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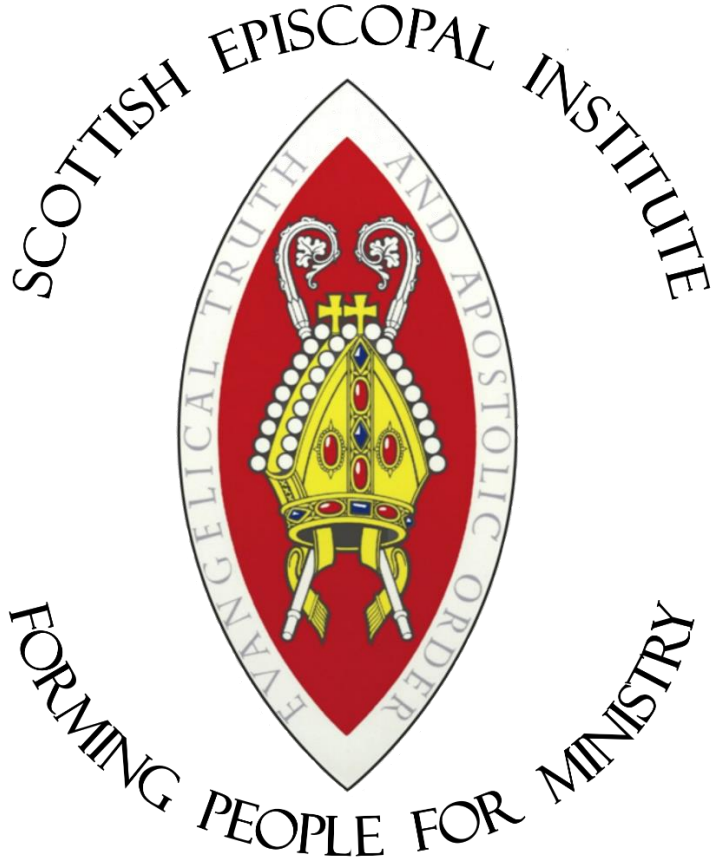

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ARTICLES

REVIEWS

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Editorial: Care For God's Creation — Discipleship, Justice and Hope

Valerie Cameron
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In June 2023 the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) agreed the direction of the Net Zero Action Plan (NZAP), the guiding values of which are *discipleship*, *justice* and *hope.* This issue of the *SEI Journal* contains articles written from a range of perspectives that consider these values in relation to care for God's creation.

The NZAP aims to tackle the three interlinked aspects of the triple planetary crisis set out by the United Nations, namely climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Our changing climate is rapidly approaching the point of no return, so the need for us to take action is urgent.
Catastrophic impacts are being felt around the globe, and it is generally the most vulnerable communities and ecosystems that are both most severely affected by and least likely to have caused the crisis which we now face.
The most common question asked by congregants is 'What can I do?'. There is a hopelessness and anxiety about the enormity of the climate crisis. Yet, as disciples, we can all be instrumental in bringing about change. We can all take the small steps that are an essential contribution to the bigger journey we are on.

Bethany Nelson writes about work done with children and young people in 'Mossy Church' at St Paul's and St George's (Ps & Gs) Church, Edinburgh and at a local school, and about how children, as disciples, notice the small things that lead to big ideas. She describes how, with the promise of hope rooted in Christ, 'we will grow the wings of action and influence'.

There is Christian hope in the face of the ecological crisis, according to the article written by Jaime Wright, Assistant Priest at Old St Paul's Church, Edinburgh. It is recognised that many people, of all faiths and none, feel a spiritual pull towards nature and the outdoors. Jaime provides an insight into practice and belief in the context of earth-based religions and discusses two Christological approaches that find resonance with earth-based spiritualities, namely deep incarnation and the cosmic Christ.

The Scottish Episcopal Institute (SEI) is responsible for the training, development and formation of our ordained and licensed ministers. During 2022 and 2023, research was undertaken by SEI in partnership with the Scottish College (Congregational and United Reformed), involving staff and students. The findings of that research show that 'green formation' for 'living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience'. Green formation is at the

heart of discipleship — it is the golden thread running through all of our endeavours and equipping future church leaders to work with their congregations, and reduce anxiety, as they work towards General Synod's target of achieving Net Zero by 2030.

Christopher John Masters, Minister General of the Society of St Francis (SSF), provides an insight into the role of environmental advocacy through peace and conflict resolution, with action rooted in prayer, stillness and listening. Such action draws on the disciplines of relationship, paradoxical curiosity, creativity and risk. He outlines issues for environmental advocates, and as an example he reflects on the logging industry in the Solomon Islands.

Elisabeth Sherrill is an environmental economist based in Brazil. The environmental crisis has had an impact on economic theory, and since the 1970s it has been recognised by economists that the effects of pollution, depletion of natural resources and conservation are key influences on economic growth. Christians would question the need for continuous economic growth when there is joy in simply having enough.

For many SEC congregations, the call to care for God's creation has resulted in a range of projects — from creating community gardens to litter picking, eco film nights and recycling. There are also Christian activists who take part in peaceful protests, prayer vigils and marches. Earlier this year the 'Revolting Christians' Conference (United Reformed Church) heard from many speakers who are involved in a wide range of eco actions, and an e-book containing their papers can be found at Rev Christians With Cover.pdf (urc.org.uk)

Luca Tovey Duckworth shares her experience of and theological reflections on creation care from the perspective of a curate in New Zealand. Christianity offers a distinctive voice to the ecological conversation about the environmental crisis. As disciples we can share stories of our faith, our hope in Christ and the call for justice for all of God's creation.

This is what makes Christians unique.

Child-Like Creativity: Noticing Small Things and Thinking Big Things

Bethany Nelson
Diocesan Environment Group Edinburgh Diocese

Throughout his life on earth, Jesus noticed the small things. He felt the touch of a marginalised woman, reaching timidly for his cloak, amidst a jostling crowd brushing past him on all sides (Lk. 8.45). He describes how God sees the fall of every sparrow (Mt. 10.29), at a time when sparrows were commonplace, not in steady decline.[1] Jesus even uses one boy's simple lunch to feed a horde of hungry people (Jn 6.9). In the hustle and bustle of life on earth today, we can easily miss the small things — blades of grass under our feet, rays of sunshine on our cheeks, the tiny footsteps of a ladybird crawling over our hand. As adults we become desensitised to so many details that would have captivated us as children. Yet Jesus calls us to become child-like in our faith (Mt. 18.3) — full of humility, trust and creativity. So how can we become more child-like, and ultimately more Christ-like, as we walk on earth in 2023?

Last spring, I responded to a call for parent helpers to join my son's primary class as they ventured into the local woods for a Forest Fun lesson. It was a wonderful insight into the dynamics of a group of eight- and nine-year-old children. What struck me most was the way that the children found freedom to be creative, and permission to think spiritually, when surrounded by nature. They were tasked with sketching what they noticed and naming their drawings. As I wandered around and asked the children to show me their work, they seemed keen to share it and respond to my attention. The pride with which they showed me their drawings, and told me what they had chosen to call them, revealed in and of itself how much we as humans crave the focused attention of others. We need to be noticed in the same way that Jesus noticed the woman in the crowd. We need to be given time in the same way that Jesus let the little children come to him (Mk 10.14). I also became acutely aware of how many spiritual themes arose in the naming of what the children saw and sketched. Children with no faith or church background described their surroundings in terms of life, death and mythology. One boy drew a 'death tree', dark and leafless, and another drew

[1] Fiona Burns, Mark A. Eaton, Ian J. Burfield, Alena Klvaňová, Eva Šilarová, Anna Staneva and Richard D. Gregory, 'Abundance Decline in the Avifauna of the European Union Reveals Cross-Continental Similarities in Biodiversity Change', *Ecology and Evolution*, 11 (2021), 16647–60.

a sprawling hawthorn laden with blossom, and named it the 'heaven tree'. As the children stopped and noticed, they saw pixies' roads running through the long grasses, and fairies' umbrellas blooming beneath the undergrowth — their imaginations were set free. When we surround ourselves with nature, allow ourselves to be intentionally attentive and stop to notice the small things, we hear God whispering his expansive creativity to us.

As a volunteer at St Paul's and St George's (Ps & Gs) Church, Edinburgh, I lead a Caring for Creation team that serves to help our church to respond to the climate crisis and embed environmental thinking into its ministry. One way I have done this is by working with our Director of Children's Ministry, Rachel Cooney, to run monthly sessions of Mossy Church for the children. Mossy Church is sometimes used to describe outdoor church specifically for children, but is synonymous with Forest Church, Muddy Church, Wild Church and no doubt many other variations. The term 'mossy' suited our version of outdoor church, as we do not have access to a forest in the middle of Edinburgh city centre. On the contrary, one of the two garden spaces owned by Ps & Gs Church was previously a neglected area of broken paving slabs. At first glance it seemed to be devoid of life, but in fact there were still plenty of humble weeds and mosses growing between the concrete slabs and the crumbling brick walls. Moss is one of the most resilient plants on earth — it grows on a huge variety of substrates, can survive extreme temperatures and is playing a critical role in mitigating climate change.[2] Yet moss is not only functionally successful — it is also incredibly beautiful. Traditionally, Forest Church involves participating with creation, rather than just doing normal church outside.[3] As we teach children during our Mossy Church Sundays about God's love and care for us, and about our need to love and care for his creation, we are surrounded by natural illustrations of biblical truths — the beautiful, abundant love and grace that God has revealed through his word, through the works of his hands and ultimately through the death and resurrection of his son, Jesus Christ. Our hope is that, by allowing the children to have the extra freedom that is offered by an outdoor space, they may remember more of God's promises as they learn, play and pray with all their senses.

The young people at Ps & Gs Church have enjoyed unleashing their creativity with power tools and paint pots during some of their Mossy Church sessions. Recently they were challenged to upcycle some junk and, while we talked about how humanity treats our world, whose responsibility

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[2] Neil Bell, *The Hidden World of Mosses* (Edinburgh: Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 2023).

[3] Bruce Stanley, *Forest Church: A Field Guide to Nature Connection for Groups and Individuals* (Powys: Mystic Christ Press, 2013), p. 12.

it is to look after the world, and how Jesus is constantly upcycling and renewing the rubbish within our hearts, beautiful and useful things were designed and created. These young people are grappling with their identity, with what it means to be a child of God, and with many more of the big questions of life. Our current youth leader, Jane Booth, speaks of the need for our young people to be given space to simply have fun, to be child-like as well as grown up, and to be free to ask any question they want — however big, small or seemingly silly. The world they are growing up in has been so full of serious things, including a health crisis, a cost-of-living crisis and a climate crisis, which in the minds of developing teenagers can naturally lead to heightened anxiety.[4] And thanks to the digital world that we carry around in our pockets, it can feel as if there is no escape from the need to scroll through filtered photos on social media. Removing ourselves intentionally from that, in order to chat round a fire on the beach, or dig in the soil of a garden, can provide the space that is so desperately needed to just be ourselves, whatever age we are. There is a deep need in our society for us to support and encourage one another at every stage of life, but perhaps most importantly when we are young. Having a foundational trust in God and his strength can be the starting point for growing encouraging and trustworthy relationships with one another. In rather the same way that moss uses trees as a support — clinging to the tree's bark by means of its hair-like structures — we must cling to Christ and allow him to support and nourish us (Jn 15.4–9). As we dwell in Christ, we are strengthened to reach out to nurture and disciple the younger generations of Christians within our church communities.

At a leadership training day that I attended not long ago, Rick Hill read extracts from his recent book about the importance of growing roots and wings both in ourselves, and in the disciples whom we nurture as Christian leaders.[5] He talked about developing authentic communities where we can be weak and vulnerable, where wrinkles are celebrated as proof of resilience through times of difficulty, and where we run the race with others, spurring one another on to run faster and further. This wisdom reminds me of the beauty of ancient trees that stand tall and strong, displaying their scars through deeply knotted trunks. It also reminds me of the interconnected

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[4] Josefine Rothe, Judith Buse, Anne Uhlmann, Annet Bluschke and Veit Roessner, 'Changes in Emotions and Worries during the Covid-19 Pandemic: An Online-Survey with Children and Adults with and without Mental Health Conditions', *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 15 (2021), 11.

[5] Rick Hill, *Deep Roots of Resilient Disciples: Principles and Practices for a Life of Lasting Faith* (Sandycroft: Timeless Publications Ltd, 2021).

nature of forest ecosystems, where trees, fungi and mosses exist in community with each other.[6] So far removed from a desert-like monoculture plantation, these naturally biodiverse ecosystems thrive on the complex interactions between differently adapted species. Rewilding is a concept that has grown in popularity in recent years, and its definition has been widened to apply to a whole range of contexts. However, it remains based on the ideas of trust and simplicity. Rewilding allows natural wilderness to thrive, by freeing it from the constraints and diversion of human intervention. Yet the outcome of rewilding is complex and diverse, as biodiversity blooms and ecological interactions are restored. Steve Aisthorpe uses this ecological term to describe how God works through his church[7] — as we trust in him and embrace simplicity, he can do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine (Eph. 3.20).

Simplicity is not an easy concept to commit to in a world so full of distraction and choice. However, we cannot shy away from the fact that Jesus called his disciples to leave everything and follow him (Mt. 4.19), and then went on to challenge the rich young ruler to sell everything he had (Mt. 19.21). The implications of this command for sacrificial living can make even the most frugal of us feel somewhat uncomfortable. As a parent I am fully aware of just how quickly young children learn to want things — especially bright, shiny, plastic things sold in plastic packaging. Rick Hill suggests that the biggest barriers to discipleship are comfort and consumerism. If we want to grow as disciples of Christ, we need to look outward and give up our individualistic mindsets. C. S. Lewis put it bluntly when he said that the truly humble man 'will not be thinking about humility: he will not be thinking about himself at all'.[8] There is no doubt that we shall all face huge sacrifices when we fully embrace the daily cost of following Christ (Lk. 9.23). However, instead of seeing sacrifice as the need for us to give up what we are already entitled to, perhaps we as Christians could start to see everything as a gift that God has given us out of his grace. When we think of our daily bread as a free meal, instead of something we ought to have by default, it changes our attitude to everything that we currently own or wish we owned. Ruth Valerio starts the introduction to her useful and practical book *L is for Lifestyle: Christian Living That Doesn't Cost the Earth* by asking the reader to imagine a place in nature where they have met with God, to see themselves as

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[6] Peter Wohlleben, *The Hidden Life of Trees* (London: William Collins, 2017) pp. 1–3, 50, 65.

[7] Steve Aisthorpe, *Rewilding the Church* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2020).

[8] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952), Book 3, Chapter 8, p. 128.

participants in that area of God's creation, and to ask God to fill them with love for that area.[9] When we start small, and from a place of love rather than duty, we can gradually move towards big changes in our lives.

In his book *Planetwise: Dare to Care for God's World*, Dave Bookless speaks of his vision for churches to become 'pinpoints of light in a time of growing environmental darkness'.[10] He goes on to say that 'harmonious relationships with one another, God and creation could be the key to transforming our whole culture. People are increasingly disillusioned with the empty rewards of consumerism and escapism. Millions are seeking a more authentic way of life'. We need a spiritual and cultural transformation if we are to fix the top environmental problems facing our world — not biodiversity loss or climate change, but selfishness, greed and apathy.[11]

Therefore, although we still need the vital knowledge of scientists, economists, politicians and teachers, we also increasingly need wise Christian leaders to help grow a renewed world of sustainable and supportive communities. Schumacher put it succinctly 50 years ago when he said that 'more education can help us only if it produces more wisdom'.[12] I long to see Christians at the forefront of a widespread culture change, where an understanding of the grace of God and the redemption of all that he has created flows naturally into new attitudes towards sustainable living. The church cannot be interested in the environment simply because it is trendy and attractive to young people, nor can it see the environment as a side issue to be kept in a box labelled 'eco'. Instead, it is a core part of our faith in a creator and redeemer God, who loved all that he made enough to send his son to die for it (Jn 3.16). When we expand our view of Jesus from a 'pocket-size eternal insurance policy' to 'Lord of all creation',[13] we break down the barriers between ourselves as individuals, humanity, and the rest of nature. Suddenly we can get a glimpse of how big our God really is, and of how expansive our worship of him could be. As we live out these biblical truths

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[9] Ruth Valerio, *L is for Lifestyle: Christian Living That Doesn't Cost the Earth* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2019), pp. xiii, xiv.

[10] Dave Bookless, *Planetwise: Dare to Care for God's World* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008).

[11] James Gustafson Speth, *The Bridge at the End of the World: Capitalism, the Environment and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

[12] E. F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (London: Blond & Briggs Ltd, 1973).

[13] Dave Bookless, 'How Big Is Your Jesus?', A Rocha Blog, 31 January 2015: https://blog.arocha.org/en/how-big-is-your-jesus/

and allow them to radically disrupt the culture within our churches, we can face change with faith and hope instead of fear.

Across Scotland, and across the globe, there are inspirational examples of sustainable communities undertaking practical and scientific conservation in response to their faith — for example, A Rocha and its many partners in action, and the work of Eco-Congregation Scotland, Tearfund, Green Christian, Operation Noah and the SEC's Provincial Environment Group. There are already so many 'pinpoints of light' in our increasingly gloomy environment — let's be encouraged to keep those lights shining and spreading.

As Christian leaders within the diverse variety of churches and workplaces that we find ourselves called to, let us give one another permission to think big, and small — to widen our view of Jesus to the ends of the earth, and to focus in on noticing the small, simple and seemingly unimpressive things. Personally, I am reminded to do this whenever I see a sunshine-yellow dandelion brightening up the cracks between pavement slabs. In times gone by, grass was often removed to make room for these beautiful flowers to be grown instead, and they were valued for their beauty and medicinal properties, not dismissed as a weed. Dandelions are also for me a constant reminder of resilience — the determination with which they grow, regrow and spread seeds for new growth is truly mind-blowing. There is little point in attempting to dig up their roots, because one inch of root remaining in the soil can grow a whole new dandelion plant. Their roots can penetrate to a depth of up to 15 feet, loosening and aerating compacted soil, and increasing the availability of nutrients for other plants — effectively doing the gardener's job for them. I love the way that their deep roots and floating seeds illustrate our need for roots and wings, so that, through our being grounded in Christ, the Holy Spirit can work in and through us, far beyond our expected sphere of influence.

Growing a renewed world in 2023 might feel like an impossible task, as we see the combined and multiplied impacts of wars, a global pandemic and ongoing climate change. We may feel that we have missed the boat, or find ourselves pointing the finger at past generations, other countries or lifestyle choices. However, as followers of Christ we are called to use all of our very being — our thoughts and ideas, our energy and actions — to love God and those around us (Lk. 10.27). We must therefore be continually challenged to do everything we can, instead of giving up, and to make a practice of hope.[14] When we allow our hope to be rooted in our faith in Christ,

[14] Katherine Hayhoe, *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World* (New York: First One Signal Publishers, 2021), p. 244.

and in the knowledge that his power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12.9), we shall grow wings of action and influence. As we strive for a deeper and more child-like trust in God, can we commit to walking a life of humility and simplicity — with fewer diversions and greater opportunities?

Christian Hope Grounded in the Earth and Cosmic in Scope

Jaime Wright
Assistant Priest at Old St Paul's Church, Edinburgh

Imagine the following pastoral encounter. You are sitting opposite a young woman in her twenties, who has been engaging with the church for the past year and is now considering the possibility of baptism. She tells you that spirituality is not new to her, yet during a period of grief she found healing in the experience of surrender that she understood as Christ crucified. She explains that previously she was following the spiritual practices of neo-paganism, and she tells you in particular about her relationship with the Earth and eco-activism. She feels that these practices had been beneficial and nourishing, but she does not know what to do with them now that she is becoming a Christian. Should she stop the practices? Should she now understand them differently, in the light of Christ? Or is it just a matter of using different names for the same thing — such as God, Goddess, the Divine, Mother Earth, Spirit or Universe? How would you have answered this woman, who was so eager to grow into this new faith, but unsure about what to do with the earth-based spirituality that had been very real and important to her throughout her life?

There are, of course, many possible answers that may be given, depending on the knowledge, experience and disposition of the person who is offering pastoral care and spiritual direction. In the light of the growing popularity of earth-based spiritualities, this article offers an example of one potential path that could be taken in response to those seeking spiritualities that enable them to address the ecological crises of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss that face us. I shall first consider examples of the intermingling of neo-pagan and earth-based spiritualities with Christian theology and praxis, and show that such intermingling is not uncommon. Next, I shall examine in depth one spiritual pathway — that of Goddess worship and witchcraft — to draw out earth-based beliefs and practices. Then I shall explore two Christological approaches that find resonance with earth-based spiritualities, namely deep incarnation and the cosmic Christ. Finally, I shall weave together these Christologies and earth-based spirituality to suggest a Christian hope — in the midst of ecological crisis — that is both grounded in the Earth and cosmic in scope.

