more than offset by the emergence of new species, which is why the world today is (still) near a maximum of species diversity in Earth history, despite human-caused species extinction."[104]

---

102 CBD, "Convention Text", Article 6, https://www.cbd.int/convention/articles/?a=cbd-06, last access: 2021/02/28.

103 Reder, Michael et al., *Umweltethik. Eine Einführung in globaler Perspektive*, Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2019, 123 [translation K.S.F.].

104 Reder, *Umweltethik*, 124 [translation K.S.F.].

Christians are called to act against this loss of biodiversity with all its consequences.

4.2 Sustainability

Usually, sustainability is divided into ecological, economic, and social dimensions. Those three are fundamental but need to be complemented by the cultural dimension, which also appears in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.[105]

According to Vogt[106], sustainability can be understood as the basis for a new social contract. In this context, it is considered the leading, normative guiding principle of global environmental and development policy and forms a key principle of environmental ethics. The breadth of the concept of sustainability, which occasionally makes it seem diffuse, can be sorted by eight dimensions proposed by Vogt. He speaks of an ecological/silvicultural dimension, a political one, a justice-theoretical one, a socio-ecological one, a democratic one, a cultural one, a time-political one, and a theological one. In order to achieve an ethically appropriate understanding of sustainability, all eight dimensions are equally important and necessary.

Concretizing the ecological and silvicultural understanding of the term, which can be considered the original one, it is necessary to reflect on the concept of ownership. It is central to understand resource ownership as appropriation, which at the same time retains the earning power of what is owned (as *usus fructus*). Thus, man is not the owner of nature, because he did not create it. It remains the task of man not to consume more resources than can be newly formed in the same period of time. The core of sustainability, thus, intends the foresighted and prudent integration of the economy into ecological material cycles and rhythms. Vogt calls for an ethical-cultural anchoring of sustainability and political decisions that set the framework for the permissible use of nature.[107]

The political dimension received a boost from the 1992 UN conference in Rio de Janeiro, where a guiding principle for sustainable development was developed. According to this, three pillars are crucial and must be separated from each other: Ecology, economy, and social factors. It is neither an equation nor an equal coexistence, but the integration and networking, in the sense of retinity (that is overall networking), of these three pillars. Sustainability is, therefore, not

105 Cf. https://sdgs.un.org/goals, last access: 2021/10/26.

106 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 482–505.

107 The following explications are based on Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 509–534.

the sum of social, ecological, and economic goals. This assumption would be a maximalist fallacy that would empty the term by infinite scope. Rather, sustainability refers to an interaction between ecological, social, and economic factors. It is a cross-cutting concept.

In terms of justice theory, reference should also be made to the UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The concept of justice was expanded there to include global and intergenerational aspects. Ethically, the distinction between equity and fairness remains to be discussed in the question of a theory of justice. Here, there is a lack of a differentiated theory of justice that makes an ethical approach to sustainability more challenging. The goal, however, must be to leave behind a world that offers sufficient freedom and means for future generations to make their own decisions. According to Vogt, what is needed is a comprehensive concept of the common good that considers global and ecological public goods such as the climate and water balance, as well as a differentiated theory of justice that understands the common good neither collectivistically nor egalitarianistically.

In socioeconomic terms, sustainability can be concretized as an effort to preserve the natural capital stock. This is done by using the notions of weak (substitution of natural capital is allowed) and strong (substitution not allowed) sustainability. The concept of resource becomes a methodologically problematic concept because it is considered a pre-social fact. However, contrary to this, it depends on technical and social development because of its benefit ratio. Strong sustainability keeps in view an interaction between socio-economic and ecological systems and can be linked to the extension of the concept of utility.

The democratic dimension is concretized in a model of openness in the shaping of sustainability. It is about a demand for co-design and the securing of a participatory democracy. Social innovation processes and the so-called change of values are also part of this. The active co-determination of the population must lead to an awareness of responsibility through recognition and co-design and encourage mature citizens to be resilient towards suggestions of the consumer society. The awareness-building together with a mind-shift is the heart and, at the same time, the engine of sustainability in a democratizing respect. Various problems that arise in this regard are only briefly mentioned: the high complexity of sustainability issues, the self-restriction through the fear for one's job, participation concepts (more precisely: such as those promoting acceptance, hardly offer real space for co-design).

With regard to the cultural dimension, sustainability stands for a new definition of the prerequisites, limits, and goals of progress. It is a matter of securing human habitats, avoiding risk and replacing the goal of the so-called "higher, faster, further". A culture of sustainability recognizes nature conservation as a

task for all and integrates environmental quality as a fundamental value in the definition of prosperity. It does not see itself as maximizing growth, but as optimizing quality of life and opportunities for participation for as many as possible in the present and the future. The *Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare* can serve as a measure and control variable in this context. Eco-social development can be measured according to this.

In terms of time politics, humanity is currently so successful that it is destabilizing its own ecological niche through accelerated expansion. The problem of sustainability, therefore, specifically draws attention to the lack of synchronization of social and ecological rhythms. Nature does not have enough time to regenerate its resources and assimilate waste materials. Human progress as a non-stop society consuming energy and transportation is often associated with emancipation from biological rhythms. Vogt sees respect for and rediscovery of natural and social rhythms as a central development principle of sustainability.

Finally, the theological dimension should be mentioned. A change of course towards sustainable development can only succeed if religions share responsibility for it. The decisive corrective here is the awareness of one's own creatureliness, which points to the limits of human ability. Sustainability is not a management rule, but an attitude of mind that is nourished by reverence for creation and holds out the prospect of participation in its creative power. The specific competence of theological ethics lies in conveying a knowledge of critical orientation in the dialectic of progress and risk. Accordingly, the theological dimension suggests neither a promise of harmony and security, nor apocalyptic discourses of fear and guilt.

5 The Roman Catholic Church and Environment Nowadays

One explicitly Christian position on the environmental issue is that of the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church today expresses its interest in God's creation and environmental protection in many ways. Pope Francis can be described as an important player in sustainability issues.[108] With his environmental, social, and spiritual encyclical *Laudato Si'*, he expresses the importance

108 Cf. Schlögl-Flierl, Kerstin, "Papst Franziskus als Akteur für Nachhaltigkeit", in: Tögel, Jonas / Zierer, Klaus (eds.), *Nachhaltigkeit ins Zentrum rücken: Ein interdisziplinärer Zugang zu den wichtigsten Fragen unserer Zeit*, Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 2020, 156–163.

and urgency of this topic. The encyclical is a milestone in the Christian interpretation of environment. It will be analyzed in the following.

5.1 *Laudato Si'* as a Turning Point for the Catholic Church

The title is taken from the Canticle of the Sun by Francis of Assisi, whose spirituality of joy, simplicity, and fraternal relationship with all fellow creatures is carried over by the encyclical.

5.1.1 St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Creatures*

The text reads:

[1]Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are *the praises, the glory,* and *the honor,* and all *blessing,*
[2]To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no human is worthy to mention Your name. [...]
[3]Praised be You, my *Lord,* with all *Your creatures,*
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You give us light. [...]
[4]And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.
[5]*Praised* be You, my Lord, through Sister *Moon* and *the stars,*
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful. [...]
[6]Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather,
through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures.
[7]*Praised* be You, my Lord, through Sister *Water,*
who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.
[8]*Praised* be You, my Lord, through Brother *Fire,*
through whom *You light the night,*
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.
[9]*Praised* be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother *Earth,*
who sustains and governs us,
and who produces various *fruit* with colored flowers and *herbs.*
[10]Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation. [...]
[11]Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.
[12]Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no one living can escape. [...]

[13]Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,
for *the second death* shall do them no harm. [...]
[14]*Praise* and *bless* my *Lord* and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.[109]

5.1.2 An Analysis of the Encyclical

Encyclicals are considered letters containing papal teaching of the highest order, but do not have infallibility status. They deal with fundamental theological and social questions that are of (mostly current) interest and articulate a binding position. The encyclical *Laudato Si'* can be described as scientific and theological: scientific in the sense that the Pope draws on the findings of quantum theory, the theory of relativity, ecosystem research, and especially the theory of evolution. Equally, it is a theological positioning that also takes other religions and the pluralistic society into consideration.

It was published in 2015 – with a positive influence on the ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement adopted the following autumn – and is considered particularly vivid due to the Latin American tradition of expressing oneself in a language that is particularly rich in images. Many examples from people's everyday lives are given to help put what is said into practice. Two prayers conclude the encyclical: a Christian one and an interreligious one.

The ecological metaphor, which can be found in the title, "House of the Earth", is a multi-layered play on words: House (Greek *oikos*) is associated with ecology, economy, and ecumenism. Building on this, an ecological concern is programmatically linked with economic questions as well as the claim of worldwide ecumenism across the borders of nations, denominations, religions, and scientific disciplines.