At the nexus of Christianity and Neo-Paganism

In this article, I use the term 'neo-paganism' as an umbrella term that can encompass several traditions, beliefs and practices, regardless of their

length of existence or determined historical accuracy, and regardless of whether they are in some way a recognised or structured religion. Traditions that fall within this category might include paganism, witchcraft, Druidry and shamanism. Other religious terms that might be included under this umbrella are 'New Age' spirituality or 'new religious movements'. As a religious scholar, my approach to classifying people's religious beliefs and practices is to allow self-identification and labelling. When engaging with the research of others, I shall follow the labels used by that scholar, unless otherwise stated. It is also important to acknowledge that '[a]t the level of the individual, religion is not fixed, unitary, or even coherent' and '[w]e should expect that all persons' religious practices and the stories with which they make sense of their lives are always changing, adapting, and growing'.[1] This is true even for mainstream Christians. It is just as true for those sitting in the pews as it is for those at the altar or in the pulpit. This is not to deny the work of definitional boundaries, doctrinal statements or theologians, but rather to acknowledge, alongside that work, that spiritual meaning-making is personal and irreducibly complex.

The long and winding history of intermingling between science, religion and magick (spelled with a k to distinguish it from stage magic) is beyond the scope of this article.[2] Therefore I shall mention only a few examples of literature, studies and practices at the intersection of neo-paganism and Christianity in Europe and North America. The first is the anthology of prayers, hymns, incantations, work songs, charms and cures collected in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland by Alexander Carmichael, and known as the *Carmina Gadelica*.[3] In this anthology one finds, for example, entries relating to the seasons, the moon and the sun, creatures, plants and fairies alongside entries relating to trinitarianism, saints, the Virgin Mary and the sacraments of the church. Although Carmichael and the *Carmina Gadelica* are not without their critics, these religious texts suggest

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[1] Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). For further information about lived experience in social research, see: Dina Abbott and Gordon Wilson, *The Lived Experience of Climate Change: Knowledge, Science and Public Action* (Cham: Springer, 2015); Jaime Wright, *Atwood, Ecology, and Spirit: Literary Approaches to Science and Religion* (Claremont CA: Claremont Press, 2023).

[2] For an attempt to do so, see Chris Gosden, *The History of Magic: From Alchemy to Witchcraft, from the Ice Age to the Present* (London: Penguin Books, 2020).

[3] Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns & Incantations. Collected in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in the Last Century* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2006).

a blending of pagan and Christian imagery. The influence of the *Carmina* can be seen in more recent publications that depend heavily upon the collection.[4]

An example of current engagement with neo-paganism by practising Christians is evidenced by the gathering of Forest Churches. In 2016, Paul Cudby published *The Shaken Path: A Christian Priest's Exploration of Modern Pagan Belief and Practice.* [5] His account touches on Wicca, witchcraft, Druidry, animism, panpsychism, shamanism and heathenism, and it concludes with an account of his Forest Church as a place of interfaith worship for Christians and pagans. Although Forest Church can be taught, explained and practised with little or no reference to neo-paganism,[6] for those who have had any exposure to neo-paganism the integration of neo-paganism and Christianity is plainly apparent. Cudby's account is written from an explicitly Christian perspective, yet he is interested in listening to the lessons of nature that earth-based spiritualities teach us to hear and understand.

For some neo-pagans, their spiritual belief and practice are clearly distinct from Christianity, especially where Christianity is seen to be colonial or patriarchal in character.[7] Cudby's accounts reveal instances of real and deep distrust of Christianity and Christians within neo-pagan communities, usually because of historical or current persecution. However, some neo-pagans believe that their practices can align with any religious tradition. For example, Christopher Penczak, co-founder of the Temple of Witchcraft, teaches magick as a spiritual technique rather than a religion, such that one can speak of 'Christian magickal practitioners', who are usually trained in esoteric, occult or mystical traditions of Christianity.[8] Similarly, in response to the question 'Can I continue with my religion?', witchcraft teacher Juliet Diaz responds,

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[4] See, for example, Meg Llewellyn, *The Celtic Wheel of the Year: Christian & Pagan Prayers & Practices for Each Turning* (Vestal NY: Anamchara Books, 2020).

[5] Paul Cudby, *The Shaken Path: A Christian Priest's Exploration of Modern Pagan Belief and Practice* (Winchester: Christian Alternative, 2016).

[6] See, for example, Bruce Stanley, *Forest Church: A Field Guide to Nature Connection for Groups and Individuals* (Llangurig: Mystic Christ Press, 2013).

[7] See, for example, Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*. *Special 20th Anniversary Edition* (New York: HarperOne, 1999).

[8] Christopher Penczak, *The Lighting of Candles: Setting the Flames of Enchantment* (Salem NH: Copper Cauldron Publishing, 2020). See also Christopher Penczak, *The Casting of Spells: Creating a Magickal Life Through the Words of True Will* (Salem NH: Copper Cauldron Publishing, 2016).

> 'Most of the thousands of students in my Tierra Sagrada school and sisterhood follow a religion or have done in the past. Among others I have Catholic Witches, Jewish Witches, and Witches from voodoo religion. It's okay to have a religion and practice Witchcraft at the same time'.[9]

Goddess religion and witchcraft: earth-based spirituality

Despite the many different pathways that are included under the neo-pagan umbrella, I shall focus my examination of earth-based spirituality on Goddess religion (sometimes referred to as Wicca) and the practice of witchcraft. Furthermore, I shall limit my discussion to teachings by Starhawk and Juliet Diaz. Starhawk has an international reputation as a leader within witchcraft, Wicca, ecofeminism and environmental activism; her book, *The Spiral Dance*,[10] originally published in 1979, is considered to be one of the seminal texts promoting the public revival of Wicca and witchcraft. Diaz is an Indigenous seer, healer and spirit communicator who teaches witchcraft and is currently active and popular on social media platforms.

Diaz's book, *Witchery: Embrace the Witch Within*, is a fine example of a twenty-first-century introduction to witchcraft. It is short, accessible, useful for the uninitiated as well as for the seasoned witch, and it includes foundational information, spells and inspiration on how to integrate witchcraft into one's day-to-day life. It also ultimately focuses the reader on care for the Earth, which comes to the fore in the final section of the book. Diaz opens this section thus:

> Now, more than ever, the Witch within you needs you to wake up to help protect the Earth—our Mother, our home. Without our collective awakening the Earth cannot be healed. It doesn't matter how much or how little you do, as long as you do something to help heal and protect our planet, our Mother, from dying of the injustices she suffers in the world today. We are all children of the Earth, and we have a responsibility to return her love and keep her safe. I'm not trying to be dramatic here—I'm actually *being* dramatic. Witches, you're waking and remembering our purpose, our calling, here on Earth and it's time to answer the cry for help from our Mother that we feel within our bones [italics in original].[11]

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[9] Juliet Diaz, *Witchery: Embrace the Witch Within* (Carlsbad CA: Hay House, 2019), p 16.

[10] Starhawk, 1999.

[11] Diaz, 2019, p. 223.

This chapter then lists ten practical ways for witches to do just this in their lives, only one of which is exclusive to magickal practice. There are two important things to note in Diaz's book. First, she is teaching spiritual practices that she claims can be practised by anyone, regardless of religious belief or cultural heritage. This means that she does not outline many of the beliefs or the worldview of witchcraft. Instead, she focuses her core teaching on practices, called spells. Second, she does not provide social or scientific information on climate change, pollution or biodiversity loss. She assumes that the reader is already familiar with these topics, given the media's coverage of them. Her statement, quoted earlier, is all the motivation she provides for Earth care and activism — we are children of the Earth and it is our responsibility to love, protect and heal her. These are assumptions that Starhawk could not make when she first published *The Spiral Dance*.

The Spiral Dance is also an introduction to witchcraft and to what Starhawk refers to as Goddess religion. It contains significantly more exposition than does Diaz's *Witchery*. It is an academic book — providing, for example, a history of witchcraft and a glimpse into current practices. It is a spell book — outlining rituals, invocations, exercises and magick. It is a spiritual guidebook — explaining, for example, the worldview and beliefs of Goddess religion, and suggesting directions for future individual and collective practice of this religion. Starhawk has written multiple books on witchcraft, and has led and taught others in multiple community and educational settings. The ecological dimension of her understanding of witchcraft is most evident in her later work, *The Earth Path: Grounding Your Spirit in the Rhythms of Nature*.[12] I shall use these two books to outline the earth-based spirituality that Starhawk commends to those within Wicca or Goddess religion and those practising witchcraft.

Starhawk identifies the Goddess as 'the name we put on the great processes of birth, growth, death, and regeneration that underlie the living world'.[13] She 'is the presence of consciousness in all living beings' and 'the great creative force that spun the universe out of coiled strings of probability and set the stars spinning and dancing in spirals that our entwining DNA echoes as it coils, uncoils, and evolves'. [14] Because Starhawk teaches witchcraft as practice within the Goddess religion, she claims that '[t]o be a Witch (a practitioner of the Old Religion of the Goddess) or a Pagan (someone who practises an earth-based spiritual tradition) is more than adopting a new set of terms and customs and a wardrobe of flowing gowns';

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[12] Starhawk, *The Earth Path: Grounding Your Spirit in the Rhythms of Nature* (New York: HarperOne, 2004).
[13] Starhawk, 2004, p. 5.
[14] Starhawk, 2004, p. 5.

rather '[i]t is to enter a different universe, a world that is alive and dynamic, where everything is part of an interconnected whole, where everything is always speaking to us, if only we have ears to listen'.[15] Magick thus becomes 'the art of opening our awareness to the consciousnesses that surround us, the art of conversing in the deep language that nature speaks'.[16] Witchcraft, within this understanding, gains its ethics and values from Goddess religion, such that '[l]ove for life in all its forms is the basic ethic of Witchcraft',[17] and its core principles are immanence, interconnection and community.[18] Starhawk is of the opinion that Wicca and witchcraft offer helpful correctives to our society. For example, in contrast to a view of the universe as composed of warring opposites, a heritage that she believes comes from the Judeo-Christian tradition, '[a] valuable insight of Witchcraft, shared by many earth-based religions, is that polarities are in balance, not at war'.[19] She also claims that Wicca and witchcraft enable a more fruitful engagement between science and religion, for '[w]hen science and spirit are reconciled, the world becomes re-enchanted, full of wonder and magic'.[20] Eco-activism, then, becomes an integral part of one's spirituality and way of being in the world: 'Bringing our lives into alignment with the earth should not become a burdensome, guilt-filled project, where we are constantly in an unshriven state of eco-sin. Instead, we can think of it as a gradual, joyful process, where we look for the choices we can make that will enhance our lives'.[21]

For both Starhawk and Diaz, care for the Earth is an integral part of practising witchcraft or following Goddess religion. Both teach that we have a responsibility to care for the Earth. For Diaz, this responsibility is based on acknowledging the Earth as our common home and source of life. For Starhawk, this comes from a shift in worldview that sees the interconnectedness of all within the cosmos; this interconnectedness is woven by a thread of consciousness that is immanent to all and is the Goddess. Magick thus enables us to be aware of the Goddess and to work with her to enable flourishing of and within the cosmos, including the flourishing of the Earth and its components, cycles and life forms.

Christology: deep incarnation and the cosmic Christ

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[15] Starhawk, 2004, p. 7.
[16] Starhawk, 2004, p. 11.
[17] Starhawk, 1999, p. 36.
[18] Starhawk, 1999, p. 22.
[19] Starhawk, 1999, p. 218.
[20] Starhawk, 2004, p. 11. See also Starhawk, 1999, pp. 219–21.
[21] Starhawk, 2004, p. 36.

Rather than focus on the distinctions between Starhawk's Goddess religion and Christianity, I shall instead outline two doctrines of Christology which suggest that the earth-based spirituality found in neo-paganism can find resonance in some Christian traditions. Referencing these Christologies, one can affirm that earth-based spiritual techniques can indeed be shared across religious traditions, and in particular with Christianity. The two theological approaches to Christ that I shall be explicating are deep incarnation and the cosmic Christ.

Deep incarnation, drawing on the theory of deep ecology,[22] affirms that, in Christ Jesus, God took on not only the flesh of a human being, but also the very materials that constitute creation. Niels Henrik Gregersen, one of the first scholars to use the term, claimed that Christ entered into the 'whole malleable matrix of materiality'.[23] Incarnation understood in this broad sense refers to Christ sharing the depth and scope of the social and geo-biological conditions of the cosmos.[24] Different theologians understand deep incarnation slightly differently. Elizabeth A. Johnson helpfully expands deep incarnation to include deep ministry, deep crucifixion and deep resurrection.[25] Celia Deane-Drummond claims that, rather than understanding deep incarnation as either the spatial descent of God into creation or the ontological extension of Christ into creation, deep incarnation should be understood as the transformative and dramatic movement of God in Christ,

> at the boundary of creation and new creation, where Christ enters into human evolutionary and ecological history in a profound way so that, through the living presence of the Holy

[22] Arne Naess, 'The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary', *Inquiry*, 16 (1973), 95–100.

[23] Niels Henrik Gregersen, 'Creation and the Idea of Deep Incarnation' (Plenary Lecture, Louvain Explorations in Systematic Theology, 7, Congress on Discerning Creation in a Scattering World, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, 28–31 October 2009).

[24] Niels Henrik Gregersen, 'The Extended Body of Christ: Three Dimensions of Deep Incarnation', in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depths of Christology*, ed. by Neils Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2015), pp. 225–52.

[25] Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'Jesus and the Cosmos: Soundings in Deep Christology', in *Incarnation: On the Scope and Depths of Christology*, ed. by Neils Henrik Gregersen (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2015), pp. 133–56.

> Spirit, the history of the earth is changed in the direction of God's purposes for the universe after the pattern of Christ.[26]

This means that the sacramental presence of God is more than the ecclesial community; it can also include the community of creatures on earth. Thus, according to Deane-Drummond, deep incarnation is a call to humanity to 'act out of proper respect for the natural world and all its creatures', to 'build a community of justice, one that challenges humanity to reconsider its place in the natural order and behave in a matter that befits one of the most powerful actors on the world stage', such that we use our 'power responsibly, rather than out of self-interest, both within and between human communities, and wider than this in the community of other creatures'.[27]

The cosmic or universal Christ is very similar to deep incarnation in terms of its theological implications, and some might argue that a distinction is irrelevant. As a scholar who operates within the field of science and religion, I would classify deep incarnation as linked to ecology and evolutionary science, whereas I would classify cosmic Christ theories as linked more to physics and cosmology. Much current theology relating to the cosmic Christ is linked to the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French Jesuit priest and palaeontologist, and to his articulation of the omega point as the endpoint of cosmological development and the full realisation of Christ, or God, in creation.[28] Such theories seek to link evolutionary theory of ecology to the forces, cosmological constants and natural laws of cosmology. For example, Ilia Delio, in *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love*, a work heavily indebted to Teilhard's thought, writes of love as a cosmological force 'at the heart of the Big Bang universe, the fire that breathes life into matter and unifies elements center to center'.[29] Thus to be drawn into love is not only to be drawn into relationship and community with others, but also to be drawn into alignment with God's ongoing creative activity and into the very nature of God. Another prominent theologian currently writing on the cosmic or universal Christ is

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[26] Celia Deane-Drummond, 'Who on Earth is Jesus Christ? Plumbing the Depths of Deep Incarnation', in *Christian Faith and the Earth: Current Paths and Emerging Horizons in Ecotheology*, ed. by Ernst M. Conradie, Sigurd Bergmann, Celia Deane-Drummond and Denis Edwards (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 48.

[27] Deane-Drummond, 2014, p. 48.

[28] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Human Phenomenon*, trans. by Sarah Appleton-Weber (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2003).

[29] Ilia Delio, *The Unbearable Wholeness of Being: God, Evolution, and the Power of Love* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2013), p. 43.

Richard Rohr, who teaches that Christ is 'an eternal love affair' between matter and God as spirit: 'This divine love affair, eventually called "the Christ", has been unfolding and manifesting for about 14 billion years now'.[30] The Christ mystery — the essential unity of matter and spirit, humanity and divinity — thus becomes the template or blueprint for Creation, reminding us that '[t]here is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all' (Eph. 4.4–5).[31]

From the Christologies of deep incarnation and cosmic Christ we can identify theological foundations for earth-based spirituality within Christianity. Far from creation care being simply a divine command, creation itself is identified as divine by these Christologies. Within the science-and-religion field, these theologies of relationship between God and creation are often described as being 'panentheistic' (meaning God-within-all), such that the connection between God and creation is so deep that they cannot be pragmatically distinguished from each other (even if they are ontologically distinguishable). Furthermore, with the explication of deep incarnation and cosmic Christology, one can see resonance between Christian theology and Starhawk's description of Goddess religion — creation, incarnation, growth, death and rebirth. Is this the Goddess of whom Starhawk speaks — 'the name we put on the great processes of birth, growth, death, and regeneration that underlie the living world'?[32] Or is this the Christ, 'the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible […] all things have been created through him and for him […] and in him all things hold together […] he is the beginning, the first born from the dead' (Col. 1.15–18)?

Christian hope in the midst of ecological crisis: grounded in the earth and cosmic in scope

Now that I have identified resonances between earth-based spiritualities and the Christologies of deep incarnation and the cosmic Christ, I shall weave them together to articulate Christian hope — in the midst of the ecological crises we face — that is both grounded in the Earth and cosmic in scope.

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[30] Richard Rohr, 'The Christ is Bigger than Christianity' (Albuquerque NM: The Center for Action and Contemplation, 2017): https://cac.org/daily-meditations/christ-bigger-christianity-2017-03-26/ [accessed 1 November 2023]. See also Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope For, and Believe* (London: SPCK, 2019).

[31] Quotations from the Bible are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

[32] Starhawk, 2004, p. 5.

These thoughts are a drawing together of Christmas and Easter sermons that I have given at Old Saint Paul's Scottish Episcopal Church in Edinburgh.

When we hear the phrase 'God with us', we often think of the story of the baby in a manger, the story of God's radical unity with humanity. Yet the concept of incarnation, of God being manifested among us, is much bigger and much more deeply rooted than that event at that particular time and place. For God has been with us since the very first instance of creation, when God joined the Divine Self in unity with the physical universe and became the spark of divinity inside everything, from the tiniest subatomic quark to the largest galactic cluster. The incarnation, then, is not only about God becoming Jesus — it is also about the continuous opportunity to encounter God in other people, in a holly bush, in a robin or in the bright warmth of the sun on a cold winter's day, for ordinary matter is the hiding place of the divine spirit. Instead of speaking of God coming into the world through the baby Jesus, it would be more appropriate to say that the baby Jesus came out of a world which was already saturated with the divine. In the story of Christmas, we daringly believe that God's presence was manifested in a human being, but this unity of matter and divinity is not only within Jesus — it is also a unity within each of us, and a unity that runs deep into all the elements of creation. For ordinary matter is the site of spirit. The drama of the Christmas story brings home the immediacy of the spiritual — the wondrous in the fabric of ordinary existence. It is not only Christ who is the light bearer, for we are all bearers of light. At Christmastime we open ourselves to the hope that the divine spark — the light of the world — is within each of us and throughout the world. Such an act of profound hope can empower us to be that divine presence of peace with justice even in the face of age-old injustices and brokenness, so that the true story of Christmas becomes about each of us, together with Jesus, being incarnations of God's peace on this earth for however long it takes for this to become ubiquitous.

Creation and incarnation are bound together. Yet earth-based spiritualities and the Christian tradition also speak of the suffering and death within the cosmos, as well as new creation and rebirth — of hope in the midst of what seems hopeless.

Nothing that is read or performed in our great liturgies of Holy Week and Easter is meant to convince people that thousands of years ago a man from the Middle East was raised from the dead. Resurrection faith is not based on evidence, analysis or inference. Resurrection faith cannot be reduced to a philosophical worldview or a moral code. Rather, resurrection faith is a matter of worship and arises from experience which affirms that — no matter what — life finds a way. This is not to say that the Christian festival of Easter is merely another pagan ritual commandeered by Christendom, but rather that the link in the Northern Hemisphere between Easter and the

Spring Equinox reveals an awareness that the return to life from death is not inaugurated by any historical resurrection of a man, but found deep within the fabric of creation. The great mystery of resurrection is not only a sacred mystery of our faith, but also a mystery of the cosmos itself. The physical universe has been imbued with the Divine Self since the moment of creation. The incarnation of God in Jesus is a revelation of the incarnation of God within all matter. The mysteries of Holy Week and the great mystery of resurrection are held within this same Divine Self in all of creation. Each atom is suffused with divine love and life, yet is also suffused with the passion of God — divine love through suffering and death. Resurrection faith does not exclude death or doubt, but rather takes death and doubt into itself, because life and death both contain each other.