Pope Francis distinguishes within the ecology, as an overall term between different forms of ecology: environmental ecology, economic ecology, social ecology (*Laudato Si'*, no. 138ff.), cultural ecology (*Laudato Si'*, no. 143ff.), and the ecology of everyday life (*Laudato Si'*, no. 147ff.). Part of the ecology of everyday life is also human ecology. This terminology brings to mind the equally named research branches of the various sciences. This means, by way of example, that when the encyclical speaks of cultural ecology, it does not mean the shaping of cultures by their environment, but rather – following liberation theological

109 Canticle of the Creatures, in: *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 1, New York-London-Manila: New City Press, 1999, 113–114, Italics in origin.

debates about inculturation – the process of making cultures conform by human consumerism. This leads to the disappearance of a culture, which can be just as difficult as the disappearance of an animal or plant species.[110]

The encyclical is structured as follows: Part I is an intensive dialogue with various environmental sciences. In this situation analysis, the pollution of the planet Earth is noted. The first chapter deals with the question of what is happening to our House. In the second part follows the theological-ethical judgement. It begins with chapter two, which is entitled the "Gospel of Creation". This is followed by chapter three describing the human root of the ecological crisis and chapter four with the construction of a holistic ecology. Part III is now a practical one, dealing with political-social and pedagogical-spiritual assessments and implications. More specifically, chapter five proposes guidelines for orientation and action, and chapter six addresses ecological education and spirituality.

5.1.3 Certain Eco-Social Issues and Biocentric Perspectives

Vogt classifies the encyclical's specific perspective on eco-social issues through the following four features: he begins with a catastrophe-theoretical approach. It states that ecological capacities are largely overloaded, the stability of ecological systems is endangered, and the habitats of countless people are acutely threatened. Second is a socio-ecological approach, which focuses on the fundamental links between environmental and justice issues and states that global and intergenerational justice cannot be achieved without environmental protection. The third is an eco-theological approach. This follows up on the cry of God's creation and the related plight of the poor, which is a challenge for the church and a call to revise the Christian understanding of nature. Fourthly, and thus finally, Vogt proposes a liberation-theological approach. *Laudato Si'*, thus, not only formulates ethical postulates, but also programmatically addresses questions of power, corruption, and systemic undesirable developments.[111]

Another approach is a biocentric approach. According to this, every living entity contains an intrinsic value. Contrary to modern despotic anthropocentrism, a biocentric approach can be classified in a much more moderate way.

---

110 Cf. Bederna, Katrin, *Every Day for Future. Theologie und religiöse Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung*, Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 2019, 68.

111 Cf. Vogt, Markus, "Ein neues Kapitel der katholischen Soziallehre. Ganzheitliche Ökologie – Eine Frage radikal veränderter Lebensstile und Wirtschaftsformen", *AMOS International* 9 (2015), 3–10.

The prominent position of the human being as the image of God (*imago Dei*) is placed in a new and biblical context.

5.1.4 "Environment" and "Sustainability" in *Laudato Si'*

The terms environment and sustainability are mentioned directly as more specific topics. *Laudato Si'*s contribution to environmental ethics is characterized by a clear concern for the common House, the proposal of house rules for the solidary use of global resources, the recognition of the climate and some basic environmental resources as collective goods of humanity (this corresponds to a further development of Thomas Aquinas' theory of property), and the extension of the common good obligation of property to the climate (*Laudato Si'*, no. 23–25).

In concrete terms, this means that in *Laudato Si'* the climate is conceived as a collective good, which has far-reaching consequences for state and societal obligations to protect the climate. The water and food crisis, which is closely linked to climate change, is called a central challenge. Both virtue and norm ethics are presented here. A total of 55 times, a renewal of lifestyle is mentioned, calling for an "ecological conversion". The issue is a public one for Pope Francis. The cultural change in relation to nature creates a gain in quality of life, economic rationality, and social community (*Laudato Si'*, no. 191).

The concept of sustainability is treated less strongly than the term environment. However, it is used as a conceptual basis.

5.1.5 Criticism on *Laudato Si'*

Criticism can also be levelled at the encyclical. The impact of market-based mechanisms is underestimated, especially regarding emission certificates, for example. Personal virtues and moral concepts are also solely appellative, but not sufficiently structurally conceived and demanded. There is a primarily ethically motivated guideline and no concrete conclusions from it. A sufficiency strategy is pursued that focuses solely on the level of the individual actor. Population growth is also not sufficiently considered.[112]

112 See for example Möhring-Hesse, Matthias, "Gelobt seist Du, nicht aber die 'jetzige Wirtschaft': zur Wirtschaftskritik in Franziskus' Öko-Sozial-Enzyklika", *AMOS International* 9.4 (2015), 26–27, 30–35.

Criticism, therefore, can be found mainly in matters of detail and less in the basic duct. One such point of criticism, for example, is that in the search for causes, overall blame is assigned to the financial markets, consumerism, and the technocratic paradigm. The argumentation of *Laudato Si'* enables a differentiated view of the constellation of responsibility in consumption. Attributions of responsibility do not only depend on causal attributions, but form a persistent structural question.

Recommendations for action that result from *Laudato Si'* can be found on the level of politics, such as the demand for a privileged participation of the population (*Laudato Si'*, no. 183) in the economy or companies, an internalization of negative external effects (*Laudato Si'*, no. 195) and, across the board, in the introduction of obligatory environmental impact assessments. Marianne Heimbach-Steins and Nils Stockmann[113] draw attention to the role of the churches as agents of change. The aim is to understand *Laudato Si'* as an encouragement for ecological conversion. It is inductively carrying out a three-step process: Perceiving the social challenge ("seeing"), analyzing and evaluating it against the background of the faith, more precisely, the theological tradition ("discerning") and orienting it towards an altered practice ("acting").

5.1.6 *Laudato Si'* in the Context of the Global South and Interreligious Studies

Following on from the Apostolic publication, *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis draws attention to the great debt of the affluent countries to the poor of the global South. The universal common good loses credibility in comparison to particular interests. The key message of the encyclical follows the pattern of Old Testament prophecy: The prophetic gesture is found (for example in comparison with Hos 5:12f.) not only in the prophetic accusation, but also in following the call and invitation to conversion (compare Hos 6:1–6), given that the addressees are interested in the knowledge of the Lord (Hos 6:3).

Pope Francis expresses his concern about building alliances that are as broad as possible. In the banner of his "option for the poor", to which he also counts the earth itself, he sends clear ecumenical and interreligious impulses, for example, the appreciation of the creation-theological position of Patriarch

113 Cf. Heimbach-Steins, Marianne / Stockmann, Nils, "Ein Impuls zur 'ökologischen Umkehr' – Die Enzyklika Laudato si' und die Rolle der Kirche als Change Agent", in: Heimbach-Steins, Marianne / Schlacke, Sabine (eds.), *Die Enzyklika Laudato si'. Ein interdisziplinärer Nachhaltigkeitsansatz?*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2019, 11–54.

Bartholomew (*Laudato Si'*, no. 8f.), or the quotation of a Muslim mystic as a crown witness of a creation spirituality. Compared to previous papal publications, this strategy of citation and simultaneous opening to a broad spectrum of the world church is new. This also includes the fact that not only Church representatives were present at the presentation of the encyclical in Rome, but also the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan, Johannis Zizioulas, the climate researcher, and then deputy director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, and the American economist, Caroline Woo.[114]

5.1.7 Pope Francis' Ecophilosophy: Krausism

In sum, one might state that Pope Francis develops an Ecophilosophy, based intellectually on the following predecessor. Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781–1832), a student of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854), elaborates an ecophilosophy that criticizes the anthropocentrism of idealistic subject philosophy. He is considered the namesake of so-called Krausismo (a panentheistic cosmology), which Pope Francis also takes up. Aside from Schelling, Krause never comprehensively joined his other teacher, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814). Krause's criticism of Fichte's anthropocentrism refers to the free act on the world. According to him, Fichte erred in assuming a world to which one freely relates. Rather, the world exists only through processing by human freedom. Without such, it has no meaning and intrinsic value. A dualism arises between the realm of the rational (freedom) and one of the irrational realms (necessity of nature). Thus, free action of man is always in opposition to nature.[115]

Krause speaks philosophically of man as the guardian and caretaker of nature; despite an earthly primacy of man, his prerogatives are linked to a duty of care and concern. Theologically speaking, human beings are gardeners in God's garden. One is allowed to enjoy environment and nature; destroying them is not allowed.

Pope Francis, in a similar fashion to Krause's philosophy, assumes an intrinsic value of plants and animals (*Laudato Si'*, no. 33). Against a sharp contrast between man and nature, he speaks of "human beings who, as part of the world, have the duty to cultivate their abilities in order to protect it and develop

114 Cf. Gabriel, Ingeborg, "Die Enzyklika 'Laudato Si'". Ein Meilenstein in der lehramtlichen Sozialverkündigung", *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 44.6 (2015), 639–646, here: 639.

115 Cf. Dierksmeier, Claus, *Umwelt als Mitwelt. Die päpstliche Enzyklika Laudato si' und der argentinische krausismo*, Kirche und Gesellschaft 428, Köln: J.P. Bachem Medien, 2016, 7.

its potential" (*Laudato Si'*, no. 78). According to Krausism, *Laudato Si'* says: "By virtue of our unique dignity and our gift of intelligence, we are called to respect creation and its inherent laws" (*Laudato Si'*, 69). In the treatment of other living beings, a human moral witness is revealed (*Laudato Si'*, no. 92).[116]

5.2 Amazon Synod

The topic of environment has also been actively addressed at the so-called Amazon Synod of October 2019. It resulted in a Holy See publication entitled: *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Querida Amazonia of Pope Francis to the People of God and to All People of Good Will*, dated 2 February 2020, which looks at the region of Amazonia, in "its splendour, its tragedy and its mystery" (no. 1), to which the Synod in Rome, from 6 to 27 October 2019, was dedicated. The Synod concluded in the document *Amazonia: New Directions for the Church and for a Holistic Ecology.*

The post-synodal apostolic exhortation calls for indignation just as Moses in Ex 11:8 and Jesus in Mark 3:5 *indignated* (compare likewise God's wrath in Am 2:4–8; 5:7–12 and Ps 106:40). The social conscience should not allow itself to be numbed, but should be alert to the evil and dangers that farmers and indigenous people in Amazonia are exposed to (no. 15).

At the same time, it conveys an ecological vision that assumes that life in a cultural landscape like Amazonia, where nature and human beings are in a close relationship with each other, always has a cosmic dimension. Supporting and helping the people of Amazonia is an expression of opening one's heart to a God who, in addition to his creation, has given himself to us in Jesus Christ (no. 41).

Care for people and the ecosystem in which they live must be accepted as inseparable. The forest can be seen as a being that must be respected and protected in its existence just as we humans do. Respectful and careful treatment of the Amazonian region avoids any abuse and secures the future of our common coexistence (no. 42).

A poet of the Amazonian natives describes Amazonia as follows:

> The world suffers from the transformation of the feet into rubber, the legs into leather, the body into cloth and the head into steel [...]. The world suffers from the transformation of the spade into a gun, the plough into a war tank, the image of the sower sowing into a robot

116 Cf. Dierksmeier, *Umwelt*, 13.

> with its flamethrower, from whose seed sprout deserts. Only poetry, with the humility of its voice, will be able to save this world. (no. 46[117])

In addition to the large forests in Congo and Borneo, the rainforest in Amazonia also plays a crucial role as a carbon dioxide filter in order to maintain the balance of the planet. The rainy seasons and a great diversity of living creatures on earth also depend on it. It is crucial to know that, when the forest is cut down, it will not grow back as it was before. The area will become desert-like and devoid of vegetation (no. 48).

Protecting and caring for the region also includes using today's technical knowledge and processes. This must always be done while respecting the lifestyle and value system of the inhabitants (no. 51). No information should be withheld from them.

A holistic ecology, as it is necessary for the protection of the region, also goes hand in hand with corresponding educational aspects, which cannot be ignored alongside political, technical, legal, and social aspects. Unfortunately, a lifestyle characterized by consumerism has also spread in the Amazon regions. Making people aware of a fraternal approach to the environment and educating them in their behavior in the sense of a healthy and sustainable ecology is also part of the great ecological vision (no. 58).

With the Amazon Synod in Rome in October 2019, Roman Catholic environmental ethics has attracted special attention from the Universal Church. The Amazon basin is considered a treasure trove of the world's biodiversity and carries global significance for the future viability of human civilization. The Roman Catholic Church is, thus, part of an international solidarity movement and makes an appeal to the states for a participatory international environmental policy.

However, the connection between nature conservation and the legal protection of local indigenous peoples from Latin America (pachammam, buenvivir) is dwelled upon. Gerhard Kruip relates Pope Francis' Latin American background to his appreciation of indigenous wisdom, with reference to the "cry of the poor" and the "cry of Mother Earth." The link to the socio-ecological concept of the good life ("buen vivir") also emanates from his Latin American background. Pope Francis, thus, ties in the new and growth-critical model of the "good life" that originated there.[118]

---

117 Following: De Moraes, Vinicius, *Para vivir un gran amor*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 2013, 166.

118 Cf. Kruip, Gerhard, "Buen Vivir – Gut leben im Einklang mit Mutter Erde", *AMOS International* 9.4 (2015), 11.

The so-called Rio Conference refers to a UN conference on environment and development that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Environmental protection and poverty reduction go hand in hand: The concept of sustainable development was coined at the conference and it combines both, environmental protection and poverty reduction. Leonardo Boff, as an exemplary representative, stands for numerous liberation theologians who contributed. He drew on indigenous ideas in his contributions and used, for example, the concept of "Mother Earth"[119]. This denotes the worship of an all-powerful goddess, for example, "Pacha mama" in Andean religions, which is common in many Native American cultures. The concept of a "good life" is part of the constitutions of Ecuador (2008) and Bolivia (2009) initiated by various indigenous peoples. Evo Morales (Bolivia) and Rafael Correa (Ecuador) had previously been opposition forces coming to power under left-leaning presidents who were also supported by indigenous peoples.[120]

According to Pope Francis, a conception of the good life means the demand for a dignified life, the meaning of which must be struggled for. It is worth fighting to be able to live well and in dignity.[121] Moreover, indigenous peoples take a lead role for all other people on earth when it comes to a conversation of biodiversity.[122] A paradigm of holistic ecology with a close interconnectedness of human beings and nature is presented. The diversity and beauty of nature in the Amazon basin are expressed through creation-theological and poetic texts.

Particularly the environmental spirituality is pushed forward, which was, from a theological point of view, introduced years before the Amazon synod. See as an example Karl Bopp.

5.3 Ecological Pastoral Ministry and Creation Spirituality

Karl Bopp proposes a program of ecological pastoral ministry in which he distinguishes between an external dimension of the Church – which means: witnessing to the faith of creation in dialogue with the world – and an internal dimension of the Church – which means: confessing faith in creation in dialogue with God. God and his truth of salvation must be witnessed on the one side, in the world through the proclamation of the Gospel (in the form of the Creator

119 Cf. Boff, Leonardo, *Die Erde ist uns anvertraut. Eine ökologische Spiritualität*, Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 2010.

120 Cf. Kruip, *Buen Vivir*, 13.

121 Cf. Kruip, *Buen Vivir*, 16.

122 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 228.

God), diakonia (to the threatened creation itself) and prophetic as well as pathic witness (against the destruction of creation). The koinonia of sisters and brothers must confess and celebrate faith on the other side. This is done through the liturgy (prayer and celebration of the sacraments), magisterial confession (creed), and situational confession. In this form of congregational catechesis, each person's own baptismal confession unfolds and is built up into a contemporary spirituality of creation. In the interaction of these two levels with each other, a witnessing and confessing arises in equal measure, which has God as the Creator of the world and of the whole cosmos, connected with the hope of a new heaven and a new earth at its center.[123]

This creation spirituality understands itself as an open search, challenged by questions of the world, for the will of God in the context of the crisis of creation. Its elements and major themes, in the context of the inner-Church creation dialogue, are: the biblical tradition of the covenant between God and his people (including the whole creation), the praise of the Creator God who creates and sustains life, the incarnational faith (in Jesus Christ the Creator God has turned to the earth), the sacramental understanding of creation, the Sabbath order of creation with the specification of a temporal rhythm, and the hope for the Adventus of God as the fulfillment of the whole creation.[124]

The diaconal task of the Church in the context of creation care must be understood as universal solidarity. The Creator God as God of all people is, thus, the basic assumption of an ecological pastoral care. It must, therefore, also be a concern of the Church to preserve humane foundations of life for future generations.[125] The care of creation and the preservation of the living space for all creatures is today an indispensable practice of a Christian faith in creation.[126]

The Church acts as an advocate for creation. This happens explicitly in a 2006 declaration by the German bishops on climate change.[127] There, reference is made to the Christian responsibility for creation to preserve planet Earth as a sustainable home for all creatures. It advocates an image of humanity that also considers the dignity of human beings in relation to their living conditions. An

123 Cf. Bopp, Karl, "Nachhaltigkeit als Basis einer Ökologischen Pastoral", *Pastoraltheologische Informationen. Durcharbeiten und Erinnern*, 30.2 (2010), 217–242, here: 238.

124 Cf. Bopp, *Nachhaltigkeit*, 240.

125 Cf. Bopp, *Nachhaltigkeit*, 241.

126 Cf. Vogt, Markus, "Schöpfung. VIII. Schöpfung und Evolution", in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 9, ^{3}2000, 236–239, here: 239.