If we allow ourselves to step back from historical questions about Jesus's birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, we might be able to notice the witness of all things to the mystery of resurrection — the revolutions of planets, the recurring sequence of seasons, the cycles of water and nutrients throughout the Earth, and seedlings peeking up through softened spring soil. The impact of incarnation spans all of space and time. It is not limited to the body and lifetime of Jesus of Nazareth. It is so pervasive that resurrection is as undeniable as death itself. As we participate in the resurrection faith celebrated at Easter, may we release our fear of death and allow life to lead us to the precipice of newness that was already seeded into the life of all creation from the first moment in time. Christ has indeed arisen, and all creation rises with him.

Stepping Stones in Green Formation

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The call to adopt a transversal approach to creation care within theological education institutions (TEIs), issued in the 2021 *Report on the Environmental Consultation for Theological Educators*,[1] galvanised staff and students at the Scottish Episcopal Institute (SEI) into renewed thinking and action. Accordingly, within the 2021–2022 academic year, a number of pro-environmental interventions were piloted, both within the formal curriculum — modules taught and assessments set — and with regard to the community's ethos, shared behaviours, worshipping life and leisure. These developments in pedagogy, liturgy, use of paper and plastic, provision of default vegetarian meals and alternative travel arrangements have been described in an earlier issue of the *SEI Journal*.[2]

As the Institute prepared to evaluate that year's activity and plan further steps in consultation with its ecumenical partner, the Scottish College (Congregational and United Reformed), other questions in that report jumped out — questions about how change might best be managed, whose choices and voices should be included in the planning, and what structures would enable the embedding of a pro-environmental formational culture. How, in other words, might the 'profound interior conversion' of which Laudato Si' speaks be best effected in the lives of those preparing to be congregational leaders and change agents? Careful analysis of the two TEIs' pedagogical approach to creation care was clearly necessary if 'our present and future ministers [were] to be resourced theologically, missiologically and practically to live out an effective message of hope in this challenging and uncertain world'.[3]

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[1] Martin J. Hodson and Margot R. Hodson, *The Environment in UK Theological Education Institutions: Report on the Environmental Consultation for Theological Educators* (*07-08 December 2020*) (Gloucester: The John Ray Initiative, 2021): https://jri.org.uk/resources/the-environment-in-uk-theological-education-institutions/

[2] For further details, see Richard Tiplady and Anne Tomlinson, 'Greening the Curriculum: An Experiment in Integration', *SEI Journal,* 5 (2021), 83–96.

[3] Martin J. Hodson and Margot R. Hodson, 2021, p. 19.

Furthermore, the context itself is slippery. Ministerial candidates inhabit a 'place of […] multiple affiliations', [4] coming as they do from a diversity of backgrounds. Influences are many and their effects are unpredictable, the geo-political implications of creation care are variously understood and interpreted, and different churches have different takes on these issues, along a continuum from spiritual to managerial. Moroever, the process of ministerial formation itself is complex and dynamic. Within this tangle, the researcher assumes cause and effect at their peril.

A review of the extensive literature on the promotion of pro-environmental attitudes in higher education institutions (HEIs) revealed a consensus. Whole-system approaches to curricular design, variously described as 'transdisciplinary', 'holistic' or 'systemic', [5] were advocated in place of compartmentalised methods that observed disciplinary boundaries; 'build-in' approaches [6] were promoted, through which issues of

[4] Cynthia F. Kurtz and David J. Snowden, 'The New Dynamics of Strategy: Sense-Making in a Complex and Complicated World', *IBM Systems Journal*, 42 (2003), 462–83 (p. 467).

[5] See, for example, Alberto Bertossi and Francesco Marangon, 'A Literature Review on the Strategies Implemented by Higher Education Institutions from 2010 to 2020 to Foster Pro-Environmental Behavior of Students', *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 23 (2022), 522–47 (p. 524); Arjen E. J. Wals and Bob Jickling, '"Sustainability" in Higher Education', *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 3 (2002), 221–32 (p. 227); Norka Blanco-Portela, Javier Benayas, Luis R. Pertierra and Rodrigo Lozano, 'Towards the Integration of Sustainability in Higher Education Institutes', *Journal of Cleaner Production,* 166 (2017), 563–78 (p. 565); Rachel Shawe, William Horan, Richard Moles and Bernadette O'Regan, 'Mapping of Sustainability Policies and Initiatives in Higher Education Institutes', *Environmental Science and Policy*, 99 (2019), 80–88 (p. 84); Rodrigo Lozano, 'Advancing Higher Education for Sustainable Development: International Insights and Critical Reflections', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 48 (2013), 3–9 (p. 7).

[6] See, for example, Nikos Macheridis and Alexander Paulsson, 'Greening Higher Education? From Responsibilization to Accountabilization in the Incorporation of Sustainability in Higher Education', *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 22 (2021), 208–22 (p. 210); Gerald Dawe, Rolf Jucker and Stephen Martin, *Sustainable Development in Higher Education: Current Practice and Future Developments. A Report for the Higher Education Academy* (Heslington: Higher Education Academy, 2005), p. 30.

sustainability could be addressed across the gamut of taught courses, and praxis-oriented learning[7] was strongly encouraged.

However, although such literature urged holism, the underlying research was itself compartmentalised, focusing primarily on curricular design and delivery. This may be due to the tendency of HEIs to rely too heavily upon Newtonian and Cartesian mental models when undertaking research, 'relegat[ing] learning and action to reductionist thinking and mechanistic interpretation'.[8] The research team sought instead a method that would widen the scope of enquiry by addressing social, cultural and behavioural aspects as well as cognitive approaches, acknowledge the 'soft' organisational issues, and marry the qualitative with the quantitative. The method would also need to take account of the ambiguities inherent in the complex issue under scrutiny, adopt an adaptive approach to change, and avoid the forming of premature conclusions.

Because the team was dealing with *complexity*, it turned to the work of the Cynefin Company,[9] an action research and development hub in which David Snowden and colleagues have for many years studied complexity and its effects within organisations and human situations.[10] Cynefin® has

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[7] Katja Stuerzenhofecker, Rebecca O'Loughlin and Simon Smith, 'Sustainability in the Theology Curriculum', in *Sustainability Education. Perspectives and Practice across Higher Education,* ed. by Paula Jones, David Selby and Stephen Sterling (Oxford: Earthscan, 2010), pp. 219–40; Arjen E. J. Wals and Bob Jickling, 2002, p. 229; Fred Glennon, 'Experiential Learning and Social Justice Action: An Experiment in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning', *Teaching Theology & Religion*, 7 (2004), 30–37; Mercè Junyent and Anna M. Geli de Ciurana, 'Education for Sustainability in University Studies: A Model for Reorienting the Curriculum', *British Educational Research Journal*, 34 (2008), 763–82 (p. 769).

[8] Rodrigo Lozano, Kim Ceulemans, Mar Alonso-Almeida et al., 'A Review of Commitment and Implementation of Sustainable Development in Higher Education: Results from a Worldwide Survey', *Journal of Cleaner Production,* 108 (2015), 1–18 (p. 3).

[9] See primarily *Cynefin®: Weaving Sense-Making into the Fabric of Our World*, ed. by Riva Greenberg and Boudewijn Bertsch (Colwyn Bay, Wales: The Cynefin Company, 2021); David J. Snowden and Mary E. Boone, 'A Leader's Framework for Decision Making', *Harvard Business Review*, 85 (2007), 69–76; Cynthia F. Kurtz and David J. Snowden, 'The New Dynamics of Strategy: Sense-Making in a Complex and Complicated World', *IBM Systems Journal*, 42 (2003), 462–83.

[10] Cynefin is a Welsh word, used here with its meaning of 'a place of your multiple belongings'.

devised and tested frameworks for thinking and practical tools that can be used to find a way through the undergrowth — that is, places where multiple systems are entangled. SenseMaker® is one such framework. Facilitated by technology, it offers a distributed platform for an ethnographic approach. Unlike the impact monitoring and evaluation survey-based research methods described earlier, SenseMaker® acknowledges that organisations are complex ecologies, the workings of which cannot be understood mechanistically or fully predicted. In these settings, 'where behaviours change in more irrational ways with less predictable outcomes, traditional IM&E runs the risk of cognitive bias'.[11]

Core to the approach is the notion that people make sense of their world by telling stories about their experience. SenseMaker®[12] enables the capture of a large group of narratives, from which emerge patterns and linkages for subsequent interpretation; from this in turn can come a sense of a possible direction of travel or the identification of possible beneficial interventions, or 'nudges'. The method recognises that 'narratives may allow better access to contextualised knowledge about behaviours and actions than questions and answers'.[13] Through these narratives, participants map their experience, plotting their coordinates in a wider landscape. These 'subjects' in the research are the experts in the system, recording their experience and also reflecting on it; the researcher does not have a hypothesis or goal, but becomes a listener and a co-explorer.

This disclosive and descriptive approach appealed to the research team, with its 'null-hypothesis' starting point and abductive reasoning

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[11] Adinda Van Hemelrijck and Zhen Goh, 'Methodological Reflections on the Use of SenseMaker® for Impact M&E of Adaptation in the Mekong Delta', *IFAD and Cognitive Edge,* https://collabimpact.org/publications [accessed 12 March 2023], p. 4.

[12] For more about the framework, see David J. Snowden, 'Naturalizing Sensemaking', in *Informed by Knowledge: Expert Performance in Complex Situations*, ed. by Kathleen L. Mosier and Ute M. Fischer (New York: Psychology Press, 2011), pp. 223–34; David Snowden, 'Story Telling: An Old Skill in a New Context', *Business Information Review*, 16 (1999), 30–37.

[13] Steff Deprez and Irene Guijt, 'Can Voices at Scale Really Be Heard? Reflections from Ten Years of Innovation with SenseMaker', in *The Sage Handbook of Participatory Research and Inquiry*, ed. by Danny Burns, Jo Howard and Sonia M. Ospina (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2021), pp. 889–904.

encouraging them to remain open, curious and 'surprise-seeking' [14] throughout the process, rather than steering the data to fit preconceived outcomes. The pluralistic and participatory nature of the research method was another positive factor, requiring that the project's stakeholders — students from SEI and the Scottish College — be involved not only in the data collection but also in the interpretation phase. 'With SenseMaker, all voices count', [15] and this process of 'disintermediation' is both challenging and exciting.[16]

Guided by Cynefin consultant Dr Anna Panagiotou, the four-person research team designed [17] a process whereby students from SEI and the Scottish College were invited each week between Epiphany and Easter 2023 to recount a current environmentally related experience, entering this on a digital device using the SenseMaker® online data entry platform app. Such regular journalling was prompted by reflection on a mélange of images depicting creation in all its beauty and human-induced degradation, and the following question: 'Which part of the image are you most drawn to today?' Respondents were then asked to describe 'their feelings and responses or whatever comes to mind', and to headline that story with a few key words, a title or a hashtag.

The open-ended visual prompt was intended to enable respondents to share immediate lived experiences that were significant to them, 'rather than to generate evaluative statement or opinions. The narrative is not a lengthy account of the experience, but rather a selective and focused account of what happened',[18] as exemplified by the following micro-narratives:

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[14] Irene Guijt, Maria V. Gottret, Anna Hanchar, Steff Deprez and Rita Muckenhirn, *The Learning Power of Listening: A Practical Guide for Using SenseMaker* (Rugby: Practical Action Publishing Ltd, 2022), p. 23.

[15] Irene Guijt, Maria V. Gottret, Anna Hanchar, Steff Deprez and Rita Muckenhirn, 2022, p. 20.

[16] Cynefin's glossary defines disintermediation as 'reducing intermediary interpretation of data and information to put decision-makers in contact with raw data, rather than pre-analyzed insights': *CYNEFIN^R: Weaving Sense-Making into the Fabric of Our World*, ed. by Riva Greenberg and Boudewijn Bertsch (Singapore: Cognitive Edge Ltd, 2021), p. 27.

[17] One of them, PE, road tested a pilot project with two congregations in the Diocese of Moray, Ross and Caithness as the SenseMaker process requires; see Irene Guijt, Maria V. Gottret, Anna Hanchar, Steff Deprez and Rita Muckenhirn, 2022, p. 27. The data from this pilot are included in the overall percentages.

[18] Irene Guijt, Maria V. Gottret, Anna Hanchar, Steff Deprez and Rita Muckenhirn, 2022, p. 18.

Snow at the end of March

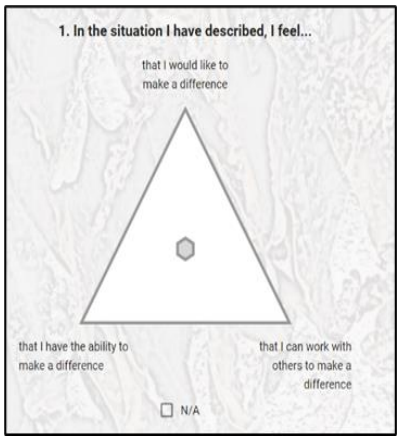
Felt really sad that on the day the clocks moved forward for the start of British Summer Time; it snowed as we were going home after Sunday service. And my child summed it up by saying 'snow at the end of March?' (Respondent A)

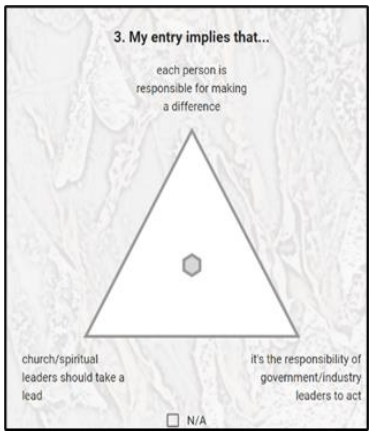
We are called to honour God in all creation

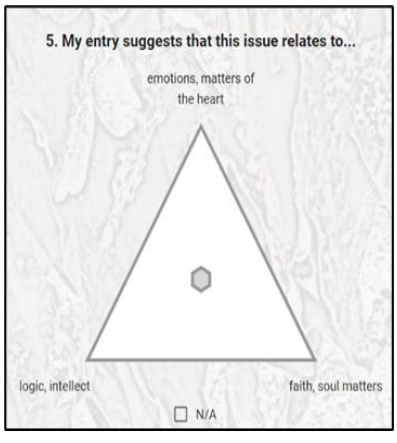
I attended an Affirmation of Baptism service yesterday. After the service, I asked one of the candidates (about 10 or 11 years old) what was memorable for him in this service. And he answered that it was actually making those promises, particularly the one that has to do with honouring God in all creation. That was touching for me. Issues around climate change are a big deal for the young generation. (Respondent B)

Respondents were next asked to describe the impulse behind their sharing of the story, the options given being that it had emerged from a recent conversation, had been read about or heard in church, seen in the media, experienced personally, or spoken about in their theological institution.

Following the telling and tagging of their stories, the participants were invited to convey the meaning of these micro-narratives in a process of self-signification, through completion of a few analytical questions in the shape of triads (examples of which are shown below). This process generates data for quantitative analysis.



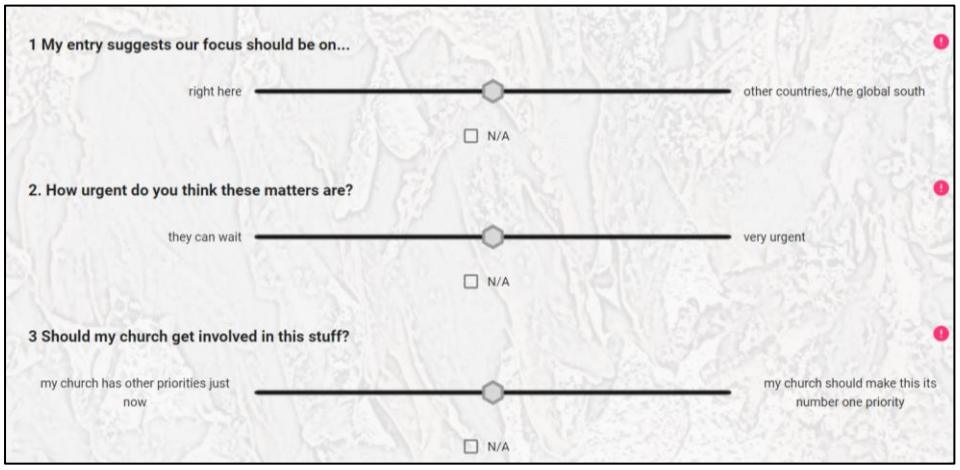




The triads tested the relative importance of three concepts by ascertaining how strongly each was present in a specific story. Participants were instructed to think about where their account sat between factors relating to

agency, attitude, influence, change and involvement, and then drag and drop a marker accordingly. The signifier questions related and gave significance to the narrated experience, and thus started with words such as 'in the situation I have described […] ' or 'my entry indicates, implies, suggests that […] ', reminding respondents that they were not being asked for an evaluative statement or general opinion. The method, which could be accomplished within 'the length of time it takes to drink a cup of coffee',[19] sought to reduce the likelihood of respondents gaming their answers.

In the case of the subsequent dyad or polarity questions (see below), which are a means of assessing one concept or belief along a continuum between two extremes, the participants were asked to think about what their story said about the focus and urgency of environmental matters, and the desired level of the Church's involvement, and then to move a marker accordingly on the sliding scale.



Some brief multiple-choice questions followed, eliciting categorical data about emotional tone and socio-demographic details, and there were two further optional questions relating to the Fifth Mark of Mission. Permission to collect, share and publish the data was handled by means of ethical consent questions.

The team then parsed the data, which were made available within SenseMaker® through visual, statistical and word cloud representation. They mused together on the patterns, pondering the dominant clusters but just as importantly taking note of the weak signals or outliers — small clusters of dots that are slightly divergent from the dominant patterns, and which hold the possibility of movement towards change and emergent practices. In accordance with the interpretative ethos of SenseMaker® that entails paying attention to what is seen in an inquisitive spirit of 'not

[19] Cynefin Academy training session.

knowing', the data shapes were studied by the team *before* they participated in any exploratory drilling down into the generative stories, thus minimising the researchers' cognitive bias and preventing premature interpretation. Following this by engaging in an iterative process of moving back and forth between quantitative data and the content of stories then gave 'those involved in analysing the data the context needed to understand dominant response patterns'.[20]

After this, all stakeholders together with staff from Eco-Congregation Scotland were invited to attend one of a series of a plenary sessions at which they too studied the patterns and pondered their meaning (though without access to the underlying stories), and considered what might be the next steps. Individual and collective reflections were recorded, and these were supplemented by suggestions for future action which were subsequently emailed to the research team.

In total, 101 micro-narratives were obtained over a period of three months, which is a somewhat underwhelming response to the task, the recommended minimum being at least 200 stories.[21] The data represent a handful of respondents engaging regularly with the invitation to journal, with others simply inputting at the beginning and end of the process, and yet others ignoring the task altogether. Because the researchers were themselves members of the community, they too have wondered and speculated about this paucity. Perhaps the enormity of the climate emergency challenge was too much for some to know where to begin; as one participant wrote, 'Why, what can we do as potential ministers?' (Respondent C). Or perhaps there was a sense that climate concern was already being added to the 'formal' curriculum — the material on which students are assessed and graded — and could therefore be put to one side. Or maybe the most effective ways to help people to make connections had not been found — this being the very 'wicked issue' that the research addresses.

However, for those who did engage routinely, the act of regular journalling proved valuable:

> It leads to change; it wasn't just an exercise to do within ten minutes of your own week and then just go back to your daily life. It actually got you to think about it, prayerfully and

[20] Franziska Mager, Becca Smith and Irene Guijt, *How Decent Is Decent Work? Using SenseMaker to Understand Workers' Experiences* (Oxford: Oxfam GB, 2018), p. 15.

[21] Franziska Mager, Becca Smith and Irene Guijt, 2018, p. 16; see also Steff Deprez and Irene Guijt, 2022, p. 23.

> intellectually, and think 'well right, this is what it means to me this week; how can I make a difference?' I'm not saying they were major differences, but it certainly made me change. (Respondent D)

With such a small number of responses, the statistical validity of the data is questionable. Nevertheless, the team felt that there was value in pondering the broad patterns of experience produced, for 'patterns do not necessarily need a certain number of data points to provide useful insights'.[22] Rather they offer an entry point for exploration via the related text, giving rise to questions, suggesting avenues for further enquiry, and offering hints and hunches about where small wins might be effected. As the founder of the Cynefin Company has stated, the framework

> helps people to break out of old ways of thinking and to consider intractable problems in new ways. [It] is particularly useful in collective sensemaking, in that it is designed to allow shared understandings to emerge through the multiple discourses of the decision-making group. The framework is used primarily to consider the dynamics of situations, decisions, perspectives, conflicts and changes in order to come to a consensus for decision-making under uncertainty.[23]

And that, after all, is what the team set out to achieve — that the next steps on the journey towards embedding pro-environmental attitudes and capacities in the student body through the formation offered at SEI and the Scottish College should be discerned imaginatively, discovered collaboratively and determined collectively.

Sense making

In keeping with its awareness of complexity and abductive ethos, SenseMaker® sees change as an incremental, dynamic and contextual process, and not as something that can be fixed by a radical blueprint or the false promise of an idealised future.[24] The purpose of studying whatever patterns and narratives are collected is to gain a window into the evolutionary potential of the present — a better understanding of *now* — before seeking to identify the stepping stones that form the next steps

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[22] Irene Guijt, Maria V. Gottret, Anna Hanchar, Steff Deprez and Rita Muckenhirn, 2022, p. 135; see also Franziska Mager, Becca Smith and Irene Guijt, 2018, p. 19.

[23] Cynthia F. Kurtz and David J. Snowden, 2003, p. 468.

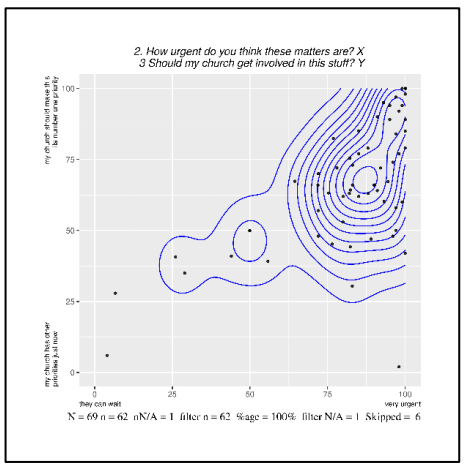
[24] See also Norka Blanco-Portela, Javier Benayas, Luis R. Pertierra and Rodrigo Lozano, 2017, p. 565.

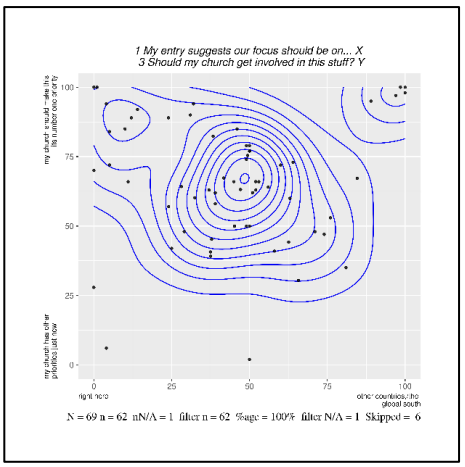
towards an improving future. The metaphor of journeying through mist, at ease with ambiguity, risk and negative capability, is one that permeates the approach of SenseMaker®.

It was in this spirit that the research team and stakeholders approached the data. After making some top-level observations about the generally upbeat tone of the feedback and the urgency with which respondents clearly felt that environmental issues needed to be addressed, they focused on looking at what was most surprising about the data. Two quantitative patterns in particular were intriguing, giving rise to varied and speculative interpretation on the part of the observers. These 'hunches' were checked against their generative narratives, yielding insights into the location and context of the data points, and then back again from the qualitative to the quantitative.

In each case the observers focused on the 'outliers'. These 'adjacent possibles' describe 'both the limits and the creative potential of change and innovation. [They are] a kind of shadow future, hovering on the edges of the present state of things, a map of all the ways in which the present can reinvent itself'.[25] Using insights from these data points, small interventions were suggested that would nudge the system closer towards the desired future, thus charting the next steps across the pro-environmental formational landscape in the two theological institutions.

Initial scanning by the project team of the data from the dyads indicated that, in general, respondents felt that the climate issue is very serious, that it is right here and now for us, and that the Church should make it a priority. This, it appears, is the context for the way in which they thought about the meaning of the narratives that they had shared with the data collector.





In the light of this, the team began to explore the nuances of the

[25] Steven Johnson, *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp. 30–31.

responses, in order to better understand what behaviours or characteristics might be 'nudged' or encouraged as part of a confident and coherent response to these challenging issues. As part of this, they began to explore how sets of respondents reacted to different choices.

Despite the view that climate issues were a priority for the Church, only 9% of respondents indicated (in Triad 3) that church or spiritual leaders should take a lead in these matters. Of these, seven respondents were SEI students and one was from the Scottish College. Two of them responded to Triad 5 by stating that these were faith and soul matters; the rest indicated that they were 'emotions, matters of the heart'.

The story fragments of this group indicated a reflective, wondering response and a deep faith-based engagement; there were references to the prophet Amos, to a cosmic Christ and to a loving creator, as well as to the Net Zero Action Plan. One respondent commented that 'it feels too as if the forest is not part of that sadness of alienation from God that humanity shares'. The respondents felt overwhelmingly positive about what they had written, and indicated that much of it was in response to personal experience.

However, none of these respondents indicated that they had the ability to make a difference (Triad 1, Agency), nor did they identify strongly with working with others to make a difference. Yet all of them carried the badge of aspirant/trainee church leader, and on the day of their response felt that the Church should be involved and that church leaders should be at the forefront. The challenge for the project team is to reflect further on what this possible dissonance might mean for people's understanding and exploration of leadership models in the context of church and in their own ministry. And perhaps there is also a need to ponder where a formal curriculum might respond — by providing opportunities for study and discussion, overt modelling, pointers for exploration during placements or other work — or where an informal curriculum might provide opportunities for observation and experimentation, skilfully helping to bring to the surface or uncover what might otherwise perhaps be hidden or unconscious.

Looking again at Triad 1 (Agency), a kind of reverse mirror effect comes into play. Around 11% of respondents felt on the day that their narrative indicated they had the ability to make a difference. Their narrative fragments were different in tone from those described earlier. In general they were shorter, mentioned God only once and were less reflective, but again personal experience was strongly identified as the source of the response. Although they also identified that the Church should make this issue a strong priority, none of them felt (Triad 3) that church or spiritual leaders should take a lead; their overwhelming feeling was that individual behaviour change would be the key component of a wider change. Nor did they feel that these issues concerned faith or soul; instead they tended

towards emotion and intellect. To clarify, there was no overlap at all between those who identified strongly with matters of 'faith, soul' (Triad 5) and those who felt they could 'make a difference' (Triad 1). There was a small degree of overlap between those who felt that they had agency and those for whom the issue was one of 'emotion/heart' (3/13), and the same degree of overlap between agency and intellect (3/14).

Both of the groups of responses described here seem to ask questions about the relationship between 'the Church', 'church leadership' and attitudinal change. Who could have influence? How might influence be exercised legitimately and appropriately? How might individual church members, or whole congregations, be encouraged to feel that they have the ability to make a difference? How might deep authentic faith-rooted engagement be articulated and mobilised to bring about that profound ecological conversion which is the aspiration of everyone involved in this work?

In terms of the 'agency' question, three responses in Triad 1 rested at a midpoint between *having a sense of personal agency* and *feeling able to work with others*. Two were explicit in mentioning hope despite the urgency of the issue — 'Many are looking for hope and a new beginning', and 'I continue to believe that people do the best they can with the information they have, so I can have hope'. The third entry spoke of 'hiddenness, wonder, questions, what is underneath'. Maybe this openness represents the most hopeful response of all, enabling engagement, and nudging commitment.

Openness to further learning is also evident in the responses to Triad 3 (influence). The fragments indicated first that the respondents were influenced by role models and the commitment of others; significant figures in the history of the environmental movement were named, as were young people. Second, these stories were uniformly flavoured by a 'questing', 'enquiring' or 'wondering' attitude; several respondents mentioned striving to 'do better' and a desire not to be complacent, and another mentioned a willingness to engage in 'challenging conversation'. Finally, the majority

made reference to the significance in their lives of gaining more 'information' on the topic, and of 'learning', whether through reading or participating in educational projects.

Thus, although the participants do not as yet recognise themselves as having a role as a leader or influencer, and seem ambivalent about their personal role as church leaders (despite being in training for such a role), there are encouraging indications that further learning will be readily embraced. This represents a real opportunity for the TEIs in question to plan a programme that takes willing people on a route to well-informed and confident leadership.

This not only suggests that the inclusion of environmental material in the formal curriculum remains a vital component in the holistic formation of church leaders, but also offers hints as to how this theological resourcing might best be delivered. It confirms the findings of a survey of students' recollections of the environmental interventions delivered in the 2021–2022 session, conducted at the outset of the 'Greening the Curriculum' project, that the most significant learning had come through 'the human stories, stirring people to empathy and outrage at the human contribution to climate emergency' (Respondent E). Two inspirational presenters who had spoken directly from contexts of struggle — from the Two-Thirds World and from marginalised parts of Scotland, respectively — had been particularly influential, as had the webinar shared with students from SEI's partner seminary in Brazil.

The SenseMaker® findings suggest that continuing to approach the delivery of environmental theology by means of a 'heart speaks to heart' approach might be a fruitful way to connect with those whose tendency is to approach the topic through a combination of 'emotions' and 'soul matters', yet whose stories evidence a yearning for further hard facts, learning and understanding. The challenge for the TEI, with any given cohort, is to get the balance right.

These findings, with their emphasis on 'accountability', 'promises' and 'commitment', also suggest that there is value in continuing the practice, conducted by SEI's Student Chapter, of continually reviewing — and renewing allegiance to — a formal Eco-Covenant 'that sums up what we believe and affirm, what we seek/commit to achieve, and what we hope for' (Respondent F). Such a statement, published in SEI documentation, signals the Institute's commitment to a green ethos, underlining the 'sense of commonality that we share in the community, of being a part of and taking responsibility for the actions of our modern lifestyle' (Respondent G), so much so that 'green issues now sit as a top agenda in our community life' (Respondent H).

The power of such institutional commitment to pro-environmental behaviour is propounded in several academic studies. Statistical analysis of data from 70 HEIs highlighted strong links between an institution's commitment to sustainability and the signing of a declaration, charter or initiative,[26] indicating that many HEIs 'increased their efforts to implement sustainable practices within their systems after signing a declaration', [27] especially when these are made 'public and durable'.[28] The SenseMaker® data suggest that the iterative review by Chapter of SEI's Eco-Covenant should continue to play an essential part in SEI's transversal approach to environmental issues, chiming with the need for 'deep and critical reflection on the worldviews, contradictions and tensions in the discourses and practices proposed by HEIs',[29] and thus helping to ensure value congruence between espoused and enacted theologies.

A second instance of the evolutionary potential of the present within the SenseMaker® data relates to nudges in the overall pedagogical approach that might be taken by SEI in future. Although 31% of the narratives offered by the respondents displayed a well-integrated mix of heart, mind and soul, emotions and faith were more strongly linked than logic/intellect and faith. However, digging into a cluster of 'adjacent possible' narratives indicated that these predominantly emanated from 'something seen or experienced', and related directly to embodied and emotional experiences, whether in relation to the beauty of creation ('walking in the woods', 'talking to trees') or reacting viscerally to wastage. Moreover, the stories were peppered with verbs ('tree-planting', 'rewilding', 'gardening', 'working with'), and the respondents displayed a heightened sense of the urgency surrounding environmental matters. Mapping this cluster onto the other triads indicated that these respondents were unanimous in believing that the earth's resources are shared in mutual dependency, were overwhelmingly positive with regard to the emotional tone of their stories, veered towards feeling that they could work with others to effect change, but were completely lacking in a sense of personal agency.

These narratives suggest that when teaching environmental modules to this passionate, activist and energetic cohort, an immersive and praxis-

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[26] Rodrigo Lozano, Kim Ceulemans, Mar Alonso-Almeida et al., 2015, p. 14.
[27] Alberto Bertossi and Francesco Marangon, 2022, p. 532.
[28] P. Wesley Schultz, 'Strategies for Promoting Proenvironmental Behavior: Lots of Tools but Few Instructions', *European Psychologist*, 19 (2014), 107–17 (p. 114).
[29] Isabel Ruiz-Mallén and María Heras, 'What Sustainability? Higher Education Institutions' Pathways to Reach the Agenda 2030 Goals', *Sustainability*, 12 (2020), 1290 (p. 15).

oriented approach would be helpful. William Kennedy's adage that 'we learn when our adrenalin runs'[30] is worth recalling here, suggesting that 'practical action learning [is] an essential element of the teaching process'.[31] Indeed much has been written about the transformative effect of direct rather than vicarious experiences of biodiversity, with authors maintaining that 'it is imperative that environmental education has a substantial field-based, in addition to class-based, element',[32] and demonstrating the positive impact of out-of-classroom learning on cognitive, affective, social and behavioural development.

Next steps

The embedding of environmental concerns into a TEI's formational programme — an endeavour that embraces heart, mind and soul — requires change first and foremost to be made at institutional level; the creation of an all-embracing culture of pro-environmentalism is predicated upon sympathetic structures and systems. Such hardwiring should begin with the discernment process, both in that which occurs before a candidate begins at a TEI and throughout the subsequent ministerial training. How, for instance, might such pro-environmental attitudes be woven into the matrices of formational criteria such as the United Reformed Church's 'Marks of Ministry'? Candidates in the discernment process should at the very least be clear that the shape of their future ministry will depend in part on finding ways to sustain resilience in communities affected by various aspects of this accelerating crisis. Applying the Five Marks of Mission to a TEI's curriculum

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[30] William Kennedy, 'Education for a Just and Peaceful World', *Religious Education*, 79 (1984), 550–57 (p. 556).

[31] Mercè Junyent and Anna M. Geli de Ciurana, 2008, p. 769; see also Fred Glennon, 'Experiential Learning and Social Justice Action: An Experiment in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning', *Teaching Theology & Religion*, 7 (2004), 30–37 (p. 32).

[32] Paul Knights, 'Virtue Ethics, Biodiversity and Environmental Education', in *Environmental Ethics, Sustainability and Education*, ed. by Estelle L. Weber (Oxford: Inter-disciplinary Press, 2009), p. 215. See also Jennifer R. Ayres, 'Learning on the Ground: Ecology, Engagement, and Embodiment', *Teaching Theology & Religion,* 17 (2014), 203–16; Forrest Clingerman, 'Pedagogy as a Field Guide to the Ecology of the Classroom', *Teaching Theology & Religion*, 17 (2014), 217–20; Graham Buxton, Johannes M. Luetz and Sally Shaw, 'Towards an Embodied Pedagogy in Educating for Creation Care', in *Innovating Christian Education Research,* ed. by Johannes M. Luetz and Beth Green (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd, 2021), pp. 349–75.

would likewise implant this typology of values in the institution's DNA, each Mark requiring particular learning, attitudes and competencies to be developed which could be mapped within the existing curriculum and assist in its development and design. The Fifth Mark would then take its place alongside others as requiring scholarly and behavioural attention from all staff and students.

Contributing to the creation of such an institutional culture is the individual witness of staff members; a report on an experiment in greening the curriculum in the Technical University of Catalonia described tutorial staff as 'the key actor in the curriculum greening process'.[33] As the 2005 report for the Higher Education Academy stated:

> It is important for tutors to involve themselves in exposing their lifestyle to student critiques as an important factor in successfully embedding education for sustainable development within a given subject area. Without such exposure, tuition remains abstract and the student fails to grasp the full meaning of sustainability.[34]

Given the emphasis on the power of role models contained in the SenseMaker® data, this issue deserves serious attention. Thought must thus be given to how the quotidian behaviours of TEI staff demonstrate the connection between God and planetary justice, instantiating every disciple's calling to 'proclaim the good news by word and deed and work for justice and peace, honouring God in all Creation'[35] with integrity and congruence.

Other methods of structural embedding that could be considered include staff taking responsibility for conducting a Carbon Audit of the theological institution's energy use, catering and travel-related activities, publishing these calculations in the budgetary summaries regularly considered by the TEI's governing council, and thus foregrounding institutional accountability and commitment; St Hild College has pioneered

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[33] Didac Ferrer-Balas, 'Global Environmental Planning at the Technical University of Catalonia', *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 5 (2004), 48–62 (p. 51).

[34] Gerald Dawe, Rolf Jucker and Stephen Martin, 2005, p. 13.

[35] *Holy Baptism 2006* (Edinburgh: Scottish Episcopal Church General Synod Office, 2006). See also 'We Will Demonstrate by Our Actions as Well as by Our Words How Much God Longs for the Healing and Wholeness of the World', in *A Service for Rededication Sunday Based on the Five Marks of Mission* (London: United Reformed Church, 2004), pp. 319–24.

such operational reporting to good effect.[36] The appointment of an 'Environmental Officer' with a strategic brief akin in scope to that of a TEI's Diversity and Inclusion Officer would be another valuable development in both pedagogy and practice. Faculty should likewise be encouraged to engage with Carbon Literacy training; indeed SEI core staff will do so in the 2023–2024 academic year.

The creation of such an institutional culture forms the seedbed in which robust teaching on the theology of the environment becomes core to a TEI's curriculum, not as an elective extra taken by 'the few', but as the golden thread running through all missional and contextual endeavours. Thus one of the two colleges has elected to teach the Common Awards module 'Sustaining the World: Christian Faith and the Environment' at Levels 4 and 5 in its 2023–2024 schedule. This module integrates biblical, theological, ethical and missiological approaches to the environment so as to ensure that *all* students have a robust theological understanding of the climate crisis in relation to creation, salvation and the Kingdom, equipping them to work theologically with congregations who are sceptical or anxious about their denomination's pragmatic Net Zero plans and targets. Imaginative ways of delivering this material immersively by visiting rewilding and renewable energy projects and by using 'committed voices', both from across the globe and locally, will be sought. However, alongside this, tutors in all disciplines will continue to be encouraged to seek out ecological readings in their particular subject areas, offering these in their booklists and helping students to become ever more hermeneutically astute in their critiquing of authorial motivations and agendas. Imaginative work across all disciplines on incorporating environmental perspectives into assignment titles and learning outcomes should also be attempted.

With regard to the student community's accountability, the SenseMaker® responses and scholarly literature underscore the value of such bodies creating — and regularly updating — a published Eco-Covenant. However, care must be taken to ensure that such an expression of commitment does not remain merely at the level of aspirational publicity, but is translated into action, with students listing and reviewing the practical outworking of such documents throughout the year, and holding each other — and the staff — accountable with regard to the stated aims. Such an exercise requires a formational community to listen well to the 'angular prophets' and disruptors in its midst, not dismissing them as cranks but allowing their discomforting voices and actions to be heard, respected and

[36] See Mark Powley, *Becoming a Net Zero Carbon College Webinar*: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hvj1dX7I7Es <at 25 minutes> [accessed 16 August 2023].

absorbed into the mainstream. Staff in particular have a duty of care to notice, nurture and amplify such voices, and, where necessary, to create an echo chamber for prophecy.

However, staff are not the only models for attitude and behaviour — students can exercise a profound influence on one another too. To this end, space must be made within the student community's self-governance structures for anxieties and scepticism to be voiced, questions to be asked, and challenges to be raised, thus banishing any tendency towards an eco-hegemonic attitude in the student cohort.

Likewise, much attention needs to be given to helping students to learn how to advocate for environmental issues within the 'climate-anxious' arena of contemporary ministry today, challenging the structural and systemic issues that contribute to the problem, naming the ways in which the Church relates to these, and partnering with other concerned agencies in addressing the concerns. As one student wrote in her SenseMaker® feedback,

> we need to be helped to reflect on how we can critically examine our relationship to agents and systems, as is the case with other social justice issues. Perhaps space to talk about these broader, more global questions? Or a discussion on the politics of this: is it appropriate for the Church to lobby, how we do we find a collective voice, how to connect with other groups praying and working for the same cause – something that points to the collective, remembering that we are only one community within local, national and global ones. (Respondent I)

A sustainability-related curriculum should indeed 'prepare students to reflect critically on processes such as media responses to climate change and how to motivate different social groups to take action',[37] and should help them to learn how to 'offer the support of the Church to politicians faced with short-term unpopular initiatives, a witness offered in trust'.[38] In response, one of the two institutions has committed itself in the coming academic year to address such issues of advocacy and change management with the entire cohort within the context of two Common Awards leadership modules and another on Community Development. Both colleges are also wedded to continuing ecumenical engagement in this area of common concern, drawing

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[37] Katja Stuerzenhofecker, Rebecca O'Loughlin and Simon Smith, 2010, p. 223.

[38] Personal communication, Reverend David Coleman, Chaplain, Eco-Congregation Scotland.

on the wisdom and expertise of Eco-Congregation Scotland, and working for the re-establishment of an effective national ecumenical instrument.