127 Cf. Die deutschen Bischöfe – Kommission für gesellschaftliche und soziale Fragen/Kommission Weltkirche, *Der Klimawandel: Brennpunkte globaler, intergenerationeller und ökologischer Gerechtigkeit*, Bonn 2006, no. 9.

attitude of global solidarity is demanded, especially in reference to the responsibility as a Universal Church for the poor and excluded. All people are taken into consideration when it comes to a willingness to rethink and act for the preservation and shaping of a creation that is fit for humanity and the environment. The focus is on long-term thinking in terms of intergenerational justice of the kingdom of God and its righteousness, as well as on a spirituality that enables people to dare and peacefully realize jointly lived responsibility for creation.[128]

Rich sources of creation spirituality are found in Franciscan and Benedictine spirituality. Benedictine spirituality includes praise of creation, reverence for things and people, right measure, living in the rhythm of creation, and mindfulness as well as attention. The right measure is particularly emphasized in Benedictine creation spirituality. Life according to God is characterized by the fact that it is immediately a healthy life. Neither consumption nor distraction are to be striven for, according to Benedict. Rather, it is about the right measure and its observance, the attentive contemplation of the moment and the restriction to what is meaningful and moderate. This also corresponds to the order of life. Franciscan spirituality stands out as less balanced and moderate, but rather radical. Poverty and humility are in focus and expressed in the love of nature.[129] Anton Rotzetter[130], who pursued such a spirituality, can be mentioned here as an example.

So far, the Roman Catholic perspective has been presented. In the following, the view is opened for the ecumenical context, which plays a decisive role in the common protection of the environment.

6 Ecumenical Approach: Anthroporelationality

6.1 Roman Catholicism and Protestantism

Ursula Lorenz presents a Protestant-Catholic comparison by relating the positions of both sides to each other.[131] On the Protestant side, she starts with Albert Schweitzer and his biocentric environmental ethics. This is based on his princi-

128 Cf. Bopp, *Nachhaltigkeit*, 241f.

129 Cf. Kleyboldt, Ewald, *Nachhaltigkeit braucht Spiritualität. Antworten aus Christentum und Buddhismus als Beitrag der Religionen*, München: oekom, 2019, 25–39.

130 Cf. Rotzetter, P. Anton, *Die Freigelassenen. Franz von Assisi und die Tiere*, Freiburg: Paulusverlag, 2011.

131 Cf. Lorenz, Ursula, *Umweltethik – ein evangelisch-katholischer Vergleich*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.

ple of reverence for life,[132] which was later adopted by Erich Gräßer[133] and Günter Altner[134].

6.1.1 Protestant Perspectives

Two other Protestant representatives of an environmental ethic based on the concept of God are Sigurd Daecke[135] and Jürgen Moltmann.[136] Daecke proceeds from the assumption of the immanence of God and rejects anthropocentrism and any form of a superior position of mankind. God's creation in the form of nature has an intrinsic value with its own rights and is protected by its Creator. It is, therefore, a theocentric approach to environmental ethics, which understands nature as sacred and places human beings right into nature. Moltmann's justification of environmental ethics can be understood as anti-anthropocentric, emphasizing the immanence of God and the special rights of nature. His position could be described as physiocentric, since the equality and significance of nature are emphasized and human beings appear increasingly insignificant in a possible superior role.

The enormous diversity in Protestant justifications of environmental ethics roots in a fundamental issue: the construction of an environmental ethic from the perspective of the doctrine of God or on the basis of anthropology (here more precisely: God's image of man, sinfulness).

---

132 A collection of important writings for Schweitzer's "Ehrfurcht des Lebens" can be found in the second volume of his collected works: Schweitzer, Albert, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, ed. by Rudolf Grabs, München: C.H. Beck, 1974.

133 Cf. for example Gräßer, Erich, "Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben", in: Röhrig, Eberhard (ed.), *Der Gerechte erbarmt sich seines Viehs. Stimmen zur Mitgeschöpflichkeit*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1992, 92–103.

134 Cf. for example Altner, Günter, *Naturvergessenheit. Grundlagen einer umfassenden Bioethik*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991.

135 Cf. for example Daecke, Sigurd M., "Säkulare Welt – sakrale Schöpfung – geistige Materie. Vorüberlegungen zu einer trinitarisch begründeten Praktischen und Systematischen Theologie der Natur", *Evangelische Theologie* 45 (1985), 261–276.

136 Cf. for example Moltmann, Jürgen, *Gott in der Schöpfung. Ökologische Schöpfungslehre*, vol. 5, *Werke*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2016 (1985). Moltmann, Jürgen, *God in creation: Gott in der Schöpfung: an ecological doctrine of creation; the Gifford lectures 1984–1985*, London: SCM Press, 2005.

6.1.2 Roman Catholic Perspectives

On the Roman Catholic side, the starting point is Alfons Auer as a classical and much-cited anthropocentrist.[137] For him, mankind experiences a superior position, especially in relation to animals and the rest of the world surrounding mankind. Sometimes he is read as too rigid, which is why tendencies towards a moderate anthropocentrism or an anthroporelational environmental ethics are becoming more popular in the Roman Catholic discussion. One example of this is Wilhelm Korff, who argues strongly for the dignity of the human being as a person as the only justification for environmental ethics.[138]

Hans J. Münk proposes another Roman Catholic position as a compromise between the various existing approaches: anthroporelationality.[139] In this approach, an explicit superior position is not ascribed to the human being, but it is seen as a responsible subject in relation to what surrounds him or her. This makes clear that human beings, by virtue of their own creatureliness, are part of the whole of creation and equally hold the position of the authorized and entitled governor there. Human activity, as an intervention in the divine creation, must, therefore, always be thought through with its consequences in mind, and the intrinsic value of the non-human – which is to be distinguished from the human – must be respected.

Hans-Joachim Höhn takes a very similar position, regarding human beings as likewise created in the context of nature.[140] He tries to establish two aspects: the great dignity of the human being and the value of the non-human. Following this, he separates the spheres of God and mankind as well as mankind and animals from each other. According to that, relationality refers to all actors in creation.

Thus, on the Roman Catholic side, also with regard to magisterial texts, it can be stated that the homogeneous position is that of a moderate anthropocentrism or anthroporelationality. The human being has a superior position that embeds him or her equally in the environment but does not make him or her abso-

137 Cf. Auer, Alfons, *Umweltethik. Ein theologischer Beitrag zur ökologischen Diskussion*, Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1984.

138 Cf. Korff, Wilhelm, "Schöpfungsgerechter Fortschritt. Grundlagen und Perspektiven der Umweltethik", in: *Herder Korrespondenz* 51 (1997), 78–84.

139 Cf. i.a. Münk, Hans J., "Grundzüge einer christlich-theologischen Umweltethik im Kontext heutigen ökologischethischen Denkens", in: Imfeld Stiftung (ed.), *Ethik und Menschenbild* vol. 1, Schriften der Imfeld-Stiftung, Cuxhaven: Junghans, 1992, 65–82.

140 Cf. Höhn, Hans-Joachim, *Ökologische Sozialethik. Grundlagen und Perspektiven*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001.

lute. Mankind as an image of God (*imago Dei*) and as a governor, combined with its creatureliness, describes human existence on earth. Responsibility for fellow creatures goes hand in hand with this existence.

In summary, it can be stated that "[a]s far as Christian creation ethics is concerned [...] an anthroporelational approach suggests itself, which refers to the human being as a subject of responsibility, but does not understand this as a contradiction to the recognition of the intrinsic value of animals, plants and ecosystems, but as their epistemic precondition"[141].

6.2 Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox Tradition

The Roman Catholic and Protestant panorama of important theological figures concerning environment has been presented. The focus is now placed on the Orthodox tradition. An important and decisive figure for the Orthodox theology of creation is the so-called "green" Patriarch Bartholomew I.[142] He is the Primate (the honorary head) of a church with more than 250 million believers worldwide. Firstly, he is the bishop of the Orthodox Christians in Constantinople/Istanbul, and secondly, he is the chairman of the Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which is responsible for all those who are under the canonical jurisdiction of this church. Thirdly, he is the head of the Orthodox bishops and may take initiatives to secure, deepen, or restore unity. He is also responsible for coordinating the work of the 14 autocephalous Orthodox churches worldwide. However, he does not have the jurisdictional powers of the Pope.[143]

---

141 Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 54 [translation K.S.F.].

142 See also: Theokritoff, Elizabeth, "Green Patriarch, Green Patristics: Reclaiming the Deep Ecology of Christian Tradition", *Religions* 8.7 (2017), 116.

143 Cf. Vlantis, Georgios, *"Der 'grüne' Patriarch Bartholomaios I. Orthodoxe Initiativen zur Bewahrung der Schöpfung"*, Lecture on the Symposium Schöpfungs-Verständnis und praktizierte Schöpfungs-Verantwortung verschiedener Religionen/Konfessionen, Zentrum für Umwelt und Kultur (ZUK), monastery Benediktbeuern, on October 21, 2017. He was born in 1940 on the island of Gökceada (Greek: Imbros) and studied theology in Turkey, more precisely in Chalki (Princes Island), in Bossey (Switzerland), Munich and Rome. In Rome, he obtained his doctorate and was ordained deacon in 1961. On October 22, 1991, the Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople elected him Ecumenical Patriarch. Among his great merits in 27 years of service were the revival of the synodal structures of Orthodoxy (a highlight being the convening of the Holy and Great Council of Crete in 2016), the promotion of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue (especially Judaism and Islam), and the strengthening of the witness of Christians in global society. He has received countless awards for this (cf. Vlantis, *Patriarch*, 1f.).