However, the data suggest that 'soul' needs to play an equal part, alongside intellect and emotions, in green formation, with as much attention being paid to environmental concerns in the ongoing life of prayer of the TEI's community as in the teaching and behavioural aspects of the curriculum. As the last student quoted wrote:

> In terms of habits, I'm keen to keep the practices we have developed so far — SEI Grove, meat-free meals, etc. — because they are good things to do. But the most effective habit-building we do happens in our daily/weekly cycle with our prayer, placement and study, so I'd look for ways to integrate this into those. Given that in our modules we discuss the effect that liturgy has on shaping our hearts and our language, is there a collect we can find or write that could be our 'community prayer for creation', printed on our prayer cycle? Something that is in line with Chapter's statement on climate change/justice. Perhaps this could be connected with our practice of praying for our friends at Centro de Estudos Anglicanos who are at the sharp end of this. (Respondent I)

Accordingly, an environmental meditation written by a United Reformed Church candidate and a 'community creation collect' created by an SEI student have been included in the 2023–24 Prayer Cycle booklet used by staff and students at SEI in their daily devotions at home, corporately whenever the community meets for prayer, and shared with the partner college in Brazil. Student groups should also be encouraged to lead outdoor worship where appropriate at residentials, and to continue to attend to the creation care criterion in all worship preparation and evaluation. These criteria advocate not simply the usage of appropriate liturgical material, but also the avoidance of overly anthropomorphic terms — expressions that betray an instrumental attitude towards creation — in worship.
Similarly, staff and students alike need to ask themselves whether

> there is any area of spirituality for which relationship with the Earth simply seems irrelevant? What festivals and practices encourage us to 'put the green stuff back in the box' rather than integrate our defining practices and traditions? Are there still things 'too holy to be green' or which are no-go areas because of our views of tradition and sanctity? And when students on placements encounter such pressures, how can they be supported through these experiences? There is no escape from

> the nature and climate crises. We should take care that the Church offers nourishing bread rather than an anaesthetic to the people. (Respondent J)

The question of agency, or the lack of it, has been of paramount concern in the study of the SenseMaker® data, together with issues regarding leadership. TEI students experience varying models of leadership within training placements, as well as within the staff teams. They will also have experienced church leadership styles in a variety of contexts, as well as styles of leadership within a range of secular situations; not all of these will have been comfortable. TEIs may at times organise students by teams, with leaders, for different learning purposes. What is formally taught about leadership models must enable the processing and exploration of this breadth of experience, such that students can integrate their own learned experience with their aspiration, and can chart a course towards their own appropriate style of ministerial leadership. This will incorporate influencing, service, modelling, pulpit, prayer, enabling, encouraging, directing, cajoling and accompanying, all in a person-appropriate mix.

This should be a clearly articulated outcome of a student's programme; there should be opportunities to practise and to give and receive feedback. This may be a cultural challenge within the context of a formational programme. Agency is of course about taking the reins, being *at cause*. Exercising leadership (of whatever kind, especially a service model) requires agency. It is about taking responsibility and making significant choices. Formation, on the other hand, is largely experienced as being *at effect*, as *being formed*, as opposed to form*ing*. Addressing this apparent puzzle is a key challenge for TEIs if they are to bring the very best of theology, pedagogy and behavioural science to bear on the issue of faith leadership in a time of crisis.

SenseMaker® is predicated on the belief that change is incremental; it suggests steps, not solutions, and direction, not blueprint. The 'Greening' research carried out by our two theological institutions was undertaken in just such a spirit of modest provisionality, offering stepping stones for the next phase of the journey. It would be instructive to carry out a similar data-gathering exercise in a year's time and see how factors such as the foregrounding of environmental theology in the formal curriculum, the inclusion of social action leadership teaching and the continuing development of a habitus of pro-environmental care — all being played out against the background of the ever more acute and urgent climate catastrophe — have shaped people's actions and altered their responses, forming them into intelligent thought leaders, courageous truth speakers, compassionate prophets of hope and effective change agents. It is hoped that evidence of such ongoing 'green formation' would indeed be adduced, for

'living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience'. It is at the heart of discipleship. Or, as Rowan Williams expressed it in the 2009 Ebor Lecture,

> our care for the world we inhabit is not simply a duty laid upon us but a dimension of life made whole: a redeeming activity grounded in the character of our own redemption, a revelation of the true 'face' of creation as we ourselves undergo the uncovering of our own human face before God. What we're asked to undertake is in fact a conversion — a turning — towards the truth: towards the God who is eternally active and giving in ways beyond our concepts, towards the hidden depths of who we ourselves are — and thus towards the face of the earth, seeing it freshly in its unfathomable interrelatedness.[39]

[39] Rowan Williams, 'Renewing the Face of the Earth: Human Responsibility and the Environment', 2009 Ebor Lecture, York Minster: http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/816/renewing-the-face-of-the-earth-human-responsibility-and-the-environment.html [accessed 9 August 2023].

The Disciplines of Environmental Advocacy

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Introduction

The theological study of creation and the ensuing duty of care placed on humankind has led to care of creation being recognised as one of the Anglican Marks of Mission.[1] This is now a well-researched field, including in my own context as a Franciscan, where not only the intuitive creation theology of Francis of Assisi but also the profound theological and philosophical insights of those who came after him, such as Bonaventure and Duns Scotus, have yielded a rich harvest.[2]

This paper addresses an area of creation care not so much written about — that of advocacy and related forms of action. Specifically, it reflects on the work of the Society of St Francis (SSF) brothers in Solomon Islands as they respond to the environmental degradation and human rights abuses caused by irresponsible clear felling and export of round logs from their islands. Care for God's creation is more than just tending what we have, and engagement in advocacy calls for those qualities of discipleship, justice and hope that are the theme of this issue of the *SEI Journal*.

The coral reefs and coconut palms of Solomon Islands may seem far away, but they are as much a part of our environment as whatever is closer to home, since environment is not something external, but the very world in which we live and are connected to each other. As I write this paper I am on one of my regular visits to Solomon Islands, and feel very keenly the frustration of thwarted potential in the environment of these 'hapi isles'. People are longing for adequate roads, medical care, education and electricity, but political corruption prevents even sharing of the meagre

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[1] www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx

[2] Recent Franciscan writing includes 'Franciscans and Creation: What Is Our Responsibility?', in *Washington Theological Union Symposium,* ed. by Elise Saggau (Washington DC: Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition of the English-Speaking Conference of the Order of Friars Minor, 2003); Ilia Delio, *A Franciscan View of Creation: Learning to Live in a Sacramental World* (St Bonaventure NY: Franciscan Institute, 2003). For an Anglican Franciscan perspective, see Simon Cocksedge, Samuel Double and Nicholas A. Worssam, *Seeing Differently: Franciscans and Creation* (London: Canterbury Press, 2021).

resources that exist, overseas investment usually favours just a few, and development projects often fail to bring about effective long-term change.[3]

In this paper I draw from the field of peace and conflict studies and attempt to outline some disciplines useful for environmental advocacy, hint at some related stories of these in action, and suggest that these disciplines and our identities as advocates can be strengthened by the use of story as a formative practice.

Logging creates conflict at multiple levels — for example, between traditional landowners, between landowners and logging companies, and between politicians and other interested groups. Advocacy adds further conflict, as it threatens the status quo and brings in further actors. For these reasons a study of conflict transformation can offer useful insights for those who engage in advocacy.

My specific question here can be summarised as follows. What can sustain advocates in their quest for environmental justice, and how can they engage with this task in a productive and healthy way? Ill-equipped engagement in contested areas can make things worse. We want our actions to lead to better outcomes.

We began our advocacy in Solomon Islands with much enthusiasm. Now, several years later, we are flagging. Other work presses on our time. It is hard to keep working at something when it yields little in the way of immediate results. We are aware, too, that logging is a declining industry. Loggers are working over old ground for the second or third time, but the negative impact on those areas persists. Logging companies are now turning their attention to previously neglected, smaller islands that are more difficult to access, while mining is emerging as a new and even greater threat. Our challenge is not just that of environmental destruction or human rights violations, but also that we ourselves feel powerless.

Solomon Islands and logging

The Solomon Islands are a tropical archipelago in the South Pacific east of Papua New Guinea, consisting of many hundreds of islands, mostly uninhabited. The population is estimated to be around 600,000, and with high birth rates and low life expectancy it is predominantly young. There is little formal employment, and the level of education is usually no higher than primary or perhaps a few years of secondary schooling, before financial pressure or difficulty in accessing education brings it to an end. Very few people have a tertiary qualification. Around 80% of the population live in villages, but large numbers drift to the urban centres, principally Honiara, in

[3] Edward Acton Cavanough, *Divided Isles: Solomon Islands and the China Switch* (Melbourne: La Trobe University Press, 2023).

search of employment, and in recent years increasing numbers of mainly young men, usually the best educated, have been employed as agricultural labourers overseas.

The population of Solomon Islands is 98% Christian, of whom 32% are Anglican.[4] Church membership is far from nominal. Every Sunday the churches are packed with large congregations, and on weekdays a significant number of people attend daily prayer services. The Anglican Church has four religious orders, and the highest number of members of religious communities anywhere in the Anglican Communion. The SSF came to Solomon Islands in 1970, as did the Community of the Sisters of the Church. The Melanesian Brotherhood, founded in 1925, works predominantly in villages, and the Community of the Sisters of Melanesia, founded in 1980, is organised along similar lines to the Melanesian Brothers.[5]

SSF has from its earliest beginnings in Solomon Islands engaged in mission in a variety of settings, such as parishes, schools, hospitals and prisons. However, around the time of its 50th anniversary the brothers broadened their field of mission from people to all of creation, as a reflection of the Fifth Mark of Mission and also of their Franciscan values. The need is clear. Logging and climate change are frequent topics of conversation, and are like two sides of the same coin. Logging is predominantly local in its environmental and social impact, but is connected globally through export of timber and the migration of loggers. Climate change is caused by multiple factors internationally, but its impact is strongly felt locally.[6]

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[4] Matthew E. Jones, 'Solomon Islands', in *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South,* ed. by Mark A. Lamport (Lanham, Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018),

[5] Matthew E. Jones, 'Indigeneous Churches/Peoples in Oceania: Anglican Church of Melanesia', in *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South,* ed. by Mark A. Lamport (Lanham BO: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), p. 00.

[6] Jan van der Ploeg and colleagues critique the discourse of 'sinking islands' as oversimplification of a complex range of factors: 'By emphasizing a new, external, and all-surpassing natural hazard, decision-makers mask their failure to address the root causes of people's vulnerability, such as poverty, weak governance, corruption, and inequality. After all, it is much easier to draft a community-based disaster risk management plan than to hold logging companies accountable, enforce fishing gear restrictions in remote areas, operate rural health clinics, or organize community committees to maintain water supplies'. See Jan van der Ploeg, Meshach Sukulu, Hugh Govan, Tessa Minter and Hampus B. Eriksson, 'Sinking Islands, Drowned Logic; Climate Change and Community-Based Adaptation Discourses in

Widespread commercial logging began in Solomon Islands in the 1980s. It involves the total clearing of whole areas of forest, leaving behind only the unwanted trees. It is not planned sustainable forestry in any way, shape or form. 'Pacific Plunder', a recent investigative series published in the *Guardian*, describes this well:

> For decades, Solomon Islands has been logging at an unsustainable rate. A sustainable harvest rate was calculated as 325,000 cubic metres a year in the early 1990s. In 2017 Solomon Islands exported more than 3m cubic metres of logs. Almost 7% of the country's tree cover has been lost since 2000, and the Ministry of Finance says that if logging continues at its current rate, natural forests will be exhausted by 2036. The country exported more than 2m tonnes of timber in 2019. This accounted for more than 60% of the country's total exports that year, according to *Guardian Australia* analysis, and the logging industry is one of the country's largest employers.[7]

The environmental impact includes loss of natural habitat, degradation of food gardens and fresh water supplies, and loss of bush areas where wild animals can be hunted, and where building materials and medicines can be found. Logging activities have profound social effects on village life, the most serious of which include drunkenness, gender-based violence and the sexual abuse of minors that results from loggers taking young women as 'housegirls'.[8]

Advocacy at an international level could not be undertaken with the resources of SSF alone, so we partnered with Franciscans International, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that uses local Franciscans to convey

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Solomon Islands', *Sustainability,* 12 (2020), p. 18. Adam Bobbette explores the relationship between geography and Christianity, specifically Anglicanism, arguing that 'climate change in the Solomon Islands is not only a physical process but a negotiation between new material realities and a Christian cosmos'. See Adam Bobbette, 'Priests on the Shore: Climate Change and the Anglican Church of Melanesia', *GeoHumanities,* 5 (2019), p. 554.

[7] Jeremy Gwao, Josh Nicholas and Kate Lyons, 'Pacific Plunder: Lush Forests Laid to Waste: How Pacific Islands Got Hooked on Logging', *Guardian,* 31 May 2021: www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/01/lush-forests-laid-to-waste-how-pacific-islands-got-hooked-on-logging [accessed 13 December 2023].

[8] Tania Herbert, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the Solomon Islands: A Report Focusing on the Presence of the Logging Industry in a Remote Region* (Honiara: Christian Care Centre of the Church of Melanesia, 2007).

concerns from the grassroots to the United Nations (UN). Our advocacy partnership soon increased to include the Catholic Dominican Network in Solomon Islands, as well as their NGO at the UN, Dominicans for Justice and Peace, and at a local level we included the Community of the Sisters of the Church.

Our initial analysis pointed to the violation of a range of human rights, including participation and consent of local communities on their customary land, the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the right to an adequate standard of living (including food, water and sanitation), women's and children's rights, and the impact of logging activities on climate change. These points formed a joint submission from our NGOs to the UN Human Rights Council UPR review of Solomon Islands,[9] and were then summarised in an advocacy paper.[10]

A number of the countries that we had lobbied included our concerns in their own submissions, and of our nine specific recommendations, seven were taken into these member states' own recommendations.[11] All except one were accepted by the Solomon Islands government.[12] A visit by our NGO partners in October 2022 and field research in six villages in Guadalcanal Island confirmed and quantified the findings of our earlier reports. We noted that 'concerns of affected communities are left largely unaddressed with

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[9] 'Human Rights Council, *3rd Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR): The Human Rights Situation in Solomon Islands, 38th Session (April - May 2021)* (Geneva and Honiara: Franciscans International, Society of Saint Francis, Province of Solomon Islands (SSF), Dominicans for Justice and Peace, and Dominican Network in Solomon Islands, 2020).

[10] Franciscans International and Dominicans for Justice and Peace, *Universal Periodic Review: Solomon Islands. Advocacy Paper: The Impacts of Logging Activities on Human Rights in Solomon Islands* (Geneva: Franciscans International and Dominicans for Justice and Peace, 2021).

[11] UN Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Solomon Islands* (Geneva: United Nations Digital Library, 2021): https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3935085?ln=en [accessed 13 December 2023].

[12] UN Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Solomon Islands. Addendum: Views on Conclusions and/or Recommendations, Voluntary Commitments and Replies Presented by the State under Review* (Geneva: United Nations Digital Library, 2021): https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3935699?ln=en [accessed 13 December 2023].

little confidence that future logging projects will be handled differently. Instead, the impact of logging threatens to cause irreparable harm to people and the environment they inhabit and rely on'.[13]

Our advocacy has taken us into areas of conflict — not only conflict between other parties, but also conflict in which we are directly involved. We see the disputes over logging and resources, and we hear of the use of economic pressure to make families hand over their daughters to the loggers. We also know that by engaging in advocacy we become part of these relationships of conflict. Observers may be neutral, looking on from outside, but advocacy takes us into the heart of conflict. The local members of our own religious communities are torn between the desire to do something, and the cultural pressure on them — as they are often younger people — not to speak out against traditional village leadership, at least in their own areas.

Moral imagination

John Paul Lederach, the Mennonite peace scholar and peacemaker, has written extensively on the art of conflict transformation. He draws on peace and conflict theory as well as on his own experience in places as diverse as Colombia, the Philippines and Nepal, among many others.[14] One of his insights is into what he calls the 'moral imagination', which he sees as a parallel to Walter Brueggemann's 'prophetic imagination'.[15] Both prophet and peacemaker are concerned with 'finding the voice of truth, ways to turn toward humanity in the fullest sense, and faithfulness to live in God the

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[13] Franciscans International, *The Impacts of Logging on Human Rights in Solomon Islands: Key Findings of October 2022 Community Visits* (Geneva: Franciscans International, 2023), p. 3: https://franciscansinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Solomon_Islands_ENG.pdf [accessed 13 December 2023].

[14] Some of his many publications include the following: John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1977); *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995); *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); *Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians* (Harrisonburg VA: Herald Press, 2013); John Paul Lederach and Angela Jill Lederach, *When Blood and Bones Cry Out: Journeys through the Soundscape of Healing and Reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[15] Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1978).

Creator's sustenance'.[16] This moral imagination stems from the creative act and has a 'quality of transcendence'.[17] He uses the term 'moral' not in the sense of moralistic, but rather as a 'beckoning to something great'.[18]

Lederach writes of his curiosity about the core 'essences' of peacebuilding: 'When held together and practised, these disciplines form the moral imagination that makes peacebuilding possible. The essence is found in four disciplines, each of which requires imagination. These are relationship, paradoxical curiosity, creativity and risk'.[19]

I shall now reflect briefly on each of these disciplines, offering examples of how they are found not only in the Franciscan peace tradition but also in contemporary Franciscan peacemaking, and I shall suggest that they are a useful tool for understanding and shaping our struggles in environmental advocacy.

Relationship

> Peacebuilding requires a vision of relationship. Stated bluntly, if there is no capacity to imagine the canvas of mutual relationships and situate oneself as part of that historic and ever-evolving web, peacebuilding collapses. The centrality of relationship provides the context and potential for breaking violence, for it brings people into the pregnant moments of the moral imagination: the space of recognition that ultimately the quality of our life is dependent on the quality of life of others. It recognizes that the well-being of our grandchildren is directly tied to the well-being of our enemy's grandchildren'.[20]

Francis of Assisi is well known as the person who intuited the relationship of brotherhood/sisterhood present in all of creation. He addressed all created beings as sister or brother, pointing to the God-given network of relationships between them and the relationship they bear to their creator.

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[16] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, p. 24.
[17] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, p. 27.
[18] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, pp. 26–8.
[19] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, p. 34. These disciplines are very similar and overlap with the three habits of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Difference course, namely 'Be curious, Be present, Re-imagine': www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/priorities/reconciliation/difference-course. See also Justin Welby, *The Power of Reconciliation* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2022).
[20] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, p. 35.

This understanding of relationship was key during the ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands between 1999 and 2004. Members of the religious communities camped between the divided sides, taking turns to lead daily prayer with each side. In time, as they built up trust and got to know the people on both sides, they were able to recognise the extended family connections and to make comments such as 'Your uncle's on the other side', thus helping to reduce the tension and lead the way to peace.[21]

Going back to our example of logging advocacy, it is possible to list many different parties and to map a complex web of relationships. These parties include everyone from the local landowners and others living in the villages to the overseas logging companies, local men who work for these companies, NGOs, government agencies, politicians, the companies that buy the timber and perhaps make flatpack furniture from it, and the people who buy the finished product.

If we map the relationships between all of these actors we can identify factors such as good or bad use of money, use of fear or pressure, sexual violence, environmental degradation, ineffective legislation, inadequate monitoring of logging, and so on. And when we engage in advocacy we place ourselves within this complex net, and in fact become part of it. And from within the net we are gradually able to work for change.

Paradoxical curiosity

> Cycles of violence are often driven by tenacious requirements to reduce complex history into dualistic polarities that attempt to both describe and contain social reality in artificial ways. People, communities, and most specifically choices about ways they will respond to situations and express views of the conflict are forced into either-or categories: We are right. They are wrong […] You are with us or against us […] People who display a moral imagination that rises above the cycles of violence in which they live also rise above dualistic polarities […] As such, this kind of imagination is infused with a paradoxical curiosity […] Paradoxical curiosity seeks something beyond what is visible, something that holds apparently contradictory and even violently opposed social energies together.[22]

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[21] Society of St Francis, Formation Conference 2010: *Solomons_06_SI_ethnic_tension.mp4*, online video recording, YouTube, 8 September 2011: www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL8PESPrcsA&t=8s [accessed 13 December 2023], Brother Lent's story, 2'23"–4'56".

[22] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, pp. 35–6.