6.2.1 A Shared Starting Point for Creation Theology

Starting in the 1970s with Pope Paul VI's letter *Octogesima adveniens*, the tradition of caring about planet Earth was continued by Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis (especially in *Laudato Si'*). Nevertheless, Orthodox and Roman Catholic church leaders follow the same common vision in issues related to the future of humanity, which is also demonstrated by the joint meetings they've held in the past years. Ecology is, therefore, an important concern of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew try to contribute through speeches, letters, and works at the same time as they are holding meetings and practical actions for promoting a new lifestyle. The principles of the Bible and the perpetuation of life in a happy and healthy way will be particularly focused upon.[144]

6.2.2 The Orthodox Tradition: Patriarch Bartholomew

He takes his theological approach to the environmental crisis from the traditional Christian doctrine of creation, which functions because of the ontological distinction between the uncreated and the created. This means, that the Orthodox's respectful attitude towards nature does not function out of a pantheistically understood holiness of nature, but through nature being ontologically radically different from the uncreated God. This does not result in a Manichean bipolarity, but in an image of creation arising from God's love. The act of creation is, thus, a gift of God to all creatures. Each creature is a fruit of divine love, care, and wisdom, and, thus, represents an imprint of divine generosity and the object of the Creator's care.[145]

In the Orthodox Church, which, in the tradition of the Greek concept of nature, is less addicted to dualistic-Western conceptions, there are quite different approaches also to ecological questions. It is based on a dynamic concept of nature, which is contrary to the Western tradition. The Western tradition assumes nature as a thing (natura as res, which is disposed of). The high value of liturgy in the Orthodox tradition can also be found in ethical considerations. Vogt suggests speaking of an "ecology of the spirit"[146] and emphasizes the hymnic ap-

144 Cf. Morariu, Iuliu-Marius, "Ecology – Main Concern for the Christian Space of the 21st Century? Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 19.56 (2020), 124–135, here: 133.

145 Cf. Vlantis, *Patriarch*, 3.

146 Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 280 [translation K.S.F.].

proach to an understanding of liturgy that opposes all inner-worldly idolatry of things.[147]

In the Orthodox tradition, there is also criticism of the constant growth of prosperity and unbridled consumption. Natural resources are, thus, not used appropriately. Like man, creation apart from man also experiences the consequences of human sin (compare Rom 8:20–22). The ecological crisis and climatic changes make it the duty of the churches to use their spiritual resources for the preservation of creation. This means further to work against the spiritual impoverishment of mankind through its greed for gratification, but pointing to the belonging of the natural wealth of the earth to God, the Creator. The Orthodox Church is committed to the protection of God's creation, emphasizing man's responsibility towards creation. Reference is made to future generations, who have a right to natural resources from our Creator. To this end, virtues of frugality and abstinence help.[148]

Current for Orthodox theology is the document of a thirteen-member working group of theologians entitled, "For the Life of the World. Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church". It was published in 2020. It is a document of the ecumenical patriarchate that collects and records in writing topics that have already been discussed and negotiated in public. It deals with the preservation of creation and human rights and the fight against the causes of flight and nationalism.[149]

Patriarch Bartholomew emphasizes the anthropocentrism of creation, that is, man as the crown and goal of all created things. Cosmologically, the focus is on harmony and inner logic, which are liturgical-doxological in nature in the form of anthropocentrism. In this, man is the priest of creation, directing the cosmic doxology of God and bringing it to a climax in the celebration of the Eucharist. Human beings bear responsibility for preserving the integrity of the cosmos, according to Gen 9:1, and do not legitimize the immoderate exploitation of natural resources in the context of self-centered interests. The Bible gives expression to the praise of God through the beauty and harmony of the cos-

147 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 280.

148 Cf. "Der Auftrag der Orthodoxen Kirche in der heutigen Welt", Translated by Archpriest Radu Constantin Miron, *Orthodoxie Aktuell* 7 (2016), 23–30, quoted from: *Orthodoxes Forum* 31.1+2 (2017), 199–200.

149 Cf. Elsner, Regina, "Weiterer Schritt auf dem Weg zu einer orthodoxen Sozialethik. For the Life of the World. Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church. Dokument des Ökumenischen Patriarchats, veröffentlicht durch die Griechisch-Orthodoxe Erzdiözese von Amerika, Fastenzeit 2020", *AMOS International* 14.3 (2020), 42–45.

mos. Violation of this beauty constitutes an interruption of God's cosmic doxology and is contrary to the will of the Creator.[150]

Prayer is a mode of expressing man's relationality and describing the sacrality of the world. Prayer gives strength and inspiration for shaping human life according to the will of God, which is done in harmony with the natural environment.[151]

The Patriarch calls for an apophatic attitude, that is, an attitude characterized by awareness of the limits of knowledge, of language, and of all human capacities. The mystery of God exists prior, to which people bow down and express their admiration through a pious silence. Silence is not understood as sinful passivity, but as an introduction to the awareness of human limits. He speaks of "eco-silence" that allows the cries of nature to be heard. He refers to the words of the Philokalia, a collection of mystical sayings of the Church Fathers: if you find your own self in silence, you will also find God and the whole world.[152]

Patriarch Bartholomew received the title of honorary doctorate on May 16, 2014, from the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich. In the laudation, in addition to his other merits, reference is made to his commitment to the preservation of creation. It is to be appreciated that he recognized early on the inner interconnectedness of ecology, sustainable development, and social justice, and that he also theologically located social and environmental ethical challenges posed by global climate change and addressed them in their repercussions on human existence. He brought this challenge into the scientific-theological discourse in the field of environmental ethics. According to him, ecological awareness, like the transformation of hearts and community, grows out of God's grace and is to be understood as *metanoia*. Humanity must transform its habits and lifestyle.[153] He also highlights the ecological question as a theological one, to be integrated into inner-Christian and interreligious dialogue.[154]

Iuliu-Marius Morariu points out that the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Church try to raise awareness in the public space on ecology through lectures, conferences, and practical actions. However, the Roman Catholic tradition is older in doing so than the Orthodox one.

---

150 Cf. Vlantis, *Patriarch*, 4.

151 Cf. Vlantis, *Patriarch*, 6.

152 Cf. Vlantis, *Patriarch*, 9.

153 Cf. Patriarch Bartholomaios, "Verwandlung erfordert Metanoia. Gedanken zum Thema der 9. ÖRK-Vollversammlung", *Orthodoxie aktuell* 10.3 (2006), 3.

154 Cf. Bischof, Franz Xaver, "Ehrenpromotion des Ökumenischen Patriarchen Bartholomaios Laudatio", *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 66 (2015), 2–10, 5.

6.2.3 The Cooperation of Roman Catholicism and the Orthodox tradition

Kevin Mongrain writes about Pope Francis and the ecumenical Patriarch (of Constantinople), Bartholomew, that both are trying to take up the challenge of re-spiritualizing Christianity in the Anthropocene age. They are in agreement about the support for their members in environmental issues, also across cultural and religious lines. They distinguish cosmocentric theology (pantheism and animism) and theocentric cosmology (monotheism centered on the incarnation of the Trinity in creation) because both believe that the environmental crisis roots in the modern culture's anthropocentric ethos. Pope Francis specifically aims for a retrieval of St. Francis' relationship to the natural world, elaborated by Ignatius of Loyola to a discipline of learning to see God's glory in all created things. In opposition to modern capitalism and its "disciplined avarice in action", the monastic-Franciscan-Ignatian spiritual ethos of "disciplined contemplation in action" is advocated by Bartholomew and Francis.[155]

They met in November 2014 and took a stand on working together in environmental and climate change issues. The cooperation of Eastern and Western churches is essential for this shared ecumenical vision.[156] Bartholomew has published several texts on environmental issues for more than 25 years.[157] He counts as the inspirator of a new subgenre in Orthodox theology and he approves the human-caused climate change.[158]

In comparison to Bartholomew, Pope Francis presents a more philosophical approach to the causes of the looming catastrophe. He ascribes the environmental crisis to our existential disposition in relation to the world around us as it is known from Heideggerian philosophy tinged with Martin Buber's "personalist" theology of I and Thou.[159]

Both of them know in all their claims that, according to Max Weber, "asceticism moved out of the monastic cells and into working life", which means that the world cannot be put back into monastic cells. However, they favor the simplicity of life and its lifestyle. According to Mongrain, "the monks and those who share their theology can leave their cells and steal back the ascetic ethos that

155 Cf. Mongrain, Kevin, "The Burden of Guilt and the Imperative of Reform: Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew Take Up the Challenge of Re-Spiritualizing Christianity in the Anthropocene Age", *Horizons* 44 (2017), 80–107, here: 80.