Again, we see this in the life of Francis, as for example when he crossed the battle lines during the Fifth Crusade, after the conquest of Damietta in Egypt in 1219, to meet Sultan Al-Malik al-Kamil. Whatever Francis intended to achieve by this meeting, the result of his curiosity was a respectful encounter. It did not prevent the battle that followed, but the nature of his encounter with Islam was person to person, rather than ideology to ideology.[23]

One of the Catholic Franciscan sisters whom I met in Sri Lanka demonstrated something of this embrace of paradox. She and other sisters had left their convents to live in a camp of internally displaced Tamils. They adopted the same clothing as the women among whom they lived, forging a new way of being religious sisters and of creatively overturning expectations:

> An army captain who came with 400 troops one morning at 4am, a Buddhist who was ignorant of the sisters' Catholic identity, asked her (in English — he had assumed she was Tamil, although she was Sinhalese) why she was in this camp. She replied, likewise in English, 'because of the poor people. They have no homes'. The officer told her, 'Get out from this place, otherwise you will be with the bullet. The bullet will come on you'. She told him 'I don't mind the bullet'. Asked who she was working for, she replied, 'We are working for Jesus'. He asked her her 'nationality'. She replied 'Sinhalese', to which he told her (in Sinhala) to 'go back to Colombo'. The sisters remained in that camp for another year, continuing to be among the people.[24]

By living in this paradoxical way and avoiding — or rather creatively confusing — the expected barriers of status, ethnicity, religion and language, these sisters were able to transform their relationships into encounters which, by questioning the usual dichotomies, could help to lead to peaceful outcomes.

Returning to our logging example, of course there are some clear-cut rights and wrongs here. The sexual abuse, bribery and drunkenness are clearly wrong. However, we can also see the desire of people to have some

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[23] For an overview of recent scholarship and a useful bibliography, see Gerard Pieter Freeman, 'Francis of Assisi and the Sultan: Deviance and Normalization', *Religion and Theology,* 23 (2016), 57–75.

[24] Christopher John Masters, '"Instruments of Peace?" Franciscans as Peacemakers in Sri Lanka During and after the Civil War' (unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Otago, Dunedin, 2015), pp. 176–7: https://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/handle/10523/6521 [accessed 13 December 2023].

economic freedom — perhaps just enough to pay their children's school fees, perhaps some cash to buy a boat and outboard motor and so be able to take produce to the markets to sell, or perhaps cash to buy medicine or food. These are all good things to have, and the small amounts of money that come from logging can be significant at a local level.

We on the Franciscan side probably ultimately wish for an end to this extractive logging. However, we need to recognise the need for realistic goals and to live with some ambiguity — to have one foot in 'what is' while at the same time having the other foot in 'what we long for'. We also need to keep being curious. I hope we would long to sit down with each of the different parties and listen to them talking about their world. What are their values? What are their dreams, hopes and fears? What does a mother in a village, or a logger, or a company owner, or a politician, or a local village leader say about these? Lederach's words are a reminder to advocates to get out of the comfortable bubble of like-minded ideas and instead to listen and be curious.

Creativity

> The moral imagination takes form and expression through an act. While we might initially think of the space where moral and imagination meet as a conceptual exercise, in reality we cannot know this kind of imagination outside of concrete human action. Theologically this notion is found in the Word that becomes flesh, the moment when potentiality moves from the realm of possibility to the world of the tangible. In other words, the moral imagination finds its clearest expression in the appearance of the creative act.[25]

Creation can refer simply to the making of something, but it can also refer to the calling out of something new. It draws on imagination and can lead to solutions beyond what at present seems possible.

There are not many specific stories about Francis as peacemaker, but the texts that we do have show him to be one who responded creatively. For example, in his healing of the division between the bishop and mayor of Assisi he sent his brothers to sing the verse he had added to his Canticle of the Creatures: 'Praised be you, my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation'.[26]

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[25] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, p. 38.

[26] 'Assisi Compilation 84', in Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann and William J. Short, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents. The Founder* (New York: New City Press, 2000), pp. 187–8.

A modern example of the power of music is provided by the Franciscan friar Ivo Markovic, who in 1996 founded the Pontanima Choir and Chamber Orchestra from all the ethnic groups in Bosnia. He thus provided a way for people separated by ethnically driven civil war to come together to perform the sacred music of each tradition, even if some at first regarded it as the music of the enemy.[27]

To return to our logging example, there are two distinct needs for creativity. One is the question of *solution*. Logging has become an addictive drug, generating a small but significant amount of cash for some at the local level, and much larger sums for the elite. What can replace this? We have no easy answers, especially for replacement income sources that could survive in the distorted economy. And so for now we live with the frustration of advocating against practices that are associated with human rights abuses, but we are unsure what positive practices we could be advocating for, or how they could be achieved.

The other creative response that is needed is *means*. How do we engage with these issues? What would be the equivalent of Francis writing a song to be sung to the warring parties? As an example, it is possible to see that the brothers and sisters of our religious orders could incorporate song and drama into their existing mission programmes to the villages. Instead of blaming the politicians for their greed and corruption, perhaps we can also sing to them.

Risk

> The final discipline at the essence of the moral imagination can be described simply but requires heart and soul and defies prescription: the willingness to take a risk. To risk is to step into the unknown without any guarantee of success or even safety. Risk by its very nature is mysterious. It is mystery lived, for it ventures into lands that are not controlled or charted. People living in settings of deep-rooted conflict are faced with an extraordinary irony. Violence is known; peace is the mystery. By its very nature, therefore, peacebuilding requires a journey guided by the imagination of risk.[28]

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[27] David A. Steele, 'Christianity in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo: From Ethnic Captive to Reconciling Agent', in *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik*, ed. by Douglas Johnston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 125–65 (p. 144); David Little and Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 111–12.

[28] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, p. 39.

Violence can be so familiar that it becomes almost comfortable. If violence is all we have ever known, it is hard to step into the unknown of a peaceful world.

Francis of Assisi, in the few examples given here, did not fear stepping into this unknown. For him it was a fearlessness that came from total poverty — from having nothing to lose. The contemporary Franciscan stories presented here show a similar risk-taking attitude. With regard to our logging advocacy, we do not know what the future holds. The income from logging licences and bribes is such an addictive drug. Addiction is never an easy thing to end. We don't know what danger there could be from concerned parties as the status quo is challenged. It is what we need to be doing, yet we are also 'stuck' and need fresh energy for this task.

To circle back to the central question of this paper, what can sustain advocates in their quest for environmental justice? Or what is hindering that quest at present? Perhaps it is not the fear of potential risk, but simply the multiple demands on our time and energy. It can feel as if we are running on empty.

A way forward

Religious community life has at its heart a form of disciplined living. The four disciplines outlined here — of relationship, paradoxical curiosity, creativity and risk — can sit within that life and be developed as a framework to assist engagement in environmental advocacy or indeed any action in areas of conflict. One of the features of religious community is that newcomers are incorporated into the community through a process of training which includes not only formal classes, but also absorbing the community life in informal ways such as the sharing of stories. The life is thus substantially 'caught' rather than 'taught'. The descriptions of Francis and of contemporary Franciscan peacemaking described in this paper are examples of what can be communicated by story. This resonates particularly in Melanesia, where 'tok stori', the sharing of story, is the traditional means of communicating knowledge, planning events or forming relationships.

My vision is that we keep on telling these stories, letting the wisdom of the past inform our present, and thus enabling the stories of our elders to become our stories, too. I have often heard Franciscans reflect on some advocacy they have undertaken by positioning it in relation to Francis — 'I felt like Francis walking up to the wolf', for example. We can find ourselves, and our identities, in these stories, and they give us connection with our tradition, as well as inspiration from it.

However, advocacy is not just another programme or activity. Lederach points out the dangers of uncentred activism:

> The fundamental nature of stillness flies in the face of common notions of getting something to change […] The paradox is this: Stillness is not inactivity. It is the presence of disciplined activity without movement […] It is the platform that generates authenticity of engagement, for it is the stage that makes true listening and seeing possible.[29]

These words point to a form of contemplative engagement. This is action flowing from prayer — not just any action, but action that remains rooted in prayer, stillness and listening. It is action that draws upon the disciplines of relationship, paradoxical curiosity, creativity and risk. Our challenge is to grow in this disciplined way, so that we may sustain advocacy and it may bear the fruit of positive change.

[29] Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, p. 104.

Care for God's Creation: Discipleship, Justice and Hope

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Introduction: paradigms of economic thought and the environment

The notion of the environment in economic theory originated as concerns both about the limits of the natural environment in providing inputs (resources) and absorbing unwanted outputs (serving as a sink for waste or pollution), and about the quality of life, none of which were new to economic thought.

Environmental economic theory as it is today has its roots in the classical school, whose economists left a legacy of ideas that have now been reintroduced through the environmental debate. These ideas are mainly related to the notion of long-term economic growth in the face of the limits imposed by the natural environment, and then expressed as land productivity. Adam Smith believed that, in the long term, there would be a fall in the rate of profit, leading to a slowdown in growth and the arrival of a steady state. Malthus drew attention to the limits caused by geometric population growth compared with the arithmetic growth of production, since there was an absolute limit to land availability. Ricardo postulated that returns would be decreasing in part due to the physical limits of arable land, but mainly due to its decreasing quality. Technical progress could even shift the production curve, postponing the tendency towards diminishing returns, but not eliminating it.[1]

Both Ricardo and Malthus shared Smith's pessimism regarding long-term economic growth. Natural limits were postulated in terms of the amount of available arable land. Thus diminishing returns would inevitably occur in agriculture — the most fertile land would be used first, and limits would be reached as the poorest soils did not allow the same productivity to be maintained.

All of the economists mentioned earlier assumed that in the long term the economy would stagnate, as the profit rate would tend to fall due to the limits imposed by the natural environment, and they viewed growth as a temporary period between one stage of equilibrium and another, with the final stage represented by a steady state. John Stuart Mill conceived economic progress as a race between technical advancement and

[1]Claudio Napoleoni. *Smith, Ricardo, Marx: The Origins of Political Economy*, trans. by Jose Fernandes Dias (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2007).

diminishing returns.[2] However, unlike the others, he viewed the stationary economy as a good thing — a more elevated stage. By the time it was achieved, technological advancement would already have provided for a large part of human material needs, and humankind would then be freed to focus on the noblest activities, such as art, education and culture.

Until the end of the nineteenth century the study of economics was related to the study of ethics, and modern economics has its roots in the study of moral philosophy. In fact, Adam Smith was a well-known moral philosopher before he published *The Wealth of Nations*[3].

Around 1870, neoclassical economics began to develop, and this approach still prevails today. The labour theory of value was replaced by that of scarcity — that is, the value of a good was determined by its relative scarcity. As a result, both sides of the market — supply and demand — could be analysed at the same time. Economic activity was the result of the interaction between productive activity (determined by technology) and the preferences of individuals (restricted by their level of income). The neoclassical economists introduced marginalist analysis, which is the study of small or marginal changes.[4] This approach lends itself to the study of price determination and market structures. It is an abstract construction that was strongly influenced by the discoveries of nineteenth-century mechanics, making use of its methods, concepts and even its mathematical instruments. Its objective was to define the set of 'economic laws' that govern market activity. Thus long-term issues began to fade into the background.

The discipline known today as environmental economics, which began by focusing on the study of pollution, non-renewable natural resource depletion and conservation, population growth and other pressing environmental issues, is based on the neoclassical school of thought, and originated in the 1970s within the postulates of welfare economics. This is the economic theory that studies government intervention in the economy and in social well-being. It also recognised the importance of understanding, for example, ecology, ecosystem stability and carrying capacity. The environment was considered a public good (also called a 'free good'), which, due to its public nature, cannot have property rights, and consumption by

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[2] Eduardo H. Martins L. Scoville and Gilson Batista de Oliveira, *The Contributions of John Stuart Mill's Thoughts about Economy*: https://revistafae.fae.edu/revistafae/article/viewFile/7/7 [accessed 13 December 2023].

[3] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: printed for A. Strahan; and T. Cadell, 1776).

[4] Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics* (London: Macmillan, 1890).

one individual does not preclude consumption by another. Typically these are environmental goods, such as the air. Pollution is considered to be an unwanted by-product of the economic process — an 'externality' derived by a 'market failure'.[5]

In the real world, a whole series of major industrial pollution accidents from the 1960s onward, which resulted in serious public health incidents and significant numbers of deaths, caused societal environmental awareness to grow exponentially over the years.

A classic example of this relates to the long-term effects of synthetic pesticides, especially the spraying of DDT, which is now on the international list of banned pesticides. The publication in 1962 of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*[6] was a landmark in raising public awareness, as it documented the environmental harm that was being caused by the indiscriminate use of synthetic pesticides in agriculture, resulting in the poisoning of birds as the chemicals entered the food chain — hence the title of the book.

Another classic example was the tragedy caused by pollution of the waters in Minamata Bay in Japan with mercury-containing compounds in the late 1950s. Mercury accumulated in fish and shellfish, which were then consumed by the resident population, resulting in severe symptoms which became known as 'Minamata disease'. It was not until 10 years after the first cases appeared that this 'disease' was shown to be a neurological syndrome consisting of various symptoms of mercury poisoning. The most serious symptoms included sensory disturbances in the hands and feet, damage to vision and hearing, weakness, and, in extreme cases, paralysis and death, in addition to impaired development of unborn babies. At the time, thousands of people in that region were left with permanent injuries and many others died; approximately 20,000 people reported being affected.

However, the most serious example of pollution poisoning to date was caused by an industrial accident in the town of Bhopal in India in 1984, when a chemical pesticide plant owned by the American company Union Carbide leaked toxic gas overnight, killing at least 25,000 people and harming 300,000. This incident is considered to be the greatest environmental crime in history.

Many other grave accidents can be mentioned, such as the sinking of the Amoco Cadiz oil tanker off the coast of France in 1978, which at the time

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[5] See the seminal book by David W. Pearce, *Environmental Economics* (New York: Longman Group, 1976), p. 24.

[6] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (London: Penguin Books, 1962): see also www.economist.com/culture/2022/09/27/silent-spring-remains-a-rousing-call-to-action [accessed 13 December 2023].

was considered to be 'the largest loss of marine life ever', [7] the 'partial' meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania in the USA in 1979, the Exxon Valdez oil tanker spillage of 11 million gallons of oil in Alaska in 1989,[8] and of course the meltdown of one of the reactors at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in 1986, which still haunts us today due to the takeover of that power plant by Russian military forces during their invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.[9]

Growing environmental awareness since the 1970s and 1980s has led to heightened concern about the direction and sustainability of economic growth. The issue of the scarcity of natural resources has come to the fore, especially after the first oil crisis (in 1973–1974). In fact the debate over the limits to economic growth is one aspect of the worldviews that crystallised within the societal environmental movement, and which supported the emergence of environmental economics as a discipline in the 1970s.

Within the study of environmental economics, the school of ecological economics emerged as the most promising area, as it is based on a transdisciplinary approach that strives to use biophysical and ecological concepts both to understand the economy and, in particular, to trace policies and instruments for sustainable development.[10]

Herman Daly, a contemporary American economist and one of the founders of ecological economics, published a landmark book on the steady-state economy in 1973, in which he presented a collection of essays on the implications of the biophysical, social and ethical constraints to economic growth.[11]

Ecological economics points out that there are basic assumptions in the current economic paradigm that act against long-term sustainability and that need to be changed to incorporate criteria that promote and maintain

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[7] https://safety4sea.com/cm-amoco-cadiz-oil-spill-the-largest-loss-of-marine-life-ever/ [accessed 13 December 2023].

[8] https://darrp.noaa.gov/oil-spills/exxon-valdez [accessed 13 December 2023].

[9] https://world-nuclear.org/information-library/safety-and-security/safety-of-plants/chernobyl-accident.aspx and www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/chernobyl/faqs [accessed 13 December 2023].

[10] Robert Costanza, Herman E. Daly and Joy A. Bartholomew, 'Goals, Agenda, and Policy Recommendations for Ecological Economics', in *Ecological Economics: The Science and Management of Sustainability*, ed. by Robert Costanza (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 149.

[11] *Towards a Steady-State Economy*, ed. by Herman E. Daly (San Francisco CA: W. H. Freeman, 1973), p. 149.

sustainability. One of these assumptions is that there can be substitution between natural capital, or natural resources and ecosystems, and human-made capital, or technology. In other words, human inventiveness can replace the scarcity of natural resources or the impacts of pollution. Ecological economics refutes this assumption and argues that the nature factor is always limiting. Human inventive capacity comes up against the planet's natural limits and carrying capacity.[12]

In the current paradigm, the institutions and the established incentive structure deal only with short-term objectives and targets at the local or national level. Existing mechanisms do not promote global, longer-term goals. There is a case of inconsistency, as individuals, acting in their own interest, do not promote the greater objective of the common good and global sustainability and their own long-term interest.

The concept of development and its evolution: a view from Latin America

Economic theory makes an important distinction between *economic growth*, which is defined as an increase in goods and services produced by the economy, and is therefore a quantitative measure, and *economic development*, which entails a qualitative improvement that is expressed through quality of life.

Economic growth, as conventionally measured and conceived, does not always bring about an improvement in quality of life, at least for an entire population. The traditional concept of economic development, in which the primary objective is growth, has always been criticised due to considerations of a distributive and qualitative nature, but since the 1970s and 1980s it has suffered its most serious limitations yet, due to environmental considerations.

Observations of the economic inequalities between countries, mainly after the Second World War, prompted economists to think about the process of development, especially in the underdeveloped world. Up until then it had been thought that, in the free market economy, international trade would remedy these differences by promoting development based on the theory of comparative advantages.[13] Countries would specialise in what they had comparative advantages in producing (in terms of natural resources and labour), exchanging these goods on the international market for goods which they could not produce with comparative advantage. The

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[12] Herman E. Daly, 'Elements of Environmental Macroeconomics', in *Ecological Economics: The Science and Management of Sustainability*, ed. by Robert Costanza (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 1.

[13] Initially conceived by David Ricardo in 1817.

market would automatically allocate between nations, in just the same way as in a national economy.

The fallacy behind this reasoning is the same one that demystifies the invisible hand of the market within a national economy. Perfect competition is nothing more than an abstraction, and what actually takes place involves social and economic inequalities and, in global terms, the perpetuation of underdevelopment. Government intervention is a necessity in both circumstances, but as the ideology of unlimited growth is intrinsic to the modern economy and linked to ideas of personal freedom, it remains the mainstream.

This process was denounced by economists from the United Nations (UN) Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), particularly by Raul Prebisch and Hans Singer, [14] Celso Furtado [15] and Oswaldo Sunkel.[16] They claimed that development was something that only 'central' countries could achieve as long as the theory of free trade prevailed, due to the structural distortions that this system caused. Development along the capitalist model of the 'centre' was a utopia for Third World countries. Yet there was still no questioning of the style of development itself. The aim was still to achieve it as such, through the appropriate means of government intervention.

From then on, new ideas emerged regarding the concept of dependence. The belief in the reforming welfare state that would lead Third World countries to achieve development, as defended by the theses of ECLAC's economists, came to be criticised. Dependency was seen as something historical and structural inherent to the capitalist market economy, which introduced domination not only between nations but also between classes in the same nation. Criticisms were made of the lack of proposals on how to overcome this dependence and inequality, due mainly to:

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[14] André Nassif, 'The Center-Periphery Model and the Political Economics of the ECLAC: Yesterday and Today': www.anpec.org.br/encontro/2021/submissao/files_I/i2-8131f48c2e25cf8adf6a27037f6cd3cb.pdf [accessed 13 December 2023].

[15] Celso Furtado, *The Myth of Economic Development* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1974); *Development and Underdevelopment* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1964).

[16] Jean Henri Benoît de Mulder Fuentes, *Oswaldo Sunkel: An Indispensable Intellectual for Understanding the World of Recent Decades.* Interview conducted on 6 October 2014 at ECLAC's headquarters in Santiago, Chile: https://books.scielo.org/id/2p9rw/pdf/sousa-9786586221671-16.pdf [accessed 13 December 2023]; see also www.cepal.org/es/equipo/osvaldo-sunkel [accessed 13 December 2023].

- an inability to promote more egalitarian development at country level, both between social groups and in regional terms
- the occurrence of an unemployment crisis with simultaneous inflation
- the occurrence of a crisis in social services and the educational system, both of which are essential to the welfare state
- the establishment of an unsustainable level of waste of material and human resources, with overexploitation of the natural resource base and the environment
- feelings of alienation and frustration among a large part of society, leading to a crisis of cultural identity and values.

Development per se began to be questioned, and new ideas emerged about 'another' development. The term 'ecodevelopment', initially conceived by Ignacy Sachs, [17] was coined during the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. Development is admittedly no longer a linear process, to be followed by the peripheral, underdeveloped countries. The definition of development as an evolutionary process was debunked for the following reasons:

- It is not possible to generalise to a global level the high degree of wastefulness in industrialised regions, due to the physical limits of resources and of the assimilative capacity of ecosystems.
- The 'standard of civilisation' in many of the industrialised countries is no longer something desirable, due to ethical, cultural and aesthetic considerations — that is, considerations that pertain to the quality of society.

From then on, environmentalism emerged as a social and political movement, with the development of nuclear energy in the background, and its long-term implications regarding the safety of operations and the disposal of radioactive waste, besides the growing pollution of the natural environment by industrial activity and urban waste. The issue of depletion of the natural resource base and the possibility of its exhaustion came to the fore, highlighted by the Club of Rome's report 'Limits to Growth', which was published in 1972.[18] Hence the environmental movement brought with it a

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[17] Ignacy Sachs, 'Eco-Development: Meeting Human Needs', *India International Centre Quarterly*, 4 (1997), 337–50.

[18] Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers and William H. Behrens, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (Washington DC: Potomac Associates, 1972): available online at www.library.dartmouth.edu/digital/digital-collections/limits-growth [accessed 13 December 2023].

concern about the direction and sustainability of economic growth, quite apart from challenging long-standing notions of development.

These are questions of fundamental importance for the future of civilisation and of life on our planet. The environmental movement is concerned not only with ecology, the natural environment and conservation of nature, but also with the human environment, since the very survival of humanity and the quality of life of human beings are at stake. It strives for government planning and for society at large to acknowledge the importance of the environmental factor for the modification of a predatory style of economic growth and development that is focused on short-term goals, and above all for advocating a return to clearly established ethical principles in the exercise of both public and private power.

The concept of sustainable development has solidified in the decades since the 1980s, appropriating the qualitative nature of economic development and uniting it with the existence of a finite economy, subject to the physical limitations of the planet and the laws of nature, such as entropy.[19] This concept calls for coherence of the economic and social components of environmental policies and development strategies, leading to the understanding that sustainability is achieved by the interaction of three pillars — economic, social and environmental. It is a concept that links economics, ecology and ethics.

The World Commission on Environment and Development was convened by the UN General Assembly in 1983 (and was later renamed the Brundtland Commission)[20] to investigate the global nature of the environmental problems faced by humanity. In 1987 it issued the report 'Our Common Future', which diplomatically defined sustainable development as 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. It also made clear the need for international cooperation.

The Brundtland Report, according to ECLAC,[21] 'set the objective of meeting the simultaneous demands for an environmental protection agenda and for ensuring the development of developing countries', and was therefore instrumental in preparing the way for the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), called the 'Earth Summit', which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992.

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[19] See the seminal book by Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 316.

[20] Chaired by former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland.

[21] www.cepal.org/en/topics/sustainable-development/about-sustainable-development [accessed 13 December 2023].

At the Rio Conference the most important UN Conventions for the future of humankind were signed, namely the Framework Convention on Climate Change, [22] the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification. In addition, a Declaration of Principles on Forests was signed, which guaranteed states the sovereign right to use their forests in a sustainable way, in accordance with their development needs. This was especially important for Brazil, which had faced pressures to internationalise the Amazon. In 2000, the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was created to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, and to strengthen long-term political commitments to this end.

Also, in Rio an agenda for the twenty-first century was approved. This was Agenda 21, a planning instrument for building sustainable societies, on different geographic bases, which combined methods of environmental protection, social justice and economic productivity. To monitor the implementation of this Agenda, the UN created the Sustainable Development Commission. [23] The latter was also responsible for monitoring projects associated with the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which established 27 non-binding legal principles on environmental protection and sustainable development, starting with 'Principle 1: Human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. They have the right to a healthy and productive life, in harmony with Nature'.[24]

Despite all the optimism that was generated by the Rio Earth Summit's outcomes and its many accomplishments, its long-term results were deceptive, due to problems that have persisted up to the present day. These include:

- denial of the seriousness of the problems, and the belief that solutions will be easy to find and implement; this has lessened in recent years,

[22] The term 'Framework' is used because it is not a complete Convention, as it defines a set of general principles and obligations to be fulfilled, but leaves it to subsequent negotiations at the Conferences of the Parties to establish specific targets for the quantitative reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

[23] The Conference on Sustainable Development (CSD) held its first session in 1993 and its final session in September 2013. The CSD was replaced by the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development as the main forum for sustainable development issues within the UN.

[24] www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_CONF.151_26_Vol.I_Declaration.pdf [accessed 13 December 2023].

after the effects of climate change began to be experienced and documented, enabling the Paris Agreement to be reached in 2015
- lack of recognition that economic growth cannot continue indefinitely and that limits do exist
- denial of the impossibility of extrapolating the standards of living of the developed world, especially of the USA, to the rest of the world
- the impossibility of controlling technological advances (e.g., transgenics, energy technology)
- the lack of political will to reduce inequalities
- the lack of resolution for the establishment of mechanisms to maintain peace and economic stability
- the lack of an agreed code of ethics.

In September 2000, leaders from 189 countries met at UN headquarters in New York and approved the Millennium Declaration — a commitment to work together to build a safer, more prosperous and more just world, with eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be met up to 2015. Efforts to achieve the MDGs were considered successful between 2000 and 2013 — for example, infant mortality rates fell by more than 30%, with the lives of around three million children saved every year compared with 2000, and deaths from malaria decreased by around 25%. This unprecedented progress was driven by a combination of inclusive economic growth, better policies and global commitment to the MDGs. This success led to the negotiation of a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), now widely known as Agenda 2030, at the Rio+20 conference in 2012, calling for their convergence with the post-2015 development agenda, and making the eradication of extreme poverty across the globe the primary goal.

The societal environmental movement and the widespread acceptance of the concept of sustainable development, despite the many problems with its implementation, left us a very beneficial legacy:

- the recognition that care for the environment must entail ethics and equity in daily life; it is a societal and global problem, but the solutions will only be found if there is participation at individual and community levels
- the consolidation of community movements and the importance of the role of women
- the private sector's growing awareness of the problem, expressed by various initiatives at the global level which trickled down to the country level, such as the Global Compact, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, and the many ISO (International

Organization for Standardization) certifications related to sound environmental management that are now available[25]
- the importance of civil society and the growing role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
- the importance of faith-based organisations, such as the Christian churches.

Sustainable development and the Christian faith: discipleship, justice and hope

The essence of the concept of sustainable development is the acceptance of the fundamental interdependence between improvements in quality of life and care for the environment. One cannot survive without the other, for without conservation and care in the use of the environment there can be no improvement in living standards that will be durable for all of humanity. In addition, without the elimination of poverty it will be impossible to control or modify the short-term predatory use of resources that the need for survival imposes on human beings, especially in the Third World. It is also imperative to change the First World's superfluous production and consumption patterns, which are exported to the poorer countries, and which encourage so much wastefulness, particularly among the affluent.

Therefore, at the core of the concept of sustainable development are issues of justice — intergenerational, within social classes in the same country, and between developed and developing nations. These issues are of paramount importance both to ethics and to the Christian faith. Barbara Ward, pioneering activist of the environmental movement, expressed this role quite unequivocally when addressing Christians:

> When we confront the ethical and the natural context of our daily living, are we not brought back to what is absolutely basic in our religious faith? On the one hand, we are faced with the stewardship of this beautiful, subtle, incredibly delicate and fragile planet. On the other, we confront the destiny of our fellow man, our brothers. How can we say that we are followers of Christ if this dual responsibility does not seem to us the essence and heart of our religion?[26]

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[25] For example, ISO 14001:2015 Environmental Management Systems.

[26] Barbara Ward, 'Justice in a Human Environment', *IDOC International*, 53 (1973), 25–36. See also J. Ronald Engel and Joan Gibb Engel, *Ethics of Environment and Development* (Tucson AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1990).

However, until recently the most common interpretation of the human–nature relationship in Western Christianity was humankind's domination over nature, as if nature existed only to fulfil the desires and needs of people. This view, which is still predominant, was based on belief in the scientific method as a means of arriving at the truth, and belief that scientific advancement implied greater mastery over nature, which would lead to human progress.

Western Christianity to some extent followed this view of nature, as an interpretation of Genesis 1.28: '[…] Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth'. Nature was 'fallen', or represented the fall of humankind, and therefore should be forced into submission, obedience and the fulfilment of human purposes.

This belief has been questioned not only in relation to its ability to advance human society, but also as a theological interpretation of creation. Today Anglican theologians call on people of faith to act as God's stewards of the created world,[27] to safeguard its integrity, and to sustain and renew life on earth. Safeguarding creation implies living sustainably in our daily life by practising a different style of consumption (in terms of both goods and energy), one that does not promote superfluous production and wastefulness. Admittedly this is not easy, for this lifestyle is ingrained in our economic free market culture, mainly in the industrialised West, but also passed down to the elites of the centralised East and less developed nations. For decades the concept of climate change was dismissed — both by the capitalist oil-producing First World and by the centralised economies — as a political movement that had no real scientific basis. This was due in large measure to an aggressive campaign by major oil companies to discredit the science. It has plagued the efforts of environmentalists worldwide and of the UN to persuade the most polluting countries to reduce their greenhouse gas[28] emissions, and it has hindered the necessary preparation of countries in the global south for what was and is to come (by not providing funds for mitigation and adaptation). Now we are facing a climate emergency that may lead us to a point of no return. Ironically, this year at the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28)[29] the implementation of a Loss and Damage

[27] For example, this is the Fifth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion: Marks of Mission (anglicancommunion.org) [accessed 13 December 2023].

[28] Greenhouse gases reduce the amount of heat that is radiated back into space from the Earth's surface.

[29] The UNFCCC Conference of the Parties was held from 30 November to 13 December 2023 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Fund was finally approved, in an admission that mitigation and adaptation have failed.

Climate disasters are affecting both rich and poor. However, the poorer nations are not historically responsible for the problem, although they are often those most severely affected by it. Therefore the need for the oil- and gas-based economies of the industrialised world, as well as the rich oil-exporting countries, to face up to their responsibility with regard to the climate crisis is a question of justice. Since 1992 this has been one of the principles of the Convention: 'Common but differentiated responsibilities'.[30] As disciples of Christ, we must act both as communities of faith and as individuals to promote sustainable development, which means transforming the unjust structures of society, as in the Fourth Mark of Mission: 'to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation'. Christians have an important role to play in this effort to redirect development, in striving to change direction towards a more egalitarian, more humane and more ethical society.

Sustainable development therefore brings us hope — hope that, despite the planetary crisis we have brought upon ourselves by the misuse and abuse of nature and people, we might now find a path towards a better society, one that brings us closer to the kingdom of God.

[30] Despite great resistance from some developed countries, mainly the USA, it was agreed that the basic principle of the convention is that of *common but differentiated responsibilities*. This one principle establishes the need for all countries to share among themselves the costs of the actions that aim to reduce emissions. However, it is up to developed countries to make their first commitments, since historically they are the biggest emitters and have greater economic capacity to support such costs, whereas developing countries are the most vulnerable to the impacts generated by climate change, and they also do not have the resources to adequately address its adverse effects.

Centring Christ in a Christian Response to Climate Change: A Sketch of Opportunities

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Note from the author:
A friend challenged me to preach my first sermon at the age of 22. I was a one-hit wonder until I nervously stepped back up to the pulpit this year. A passionate group of us had been wanting to bring our church further on a creation care journey, and it had been suggested that we could run an evening or small group. I pushed back, arguing that surely if we were saying creation care was central to a Christian journey (which we were) then we didn't want to relegate it to the periphery. Because I had suggested it, I was given the centre of a Sunday morning gathering in Ordinary Time. Because I was nervous, I split the 12 minutes among two of my mates. I was not theologically trained, but I had been discipled in a church upbringing. I talked about the thing I knew, which was following Jesus. A few months later I heard some thrilling news. Our priest had been quietly challenged by what I shared, and now left the house at 5am to allow for a longer commute to the gym, on foot.

Climate change is a facet of creation care that desperately needs compelling theological resources. Ecotheology is a field which shows promise in creating a story that inspires action and compassion. This paper surveys broad trends within ecotheology and the concept of deep incarnation and the cosmic Christ. It then suggests where deep incarnation is in danger of missing the fullness of what Christian faith can offer to the wider world, and to the Church, particularly considering an evangelical Christian audience. It ends with an exploration of three examples where I think promising additions to this conversation are happening.

The challenge
Climate change is a salient example of creation care gone wrong — the actions of a few generations have altered the heat-trapping capacity of our atmosphere and the heat-reflecting and heat-absorbing capacity of the earth's surface. Overall temperatures are rising, and our climate systems are already experiencing increases in extreme weather events. This is changing the ecosystems — species no longer thrive, or even survive, as the climate conditions change around them. As sea levels rise, coastal areas undergo massive changes, ceding to the ocean or experiencing increased storm surges and flooding.

As well as affecting our flora and fauna, climate change also has profound impacts on humans — our local as well as global neighbours, and the generations to come. Climate change is an issue of injustice. Greenhouse gases have been unequally emitted, the most severe effects will be unequally felt, and nations have unequal histories of plundering resources to finance adaptation. Those who work in the industries that are particularly responsible depend on this work for their livelihood, and big corporations have spent decades widening their influence on decision-makers while reaping the financial benefits.

The climate crisis is a salient example of creation abuse, but it is more than that. Climate change will also exacerbate many social and environmental issues that the world is already grappling with, such as regional food scarcity, poverty and biodiversity loss. Some climate change is inevitable from our actions thus far. Because of the complexity of earth systems, we have a pressing timeframe before serious feedback loops bring us to a point of no return.[1]

The world needs all parts of society to be wrestling with this challenge. There is no doubt that this requires theological reflection. Scientific and technological advances have enabled this crisis. Many social, cultural and economic factors have contributed to the creation of the climate crisis and the inertia with regard to climate action thus far. Spiritual and moral factors are also contributing to the crisis. Christian faith needs to speak to ethics and sin, and to provide a compelling way of living in and through this crisis. Climate change is a justice issue, so it must be a theological issue.[2] Theological reflection is also needed because of the historical connection between the Church and the powerful nations, colonialism and extraction that have fuelled this crisis.

Swathes of Western evangelical Protestant Christians in the USA still struggle to embrace creation care and/or are caught up in culture polarisation or misinformation that denies anthropogenic climate change. The USA has historically over-contributed to the climate crisis, has more resources to invest in solutions and mitigation, and still holds cultural influence on a global scale. Therefore it is crucial that ecotheology is seriously considered for a US evangelical Protestant Christian context, and

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[1] David I. Armstrong McKay, Arie Staal, Jesse F. Abrams et al., 'Exceeding 1.5°C Global Warming Could Trigger Multiple Climate Tipping Points', *Science*, 377 (2022): https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abn7950 [accessed 15 December 2023].

[2] Celia E. Deane-Drummond, *A Primer in Ecotheology: Theology for a Fragile Earth* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2017), p. 1.

the places this context influences (including Aotearoa, New Zealand). Arguably, the fact we are facing such inertia with regard to climate action when such a high proportion of the global population identify as Christians, previously known for looking after society's poor as well as their own,[3] means that a more impactful theology of creation care is needed across the Church.

History of engagement

The Church has always had theologies of creation with some trinitarian thinking, but contemporary theology has shifted attention to include Christology, pneumatology, eschatology and theodicy alongside contemporary knowledge of anthropology and evolution.[4] Post-Reformation theology tended to have a narrow bandwidth focusing on a journey to a spiritual realm, unhelpfully separating us from the rest of creation.[5] Traditional ecology and theology had a gender bias, and there has been an effort in both fields to engage issues of justice and women's rights and perspectives.[6]

Ecotheology is an expression of theologians and the Church grappling with how to express a faith that is more caring towards the environment. One way of doing ecotheology has been to hold up biblical texts and religious traditions as being enough to stop the current crisis.[7] Christian tradition has resources that can (re-)engage the Church with creation care.[8] This approach tended to be anthropocentric, so there was a need to take all of creation more seriously.[9] One example of this was *Laudato Si',* Pope Francis' encyclical.[10] *Laudato Si'* drew on Christian traditions but inverted the

[3] Julian (Emperor of Rome), '22. To Arsacius, High-Priest of Galatia,' in *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, trans. by Wilmer Cave Wright (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1913).
[4] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 15.
[5] Dianne Rayson, *Bonhoeffer and Climate Change: Theology and Ethics for the Anthropocene* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2021), pp. 18–19.
[6] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 12.
[7] Rayson, 2021, p. 19.
[8] Rayson, 2021, p. 17.
[9] Rayson, 2021, p. 19; Roy H. May, 'Saving Nature but Losing History? Promises and Perils of Cosmic Christology for an Ecotheology of Liberation', *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 35 (2022), 542–60 (p. 543).
[10] Rayson, 2021, p. 17.

traditional dominion theology by focusing on earth as sister/mother, emphasising our relationship to earth as dependants.[11]

In response to the critiqued anthropocentric focus, there was a shift to a sacramental approach to the environment, where creation itself became the main text of revelation (cf. Christian scripture).[12] This theology of nature (cf. natural theology) was better able to engage with indigenous spirituality and other religions.[13] This included a method of creating grand narratives and 'new creation stories', which ran the risk of scientism.[14] Theology then shifted from exploring new creation theologies to interpreting scripture and systematic theology.[15]

In this we see a shift from being anthropocentric (focusing on human responsibility) to being nature-centric (focusing on the intrinsic value of all biological organisms), and then to a theocentric approach.[16] Rather than designating some of these theologians as archaic and others as cutting edge, this describes trends that explain the breadth of voices in the contemporary conversation. To use an evolutionary analogy, any theology discussed today has a heritage of equal depth; a more recent branch is not necessarily any more complex or advanced.

As ecotheology has shifted towards being more theocentric, there have been explorations of a Christological foundation for engaging with the environment.[17] One fruitful conversation has been about the implications of the incarnation. In particular, there has been renewed interest in a cosmic Christ to respond theologically and ethically to the environmental crisis.[18]

Believing in a creator God should affirm that we love creation as a gift.[19] However, Christian theology cannot ignore the incarnation.[20] Educating for ecological sensitivity needs to be modelled on Jesus and his attitude of noticing, tending and humility.[21] A strict sense of the incarnation

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[11] Paul G. Tyson, *Theology and Climate Change* (London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 79–80.
[12] Rayson, 2021, p. 19.
[13] Rayson, 2021, p. 20; May, 2022, p. 549.
[14] Deane-Drummond, 2017, pp. 13–14.
[15] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 14.
[16] Deane-Drummond, 2017, pp. 11–12.
[17] Rayson, 2021, pp. 20–26.
[18] May, 2022, p. 543.
[19] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 72.
[20] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 74.
[21] Juan Pablo Espinosa Arce, 'For a Life-Affirming Religious Education: The Inspiration of Laudato Si'', in *Ecology and Theology of Nature*, ed. by Linda

is God being in a physical body — Jesus, a single human being.[22] A broad sense of incarnation acknowledges that Jesus 'shares the social and geo-biological conditions of the whole cosmos'.[23] Theologians who use a broad incarnation often draw on the prologue of John.[24] For example, the Hebrew idea of 'all flesh' could refer to human beings (as in Ps. 65.2, 145.21) or all living creatures (as in Gen. 6.17 or Job 34.15).[25] If Jesus identified as the earth in some way, then we need to care for the earth regardless of affirming that God is its creator.[26]

Deep incarnation is an articulation of a broad incarnation used by theologians that captures the concept of the cosmic Christ. Deep incarnation and cosmic theology are grounded in scripture (e.g., Jn 1.1–5; Eph. 1.10; Col. 1.15–20) and Christian tradition (e.g., Irenaeus, Athanasius and Eastern Orthodox traditions).[27] God is creator and ultimate source, but Jesus is en-fleshed and so restores harmony between humans and creation as well as between humans and God.[28] Deep incarnation offers a compelling vision of Christ as liberator and saviour of the whole cosmos.[29] Redemption is needed for all creation, rather than a narrow human-centred release from sin.[30] For Celia Deane-Drummond, deep incarnation is important for practical ecotheology as humanity is invited to take an active role — that of following Christ and suffering in solidarity.[31]

Roy May surveys theologians writing on the cosmic Christ in his 2022 article.[32] Matthew Fox offered an early description of Jesus being God's divine wisdom present throughout the universe.[33] Wisdom is made flesh in

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Hogan, João J. Vila-Chã and Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (London: SCM Press, 2018), pp. 124–8 (p. 126).

[22] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 75.

[23] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 75.

[24] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 76.

[25] May, 2022, p. 548; Elizabeth A. Johnson, 'An Earthy Christology. For God so Loved the Cosmos.', *America: The Jesuit Review*, 13 April 2009: https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/693/article/earthy-christology /; Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 77.

[26] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 78.

[27] May, 2022, p. 543.

[28] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 74.

[29] May, 2022.

[30] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 75.

[31] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 87.

[32] May, 2022, pp. 543–50.