156 Cf. Mongrain, *Burden*, 87.

157 A bibliography and links to the patriarch's publications, speeches, addresses, and other documents can be found at https://www.patriachate.org/publications.

158 Cf. Mongrain, *Burden*, 89 f.

159 Cf. Mongrain, *Burden*, 92.

was plagiarized and perverted by Puritans and their capitalist descendants".[160] The original ascetic ethos signifies a sense of gratitude and the rediscovery of beauty and not a dualism or denial. Gratitude, in Bartholomew's writings, is an interpretation of the sacrament of Eucharist and in this sense understood from its etymological background as gratitude and thankfulness (from the Greek *eukharistia*). As "ascetic" and "eucharistic" belong together, the eucharistic gratitude and the theme of beauty of life on Earth do. This is reflected by Bartholomew in the meaning of the Christian sacrament of Eucharist.[161]

Bartholomew and Francis guide their churches in participation in the wider and global dialogue about climate change in order to stop the environmental destruction. They symbolize the constructive role of organized religion against the coming crisis and try to gain respect for their churches and their message through presenting a credible and sophisticated well-defined position in saving the Earth from the human-made catastrophe. This might convince people of their cosmological message of finding God's beauty in nature. Simple living, repentance, breaking free of obsessive-compulsive consumerism are their proposed options. The message of a "green apocalypse" might be the message the next generation of the earth's inhabitants will be ready and willing to receive. This way of life will be centered on learning to see and participate without reserve in the ongoing process of God's incarnation. This process started with Jesus Christ followed by his disciples and is now called "New Evangelization" by Pope Francis. It roots back to the ancient evangelization of the monastic, Hesychast strand of the Christian tradition as indicated by Bartholomew.[162]

6.2.4 Other Perspectives in the Orthodox Tradition Concerning Environmental Ethics

Apart from Bartholomew, there are other Orthodox designs of an environmental ethic, as well. One example is Elizabeth Theokritoff, who presents an Orthodox Christian ecology as a "theological understanding of humans-in-the-world", a "spiritual ecosystem"[163]. Both, ecu-mene – the inhabited earth, the human community – and eco-system, built the elementary components of the Church's eco-

160 Cf. Mongrain, *Burden*, 97.
161 Cf. Mongrain, *Burden*, 99.
162 Cf. Mongrain, *Burden*, 106f.
163 Theokritoff, Elizabeth, *Living in God's Creation. Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology*, Foundations Series 4, Crestwood/New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009, 29.

logical vision. According to Theokritoff, the questions that need to be addressed are:

> What does it mean to see the material world as God's creation?
> What is the spiritual significance of the material world, its relation to God?
> In what sense is God apart from the universe, and in what sense is he present in it?
> Is the rest of nature 'fallen' as a result of human sin?
> [...]
> What does it mean to be a material creature, yet fashioned in God's image and likeness?
> What is the role played by other people and other creatures in our relationship with God, and His with us?[164]

Theokritoff answers these questions by estimating the Church's tradition, explicitly the Church Fathers, who lead into an "ethos of 'taking part in the celebration.'"[165] This includes liturgy as well as the Eucharist and ascetics.[166] In addition, Theokritoff rephrases the slogan "think globally, act locally" for the Orthodox Christian tradition to "think cosmically, act personally" and combines this with the process of metanoia.[167] The concept of every human being as a priest of creation, which she refers to, reveals two consequences for the Orthodox Christian ecology: firstly, the understanding of human work on nature together with transformations within nature, while not reducing "human creativity and international action to the level of waters weathering a rock".[168] And secondly, the actual emphasis on the transformation of nature through art and technology, which can be both: used for good or used for ill. Human creativity can, therefore, be an offering for creation.[169]

7 Ecotheology

Subsequently, the question will be answered as to whether an independent ecotheology can be developed based on this great appreciation of the environment in Christianity.

---

164 Theokritoff, *Creation*, 29.
165 Theokritoff, *Creation*, 255.
166 Cf. Theokritoff, *Creation*, 255.
167 Cf. Theokritoff, *Creation*, 256.
168 Cf. Theokritoff, *Creation*, 261.
169 Cf. Theokritoff, *Creation*, 261.

Ecotheology presents itself as a distinct theological approach to the environment. It is understood as creation-theological environmental ethics. It symbolizes today's place, within which the question of God in theology is kept alive.

Four guiding concepts of creation-theological environmental ethics can be found.[170] The first is the image of God. This means that man, as a moral subject, freely determines himself. This results in a special dignity for man, which at the same time leads to a special responsibility. In general, moral subjects are necessary to be able to recognize the value of life and of being human at all.

The second guiding concept is co-creativity. Man is created together with all other creatures by God. At the same time, this prohibits man from seeing his fellow creatures only to an end. Respect for fellow creatures is a necessary consequence of God's love.

The third guiding concept is reverence. More specifically, it is an attitude of reverence that continually rediscovers and protects the integrity and beauty of creation during suffering and conflict. This means that it is not individual norms and rules that are to be practiced, but a basic attitude. Joy and gratitude are key principles for this, as well as respectful regard for the goods and living beings of creation.

The fourth guiding concept is that of the theology of the gift. The goods of creation are gifts of God for all living beings. Thus, they are not to be thought of in terms of scarcity or competition, but in terms of gifts and a logic of giving, sharing, and abundance.

> It follows that basic environmental goods, such as a stable climate compatible with human life, access to clean water, the availability of fertile soil, or biodiversity, are common goods. Accordingly, property rights relevant to these are always subject to the condition that the global and intergenerational dimensions of the common good are not violated when dealing with basic natural goods.[171]

For a new approach in theological terms to Christian environmental ethics, Vogt calls for the four aforementioned guiding concepts to be thought of together. The special dignity of man as the image of God in no way negates his integration into nature. In his creative responsibility and its concrete implementation, man comes to his creative destiny and identity.[172]

---

170 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 211 f.

171 Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 212 [translation K.S.F.].

172 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 212.

Moreover, Vogt calls for a profound remeasurement of the relationship between human beings, nature, and God.[173] Thereby, it is demarcated against pantheistic concepts, at the same time the diversity of religious views of nature is in focus. There are also similarities between the religions in this respect. Vogt characterizes Jewish ecotheology as a "search for traces of the face of God in the world"[174], whereas Islamic environmental ethics can be clearly seen in a field of tension between radical criticism of modernity and practice-oriented legal principles of an ecological Sharia.[175]

8 Movements and Practical Examples

In addition to these doctrinal statements and theological approaches, the environmental commitment has many practical dimensions, such as environmental movements, initiatives, and practical examples.

Firstly, the World Council of Churches (WCC) is considered a pioneer of the environmental movement among all religions. In the 1970s, it positioned itself on the side of the global environmental movement and used the slogan of a "sustainable society" for the first time at the 1974 WCC conference on "Science and Technology for Humane Development" in Bucharest. This called for a comprehensive orientation of social development and the inclusion of ecological carrying capacities.[176] Other conferences also took place; prominent among these was the conciliar process initiated in Vancouver in 1983, which brought the ecosocial approach with topics such as environmental protection, global justice, and peace into the three catchwords: "justice, peace and integrity of creation".[177] Responsibility for creation, thus, became an essential dimension of the Church's commitment.

There were further assemblies in Dresden (1988 and 1989), also in Stuttgart (1988), but especially in Basel (1989), which initiated a broad and effective church movement.[178] On environmental issues, an inner-Christian ecumenism quickly emerged, recognizing that it was worthwhile and helpful to address the key issues together.

---

173 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 268.

174 Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 268 [translation K.S.F.].

175 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 268.

176 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 277.

177 Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 278 [translation K.S.F.].

178 Cf. Rosenberger, Michael, *Was dem Leben dient. Schöpfungsethische Weichenstellungen im konziliaren Prozeß der Jahre 1987–89*, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: Kohlhammer, 2001.

Secondly, the so-called Rio-Process of the United Nations is characterizing because of its content and personnel. The ecumenical document "For a Future in Solidarity and Justice", written in 1997, uses the concept of sustainability again, however, linking it neither to the WCC, nor to the Conciliar Process, but to the UN Conference in Rio de Janeiro. This also resulted in the Reformed World Alliance formulating an approach in the 1980s that granted rights to nature as an extension of human rights.[179]

Thirdly and parallel to the United Nations wide processes around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (to be implemented in 2030), an ecumenical process under the 2017 slogan: "Umkehr zum Leben. Wandel gestalten" ("Conversion to Life. Shaping Change") is taking place. This deals with central topics such as responsibility for creation and sustainability.

Fourthly, on the Protestant side, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) has also set up a chamber for sustainable development, which is centrally concerned with ecotheological issues.

Thus, it can be observed across various denominations that environmental ethical thinking leads to the idea of transformation or conversion. This way of thinking is clearly different from the classical Roman Catholic natural law, which functions as a way of thinking in terms of order. Also cosmically shaped nature ethics, such as in Buddhism or Taoism, express this order thought. An explicit critique of society is expressed, and environmental ethics as an ethic of transformation relates directly to the lifestyles of believers.[180] This is evident not only in church statements and publications, but also in everyday interaction within church congregations and parishes. Church environmental management according to the European EMAS standard (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) as an ecumenical initiative enjoys great popularity and creates a vital network for the practical implementation of environmental protection on site. More than 1000 church institutions participate in it. Only one other example out of many is the ecumenical network for climate justice[181], which unites church institutions with a special concern for climate justice, ecology, and support for developing countries. Churches, thus, emerge as the largest environmental management group in the non-profit sector in Germany.

179 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 280.

180 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 280f.

181 Cf. https://www.kirchen-fuer-klimagerechtigkeit.de/, last access: 2021/06/22.

Conclusion

The question of the environment in Christianity is not a simple one. The most urgent one to ask, is the question of moral psychology: How do we get from ought to willingness and acting?

> The overcoming of static models in the understanding of nature or creation also contributes enormously to the conceptual development of environmental ethics. Here, especially process philosophy and theology in the tradition of Alfred North Whitehead have opened up fundamentally new perspectives that are far from being explored in environmental ethics.[182]

The environment serves as a space, in which theologians can move away from the idea of the burden of the thesis that Christianity is responsible for the exploitation of the environment. Vogt stresses the meaning of the cross and the resurrection as trusting elements for the Christian hope. Human failure that is dependent on mercy and the possibility of a new beginning, puts its future in God's hands to reach the kingdom of God.[183]

For the future, the living conditions that are given must not be assumed to be static. They are subject to constant change. This is also noticeable in the fact that the adherence to an always same order structure does not constitute the creation-appropriate organization of the living conditions. Rather, it is the preservation of future viability for the individual and his fellow human beings as well as for subsequent generations. An ethics based on creation as man's self-interpretation regards the natural foundations of life as particularly worthy of protection. The history of human life always takes the form of a life story that relates to what it finds. The extra-human belongs to the self-understanding and self-interpretation of the individual existence of man just as much as the human and, therefore, becomes the subject of ethics and theology.[184]

In addition, because of the environmental crisis, Christians must change their theological teaching. It is only in this way, that they can actively contribute to an overcoming of the crisis. It is necessary to conceive an anthropology that understands the human being together with and in dependence on his co-creation. Man does not exist detached from his environment, more precisely: the non-human. The being-there and being-so of man goes back to a co-evolutionary process of the human and the non-human and expresses mutual dependence.

---

182 Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 54 [translation K.S.F.].

183 Cf. Vogt, *Christliche Umweltethik*, 158 [translation K.S.F.].

184 Cf. Anselm, *Schöpfung*, 276 f.

Before any theological interpretation, it is important to realize this as a theologian.[185]

Bibliography

Primary Literature

"Der Auftrag der Orthodoxen Kirche in der heutigen Welt", Translated by Archpriest Radu Constantin Miron, *Orthodoxie Aktuell* 7 (2016), 23–30, quoted from: *Orthodoxes Forum* 31.1+2 (2017), 199–200.

Augustine, *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. John O'Meara, London: Penguin Books, 1972.

Augustine, *The Enchiridion: on Faith, Hope, and Love*, trans. J.F. Shaw, Henry Paolucci (ed.), Chicago: Regnery Gateway, 1961.

Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963.

Basil of Caesarea, On the Hexaemeron, in: *Exegetic Homilies*, trans. Sister Agnes Clare Way, Fathers of the Church 46, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963.

Francis of Assisi, Canticle of the Creatures, in: *Early Documents*, vol. 1, New York-London-Manila: New City Press, 1999, 113–114.

Bundesminister für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit (ed.), *Bericht der Bundesregierung über die Konferenz der Vereinten Nationen*, Bonn: Köllen Druck + Verlag GmbH, 1994.

Die deutschen Bischöfe – Kommission für gesellschaftliche und soziale Fragen/Kommission Weltkirche, *Der Klimawandel: Brennpunkte globaler, intergenerationeller und ökologischer Gerechtigkeit*, Bonn 2006.

Encyclical Letter Caritas In Veritate of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI to the Bishops Priests and Deacons Men and Women Religious the Lay Faithful and all People of Good Will on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth, Rome 2009.

Encyclical Letter Laudato si' of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home, Rome 2015.

Schweitzer, Albert, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, Rudolf Grabs (ed.), München: C.H. Beck, 1974.

The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), adapted from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

United Nations, *Convention on Biological Diversity*, 1993, CBD, "Convention Text", https://www.cbd.int/convention/articles/?a=cbd-06, last access: 2021/02/28.

Vlantis, Georgios, *"Der 'grüne' Patriarch Bartholomaios I. Orthodoxe Initiativen zur Bewahrung der Schöpfung"*, Lecture on the Symposium Schöpfungs-Verständnis und

185 Cf. Enxing, Julia, "Und Gott schuf den Erdling", *Herder Korrespondenz* 74.3 (2020), 24–26, here: 26.

praktizierte Schöpfungs-Verantwortung verschiedener Religionen/Konfessionen, Zentrum für Umwelt und Kultur (ZUK), monastery Benediktbeuern, Saturday 2017/10/21.

Secondary Literature

Anselm, Reiner, "Schöpfung als Deutung der Lebenswirklichkeit", in: Schmid, Konrad (ed.), *Schöpfung*, Themen der Theologie 4, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012, 225–294.

Auer, Alfons, *Umweltethik. Ein theologischer Beitrag zur ökologischen Diskussion*, Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1984.

Barr, James, "Man and Nature. The Ecological Controversy and the Old Testament", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 55 (1972/73), 1–28.

Bederna, Katrin, *Every Day for Future. Theologie und religiöse Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung*, Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, 2019.

Bederna, Katrin / Gärtner, Claudia, "Wo bleibt Gott, wenn die Wälder brennen?", *Herder Korrespondenz* 74.3 (2020), 27–29.

Bischof, Franz Xaver, "Ehrenpromotion des Ökumenischen Patriarchen Bartholomaios Laudatio", *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 66 (2015), 2–10.

Boff, Leonardo, *Die Erde ist uns anvertraut. Eine ökologische Spiritualität*, Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 2010.

Bopp, Karl, "Nachhaltigkeit als Basis einer Ökologischen Pastoral", *Pastoraltheologische Informationen. Durcharbeiten und Erinnern*, 30.2 (2010), 217–242.

Crutzen, Paul, "The Geology of mankind", *Nature* 415 (2002), 23.

da Silva, Jorgiano dos Santos, *Füllet die Erde und macht sie euch untertan! (Gen 1,28). Strukturen einer alttestamentlich begründeten Schöpfungstheologie und deren Konsequenzen für eine biblisch orientierte Umweltethik*, Münster: LIT, 2018.

Daecke, Sigurd M., "Säkulare Welt – sakrale Schöpfung – geistige Materie. Vorüberlegungen zu einer trinitarisch begründeten Praktischen und Systematischen Theologie der Natur", Evangelische Theologie 45 (1985), 261–276.

Degen-Ballmer, Stephan, *Gott – Mensch – Welt. Eine Untersuchung über mögliche holistische Denkmodelle in der Prozesstheologie und der ostkirchlich-orthodoxen Theologie als Beitrag für ein ethikrelevantes Natur- und Schöpfungsverständnis*, Frankfurt a.M. et al.: Peter Lang, 2001.

De Moraes, Vinicius, *Para vivir un gran amor*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 2013.

Dierksmeier, Claus, *Umwelt als Mitwelt. Die päpstliche Enzyklika Laudato si' und der argentinische krausismo*, Kirche und Gesellschaft 428, Köln: J.P. Bachem Medien, 2016.

Ebach, Jürgen, "Bild Gottes und Schrecken der Tiere. Zur Anthropologie der priesterlichen Urgeschichte", in: id., *Ursprung und Ziel. Erinnerte Zukunft und erhoffte Vergangenheit. Biblische Exegesen, Reflexionen, Geschichten*, 16–47, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986.

Elsner, Regina, "Weiterer Schritt auf dem Weg zu einer orthodoxen Sozialethik. For the Life of the World. Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church. Dokument des Ökumenischen Patriarchats, veröffentlicht durch die Griechisch-Orthodoxe Erzdiözese von Amerika, Fastenzeit 2020", *AMOS International* 14.3 (2020), 42–45.

Enxing, Julia, "Und Gott schuf den Erdling", *Herder Korrespondenz* 74.3 (2020), 24–26.

Ford, Lewis S., *The Lure of God. A Biblical Background for Process Theism.* Fortress Press: Philadelphia 1978.

Gabriel, Ingeborg, "Die Enzyklika 'Laudato Si'". Ein Meilenstein in der lehramtlichen Sozialverkündigung", *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 44.6 (2015), 639–646.

Gräßer, Erich, "Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben", in: Röhrig, Eberhard (ed.), *Der Gerechte erbarmt sich seines Viehs. Stimmen zur Mitgeschöpflichkeit*, 92–103, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1992.

Hartshorne, Charles, *Beyond Humanism: Essays in the Philosophy of Nature*, Chicago: Willet Clark & Co, 1937.

Heimbach-Steins, Marianne / Stockmann, Nils, "Ein Impuls zur 'ökologischen Umkehr' – Die Enzyklika Laudato si' und die Rolle der Kirche als Change Agent", in: Heimbach-Steins, Marianne / Schlacke, Sabine (eds.), *Die Enzyklika Laudato si'. Ein interdisziplinärer Nachhaltigkeitsansatz?*, 11–54, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2019.

Höhn, Hans-Joachim, *Ökologische Sozialethik. Grundlagen und Perspektiven*, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001.

Janowski, Bernd, "Herrschaft über die Tiere. Gen 1,26–28 und die Semantik von רדה", in: id., *Die rettende Gerechtigkeit. Beiträge zur Theologie des Alten Testaments 2*, 33–48, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1999.

Kessler, Rainer, "'Eine Grenze hast du gesetzt' (Ps 104,9). Psalm 104 im Horizont globaler Krisen", *Bibel und Kirche* 76.1 (2021), 22–27.

Kleyboldt, Ewald, *Nachhaltigkeit braucht Spiritualität. Antworten aus Christentum und Buddhismus als Beitrag der Religionen*, München: oekom, 2019.

Koch, Klaus, "Gestaltet die Erde, doch hegt das Leben! Einige Klarstellungen zum *dominium terrae* in Genesis 1" (1983), in: id., *Spuren des hebräischen Denkens. Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie. Gesammelte Aufsätze 1*, Bernd Janowski/Martin Krause (eds.), 223–237, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991.

Korff, Wilhelm, "Schöpfungsgerechter Fortschritt. Grundlagen und Perspektiven der Umweltethik", in: *Herder Korrespondenz* 51 (1997), 78–84.

Kruip, Gerhard, "Buen Vivir – Gut leben im Einklang mit Mutter Erde", *AMOS International* 9.4 (2015), 11–18.

Link, Christian, *Schöpfung. Schöpfungstheologie angesichts der Herausforderungen des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Handbuch Systematischer Theologie 7/2, Gütersloh: Mohn, 1991.

Lohfink, Norbert, "'Macht euch die Erde untertan'?" (1974), in: id., *Studien zum Pentateuch*, SBAB 4, 11–28, Stuttgart: Verlag katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988.

Lohfink, Norbert, "Die Priesterschrift und die Grenzen des Wachstums", in: id., *Unsere großen Wörter. Das Alte Testament zu Themen dieser Jahre*, 156–171, Freiburg et al.: Herder, 1977.

Lorenz, Ursula, *Umweltethik – ein evangelisch-katholischer Vergleich*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013.

Marlow, Hilary, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics. Re-Reading Amos, Hosea, and First Isaiah*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Maurer, Reinhart, "Ökologische Ethik als Problem", in: Bayertz, Kurt (ed.), *Ökologische Ethik*, 11–30, München/Zürich: Schnell & Steiner, 1988.

Möhring-Hesse, Matthias: "Gelobt seist Du, nicht aber die 'jetzige Wirtschaft': zur Wirtschaftskritik in Franziskus' Öko-Sozial-Enzyklika", *AMOS International* 9.4 (2015), 26–27.30–35.

Moltmann, Jürgen, *God in creation: Gott in der Schöpfung: an ecological doctrine of creation; the Gifford lectures 1984–1985*, London: SCM Press, 2005.

Moltmann, Jürgen, *Gott in der Schöpfung. Ökologische Schöpfungslehre*, vol. 5, *Werke*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2016 (1985).

Mongrain, Kevin, "The Burden of Guilt and the Imperative of Reform: Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew Take Up the Challenge of Re-Spiritualizing Christianity in the Anthropocene Age", *Horizons* 44 (2017), 80–107.

Morariu, Iuliu-Marius, "Ecology – Main Concern for the Christian Space of the 21st Century? Catholic and Orthodox Perspectives", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 19.56 (2020), 124–135.

Münk, Hans J., "Grundzüge einer christlich-theologischen Umweltethik im Kontext heutigen ökologischethischen Denkens", in: Imfeld Stiftung (ed.), *Ethik und Menschenbild* vol. 1, 65–82, Schriften der Imfeld-Stiftung, Cuxhaven: Junghans, 1992.

Norwich, Julian of, *Showings*, trans. Edmund Colledge/James Walsh, New York: Paulist Press, 1978.

Ott, Konrad / Dierks, Jan / Voegt-Kleschin, Lieske (eds.), *Handbuch Umweltethik*, Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler Verlag, 2016.

Patriarch Bartholomaios, "Verwandlung erfordert Metanoia. Gedanken zum Thema der 9. ÖRK-Vollversammlung", *Orthodoxie aktuell* 10.3 (2006).

Reder, Michael et al., *Umweltethik. Eine Einführung in globaler Perspektive*, Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2019.

Reitz, Helga, "Was ist Prozess-Theologie?", *Kerygma und Dogma* 16.2 (1970), 78–103.

Riede, Peter, "Mensch und Welt in der Sicht des Alten Testaments. Am Beispiel von Psalm 104", in: id., *Schöpfung und Lebenswelt. Studien zur Theologie und Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*, Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 2009, 101–117.

Rosenberger, Michael, *Was dem Leben dient. Schöpfungsethische Weichenstellungen im konziliaren Prozeß der Jahre 1987–89*, Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: Kohlhammer, 2001.

Rotzetter, P. Anton, *Die Freigelassenen. Franz von Assisi und die Tiere*, Freiburg: Paulusverlag, 2011.

Schaefer, Jame, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics. Reconstruction Patristic and Medieval Concepts*, Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2009.

Sander, Hans-Joachim, *Natur und Schöpfung – die Realität im Prozess: A.N. Whiteheads Philosophie als Paradigma einer Fundamentaltheologie kreativer Existenz*, Frankfurt a.M. et al: Peter Lang, 1991.

Schmitz, Barbara, "Der Mensch als 'Krone der Schöpfung'. Anthropologische Konzepte im Spannungsfeld von alttestamentlicher Theologie und moderner Rezeption", *Kirche und Israel* 27.1 (2012), 18–32.

Schlögl-Flierl, Kerstin, "Papst Franziskus als Akteur für Nachhaltigkeit", in: Tögel, Jonas / Zierer, Klaus (eds.), *Nachhaltigkeit ins Zentrum rücken: ein interdisziplinärer Zugang zu den wichtigsten Fragen unserer Zeit*, 156–163, Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 2020.

Theokritoff, Elizabeth, "Green Patriarch, Green Patristics: Reclaiming the Deep Ecology of Christian Tradition", *Religions* 8.7 (2017), 116.

Theokritoff, Elizabeth, *Living in God's Creation. Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology*, Foundations Series 4, Crestwood/New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009.
Uehlinger, Christoph, "Vom dominium terrae zu einem Ethos der Selbstbeschränkung? Alttestamentliche Einsprüche gegen einen tyrannischen Umgang mit der Schöpfung", *Bibel und Liturgie* 64 (1991), 59–74.
Vogt, Markus, "Schöpfung. VIII. Schöpfung und Evolution", in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 9, ³2000, 236–239.
Vogt, Markus, "Ein neues Kapitel der katholischen Soziallehre. Ganzheitliche Ökologie – Eine Frage radikal veränderter Lebensstile und Wirtschaftsformen", *AMOS International* 9 (2015), 3–10.
Vogt, Markus, *Christliche Umweltethik. Grundlagen und zentrale Herausforderungen*, Freiburg et al.: Herder, 2021.
Vollenweider, Samuel, "Wahrnehmungen der Schöpfung im Neuen Testament", *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie* 55 (2003), 246–253.
Zenger, Erich, *Gottes Bogen in den Wolken. Untersuchungen zu Komposition und Theologie der priesterschriftlichen Urgeschichte*, SBS 112, Stuttgart: Verlag katholisches Bibelwerk ²1987.

Suggestions for further reading

Deane-Drummond, Celia / Artinian-Kaiser, Rebecca (eds.), *Theology and Ecology Across the Disciplines: One Care for Our Common Home*, London: International Clark, 2018.
Deane-Drummond, Celia / Bergmann, Sigurd / Vogt, Markus (eds.), *Religion in the Anthropocene*, London: The Lutterworth Press, 2018.
Northcott, Michael S., *Place, Ecology, and the Sacred. The Moral Geography of Sustainable Communities*, London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
Rosenberger, Michael, *Eingebunden in den Beutel des Lebens. Christliche Schöpfungsethik*, Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2021.
Steck, Christopher W., *All God's Animals. A Catholic theological framework for animal ethics*, Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2019.