[33] May, 2022, p. 543.

all expressions of Christ, and so is present in many spiritualities.[34] Leonardo Boff also endorses the cosmic nature of Christ, insisting that this must be the basis of an ecotheology of liberation (cf. the historical praxis of Christ).[35] Entropy and death present in evolution are not the end, but rather all of life is transfigured through the universal saviour.[36] Niels Gregersen describes incarnation as deep because it reached every system of nature when Jesus was en-fleshed in human experience.[37] All victims of biological evolution are identified by God through Jesus on the cross and will find redemption from suffering.[38] For Richard Rohr, Christ is a name, that is everything in its fullness, a universal transcendent within everything.[39]

Jürgen Moltmann is more cautious in the claims that he makes about history and cosmology.[40] Jesus' death and resurrection move beyond history in their significance.[41] As 'history' is responsible for our current ecological catastrophes, Christology needs to move beyond the historic framework to preserve its truth.[42] God has already reconciled and united everything through Christ.[43] Richard Bauckham suggests that through Jesus' death and resurrection God is related to and reconciled to all humans, and so to all creation.[44] Like Deane-Drummond, Bauckham retains a place for humans in the reconciliation and redemption of creation. Humans have an unparalleled understanding of the world and ability to affect the rest of creation, which gives us huge responsibility.[45] Cosmic Christ traditions can be used to call

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[34] May, 2022, p. 544; Matthew Fox, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: The Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance* (San Francisco CA: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 147.
[35] May, 2022; Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1997).
[36] May, 2022; Boff, 1997.
[37] May, 2022, p. 547; Niels Henrik Gregersen, 'The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World,' *Dialog*, 40 (2008), 192–207 (p. 193).
[38] May, 2022; Gregersen, 2008, p. 193.
[39] May, 2022, p. 543; Richard Rohr, *The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope for, and Believe* (New York: Convergent Books, 2019).
[40] May, 2022, pp. 545–6.
[41] May, 2022, p. 545.
[42] May, 2022.
[43] May, 2022; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 1993), pp. 274–5.
[44] May, 2022, p. 546.
[45] May, pp. 546–7.

forth humanity to work for this healing relationship (cf. suffering following in Jesus' example).[46]

Observations

Deep incarnation holds promise but falls short. May points out that the primary focus is ecological rather than political.[47] The spirituality of liberation and political holiness that has been present throughout Christian faith — and bought back to centre stage by liberation theologians and others — has been supplanted, or is at least at odds with elevating the oneness of creation.[48] May's contribution is a helpful one in ensuring that justice and the lives of marginalised communities are not neglected. This warning is also an example of where I believe ecotheology fails to offer the true richness of Christian faith to the world.

My observation from engaging in environmental conversations within the church and reading theology is that we often begin our conversation with Genesis or Job, or by laying a framework for general revelation (that God is revealed in all of creation). Rarely do we start from the assumption that Jesus' life, death and resurrection are central to our theology of the environment. Even Pope Francis' landmark encyclical was noted to contain little Christology.[49] It is possible that Francis' aim was to win over a broader, non-Christian audience,[50] but others saw the statement as an attempt to re-engage the church, which makes this lack of emphasis puzzling.[51] Last year I wrote a paper on 'An Anglican approach to climate change', based on a moving and impactful talk that Bishop Eleanor Sanderson had shared with the Anglican Diocese of Wellington.[52] During her talk I noticed that Jesus was in the periphery of the arguments. These examples are illustrative but speak to my observation based on 10 years of these conversations in churches.

Theologians and biblical scholars have much to offer the conversation about creation care and the climate crisis. Some basic biblical and theological groundwork needs to be agreed upon to build a coherent argument for

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[46] May, 2022, p. 547; Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*, Sarum Theological Lectures (Waco TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), pp. 145, 147, 151, 157, 178.
[47] May, 2022, p. 548.
[48] May, 2022, p. 548.
[49] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 73.
[50] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 73.
[51] Rayson, 2021, p. 17.
[52] *Our Climate Mission: Bishop Eleanor's Sermon* (Anglican Movement, 2019): www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVNIxlBJ8iY [accessed 13 December 2023].

climate action.[53] However, I wonder if basing the conversation on creation, Genesis, Job or general revelation is working against climate action and creation care.

For example, Evangelical Christians and Protestants with theologically conservative beliefs are some of the most climate-sceptical groups in the USA. [54] In a study published in 2013, Stephan Lewandowsky and his colleagues found that the largest predictor of climate science rejection is endorsement of free markets — a conservative individual economic ideology.[55] This speaks to the process whereby group allegiance is creating polarised positions on many issues.[56] Evangelical Protestant Americans are subject to group allegiance, which is problematic as environmental discourse and action have been framed as left-leaning. Passionate Christians are worried about environmentalism, which is perceived as pantheism, New Age spirituality and nature worship. [57] They are also worried about becoming alienated from their social circles due to being perceived as associated with such groups. [58] They are worried about sliding towards liberal political positions on other issues.[59] And they are worried that they

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[53] Chris Doran, *Hope in the Age of Climate Change: Creation Care This Side of the Resurrection* (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2017), pp. 6–8, 19–29.

[54] Wylie Allen Carr, Michael Patterson, Laurie Yung and Daniel Spencer, 'The Faithful Skeptics: Evangelical Religious Beliefs and Perceptions of Climate Change', *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, 6 (2012), 276–99 (pp. 277–8).

[55] Stephan Lewandowsky, Klaus Oberauer and Gilles E. Gignac, 'NASA Faked the Moon Landing—Therefore, (Climate) Science Is a Hoax: An Anatomy of the Motivated Rejection of Science', *Psychological Science*, 24 (2013), 622–33.

[56] Jakob Winter, 'Impfscheu Und Putintreu: Ungeimpfte Geben USA Schuld Für Ukraine-Krieg', *Profil*, 23 July 2022, sec. Österreich: https://profil.at/oesterreich/was-sagt-der-impfstatus-ueber-die-einstellung-zu-putin-aus/402085051 [accessed 19 December 2023].

[57] Doran, 2017, p. 11; Carr et al., 2012, pp. 289–90; Calvin B. DeWitt and Ronald Nash, 'Christians and the Environment: How Should Christians Think about the Environment?', *Christian Research Institute*, 28 July 2009: www.equip.org/articles/christians-and-the-environment-how-should-christians-think-about-the-environment/; J. Aaron Simmons, 'Evangelical Environmentalism: Oxymoron or Opportunity?', *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, 13 (2009), 40–71 (pp. 45, 58, 61–63).

[58] Doran, 2017, p. 11; DeWitt and Nash, 2009; Simmons, 2009, pp. 58–61.

[59] Simmons, 2009, pp. 58–61.

might suggest something which implies that God is not ultimately in control or that the Bible may not be inerrant.[60]

It is possible that conversations which emphasise nature, divine wisdom or a less historically grounded *logos* are viewed with suspicion by those who identify as religiously and politically right-leaning conservative. By approaching the climate crisis through such conversations we make it harder for people to engage without threatening their group allegiance or identity. Given the considerations laid out in the first section of this paper about the timeframe and inequality of climate change, and the global position of evangelical Protestants in the USA,[61] this is an issue if we are seeking a story that we can use to navigate (and avoid!) the climate crisis.[62]

Two core beliefs of evangelicalism are a 'fierce devotion to the Bible' that is God's inspired word, and the central message of the gospel being the doctrine of the cross.[63] Evangelical Christians do not oppose biblically grounded environmental stewardship, but climate change is infused with many divisive issues.[64] Climate conversations that are grounded in a firm belief in a historical Jesus, literal interpretation of his death and resurrection, and a focus on his proclamations of the Kingdom of God, a commission of making disciples and what true love looks like are less likely to be immediately alienating.

Grounding the theological reflection on creation care and climate change in Jesus also ensures that Christianity offers a distinctive voice to the conversation. Many important contributions are needed as we reimagine our relationship with the environment and seek to mitigate climate change. However, for a Christian audience, and to add depth to the global conversation, it is detrimental that ecotheology has failed to include much of Jesus in its reflections.

Deep incarnation bucks this trend. Yet even as a theocentric approach the lack of consideration of Jesus' death and resurrection has been detrimental to the conversation.[65] The good news of Christianity is revealed in Jesus' life, death and resurrection — so far ecotheology has been good at talking about the life of Jesus. Like the pendulum swinging from anthropocentric to nature-centred to theocentric, we need to bring more of

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[60] Carr et al., 2012, pp. 276, 285–9.
[61] Carr et al., 2012, p. 277.
[62] Simmons, 2009, p. 43.
[63] Carr et al., 2012, p. 278; David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).
[64] Carr et al., 2012, p. 290.
[65] Moltmann's work on hope based on the resurrection is an obvious exception to this.

the 'death and resurrection' into the conversation. An ecotheology that is fully grappling with the incarnation could be transformative for the Church and has much to offer our world. Rather than exploring a full overview of possibilities, I draw on three examples. Embracing Jesus contributes justice, loving sacrifice and hope to the climate crisis conversation.

Promising directions

Jesus' life and the political oppression surrounding his death motivate Christians to defend justice. Ecotheology is at risk of losing this distinctive focus on justice, which is problematic when the climate crisis is so characterised by injustice.[66] Climate change is climate colonisation — people living in the global south are denied their rights and bear the brunt of the impacts.[67] Those in places of privilege have a moral responsibility for the economic and environmental injustice that is occurring.[68] Christianity's marred history of colonisation adds to the moral imperative to act.[69] There are several ways in which this action can be framed biblically — for example, loving your neighbour as yourself (Lev. 19.18, Mt. 22.39) (when we consider that other lives are threatened by our lives), living into the resurrection as part of discipleship, or embodying the biblical call of justice from the position of a history of being the church of the empire.[70]

Liberation theology is concerned with the historical struggle of the poor, social (and environmental) suffering and this-worldly intervention.[71] The Christian story of Jesus is about the transformation of history, affirming and seeking transformation for those on the underside of history through economic, social and political systems.[72] The move of cosmic Christ theologians to decentre history comes from a desire to be less anthropocentric, but risks the cosmic Christ being disassociated with the historical Jesus, saviour of the oppressed.[73] Anthropocentrism is contextualised from a place of power and domination, a social and historical

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[66] Deane-Drummond, 2017, pp. 16–17; May, 2022, pp. 550–55.
[67] Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, 'Decolonizing the Privileged: Resistance and Re-Building the New Economy', in *Decolonizing Ecotheology: Indigenous and Subaltern Challenges*, ed. by S. Lily Mendoza and George Zachariah (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022), pp. 174–7 (p. 176).
[68] Moe-Lobeda, 2022, p. 178.
[69] Moe-Lobeda, 2022, p. 181.
[70] Moe-Lobeda, 2022, pp. 180–81.
[71] May, 2022, p. 550.
[72] May, 2022, p. 551.
[73] May, 2022, pp. 550–51.

construction.[74] Deane-Drummond acknowledges this tension by stressing the need to hold the cosmic Christ in tandem with contemporary biblical work grounding Jesus historically, drawing on both the Greek and Hebrew dimensions in the prologue of John.[75]

Deep incarnation also risks viewing the suffering of the poor and marginalised as equivalent to environmental issues.[76] May notes that '[f]rom a liberation perspective, putting the suffering and death of an animal due to predation as equivalent to a person tortured and summarily executed by a military regime is morally troubling'.[77] In a way that evolution is not, humans are responsible for the suffering caused by social injustice, and should struggle against this.[78] The systems and groups that have created the framework in which the earth can be exploited have also created situations where some people are not treated as people.[79] Although Jesus clearly had compassion for all of creation (e.g., Mt. 6.26–30), we see a preferential treatment for the marginalised. The story of Jesus delaying his arrival to heal the daughter of Jairus (a wealthy, influential, named man) in order to speak with and heal an unnamed, unclean woman hints that the salvation of the poor is the path for the salvation of the rich (Lk. 8.40–56).[80] Christian theology needs to make the marginalised key actors, in line with Jesus' transformation of them into people of dignity, agency and recognition.[81]

Meaningful climate action will require sacrifices to be made by those who are used to living in affluence built on exploitation of humans and the environment. This takes courage and a whole-of-life conviction.[82] Breaking the cycle of oppression 'requires risking acts of love'.[83] Jesus' journey to the cross, his death and his call to follow him may provide a compelling story for embracing this challenge.

Sacrifice is a controversial topic, receiving pushback from feminist and liberationist theologians who argue that the narrative of sacrifice has been

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[74] May, 2022, p. 556.
[75] Deane-Drummond, 2017, p. 78; May, 2022.
[76] May, 2022.
[77] May, 2022, p. 554.
[78] May, 2022, pp. 554–5.
[79] May, 2022, pp. 558–9.
[80] Justin Duckworth, 'Lecture for Radical Discipleship: A Course in Christian Justice-Making'.
[81] May, 2022, p. 559.
[82] Doran, 2017, p. 6.
[83] Cherice Bock, 'Climatologists, Theologians, and Prophets: Toward an Ecotheology of Critical Hope', *CrossCurrents*, 66 (2016), 8–34 (p. 12).

used as a tool of oppression.[84] Climate change is demanding huge unvolunteered 'sacrifices' from many groups, and should not be compared to wealthy communities embracing restraint.[85] Sacrifice is only sacrifice if the individual who is experiencing it experiences sacrifice as an offering, made in response to love.[86] Sacrifice might be sustained by hope, or invoked to work towards a hope.[87] However, hope and sacrifices can be misdirected.[88] Like techno-environmentalism, sacrifice can buy into a vision of self-sufficiency.[89] Because of Christ's ultimate sacrifice we do not enter a covenant with death and we can reject certain types of sacrifice.[90] Suffering needs to find meaning in the cross while still resisting injustice.[91]

We sacrifice in order to worship God (Rom. 12.1–2; Heb. 9.14) or to offer love to others (Heb. 9.23–28).[92] The New Testament links sacrifice to ethical action (Rom. 12.1–2; Heb. 10.22–24, 13.16).[93] Sacrifice necessitates a loss, which entails letting go of worldly desires, and being willing to suffer as Jesus suffered.[94] To balance sacrifice, we need an eschatological orientation — that Christ has promised redemption and has already accomplished this in his death and resurrection.[95] The moral power that will enable change and courage in these horrific circumstances is this ability to have paradox — hope and despair, sorrow and joy, love and anger.[96]

In our Judeo-Christian tradition, the prophetic role is one of both doomsday warning and hope giving.[97] There is a need for theologians to be more than just scribes and to lean into this prophetic calling.[98] Theologians can use a hermeneutic of transformative practice, giving meaning to

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[84] Sarah Stewart-Kroeker, 'Sacrifice in Environmental Ethics and Theology', *The Journal of Religion*, 102 (2022), 237–61 (p. 238).
[85] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, pp. 239, 247.
[86] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, pp. 248, 255–6.
[87] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, p. 243; Bock, 2016, p. 14.
[88] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, p. 243.
[89] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, p. 256.
[90] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, p. 245.
[91] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, p. 246.
[92] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, pp. 253, 256.
[93] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, pp. 255–6.
[94] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, p. 253.
[95] Stewart-Kroeker, 2022, p. 251.
[96] Moe-Lobeda, 2022, pp. 196–7.
[97] Bock, 2016, p. 10; Walter Brueggemann, *Reality, Grief, Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014).
[98] Bock, 2016, p. 11.

everyday decisions and struggles.[99] Hope gives people courage to be faithful even when they are facing oppression and suffering.[100]

Christian hope is more than optimistic desire.[101] It is based on the resurrection of Jesus, and the belief that God will also do this for the cosmos.[102] The Christian hope is that God is divinely committed to justice and goodness, and did not leave Jesus dead.[103] God has the ability to produce a good and novel outcome from even the most tragic circumstances.[104] Hope is an attitude, a choice or orientation, combining both cognitive and emotional aspects.[105]

We experience hope from a place of tragedy.[106] Moltmann in his work on hope shows that our search for a theology of suffering can cause us to embrace hope.[107] It is not naive optimism. We experience 'hope in spite of', rather than 'hope because of'.[108]

The increasing numbers of people affected by eco-anxiety sorely need a robust narrative of hope.[109] Religious communities have a gift to offer here, as they are set up to provide such a hope, and a community of support.[110] Hope is also needed to speak to grief, despair, terror, guilt, shame and nostalgia.[111] The recent news story about an environmentalist who set fire to himself is a chilling reminder of how different motivations for climate action can have deep consequences for action.[112]

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[99] Bock, 2016.
[100] Bock, 2016, p. 10.
[101] Bock, 2016, p. 14.
[102] Doran, 2017, p. 55; Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (London: SPCK, 2004), p. 93.
[103] Doran, 2017, p. 55.
[104] Doran, 2017, pp. 58–9.
[105] Doran, 2017, p. 60; Bock, 2016, p. 14; John Macquarrie, *Christian Hope* (London: Mowbrays, 1978), p. 5.
[106] Panu Pihkala, 'Eco-Anxiety, Tragedy, and Hope: Psychological and Spiritual Dimensions of Climate Change', *Zygon*, 53 (2018), 545–69 (p. 554).
[107] Bock, 2016, pp. 16–17; Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basics*, 4th edition (Hoboken NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), pp. 198–9.
[108] Pihkala, 2018, p. 555.
[109] Pihkala, 2018, pp. 545–69.
[110] Pihkala, 2018, pp. 553, 563.
[111] Pihkala, 2018, pp. 545–69.
[112] Adam Gabbatt, 'US Climate Activist Dies after Setting Himself on Fire Outside Supreme Court', *The Guardian*, 25 April 2022: www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/25/climate-activist-death-supreme-court-fire-washington [accessed 15 December 2023].

Faith communities carry hope in their shared stories.[113] We hold onto hope within community.[114] In order to have an impact on action on climate change, an un-naive hope is needed to transform information.[115] Christian communities have not yet lived into the potential of ethical leadership in climate change; public theology offers hope in ethical engagement.[116] We witness the confidence and assurance that hope gives some Christians about the impending second coming and the need to witness to non-Christians. With a fuller vision of what the 'kingdom coming' means (such as N. T. Wright's work), we see the missed opportunity.[117] The most hopeful story I have encountered about climate change was the final scene of the movie *2040*.[118] Despite the film's jarring technology-positive approach, I was moved, inspired and challenged through my whole being in the final minutes. It would be great if the Christian faith could instead provide stories like this, that motivate change while being based on an unchanging, unshakable hope.

Conclusion

Reacting to and mitigating the climate crisis is a huge challenge faced by our world today. It sits at the intersection of science, economy, society and ethics. Christian theology needs to grapple with this aspect of creation care, but the time sensitivity of this issue means that theologians need to be aware of the practical impact of their theology. Ecotheology has been responsive to criticism in the past, and we see a pendulum of focus as theologians have turned to a more theocentric approach. Deep incarnation provides a promising framework, but I worry that it is alienating for evangelical Christians who are desperately needed onboard the creation care movement. The cosmic Christ also does not yet capture the fullness of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Returning to a historical Jesus and biblical witnesses adds depth to the conversation — for example, keeping justice, loving sacrifice and hope at the centre of a Christian response to the climate crisis. As well as being a compelling story for the Church to act from, these are narratives we can bring to the climate change conversation in the wider world.

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[113] Bock, 2016, p. 16.
[114] Bock, 2016, pp. 17–18, 27.
[115] Bock, 2016, pp. 13–14.
[116] Rayson, 2021, p. 17.
[117] Wright, 2004.
[118] *2040* (Regen Pictures; Good Thing Productions, 2019): https://theregenerators.org/2040/ [accessed 15 December 2023].

REVIEWS

Hannah Malcolm (ed.), Words for a Dying World: Stories of Grief and Courage from the Global Church

(London: SCM Press, 2020). xxxv, 212 pp. ISBN 978-0-334-05986-8

In his poem 'The Wall' (p. 132), David Benjamin Blower writes:

> We all walk into the future backwards
> Because the past is our only reference
> And only rarely does the present demand
> That we turn and refer to what's stood there ahead of us.

This remarkable volume demands that we do indeed turn to see what is ahead of us. It also demands much of the reader. From the title proclaiming that we live in a dying world, to the harrowing tales of the epidemic of suicides among subsistence farmers in India, described in 'Farming Grief and Hope' by Anderson Jeremiah (pp. 79–87), we cannot be left comfortable and complacent because we will have allowed ourselves to hear others' stories and feel their pain — the pain that we ought to be feeling.

Living in the UK it can be hard to truly appreciate the depths of the experience, wisdom and insight of the rest of the world when it comes to the effects of climate change. We know the principle that those who are least responsible for the crisis will pay the highest cost, but we often do not know how high that cost has already been, let alone how vast it will grow in years to come. Hannah Malcolm, the editor of this volume of essays, poetry, stories and wonderings, laments that there are so many more voices that should be heard. Although this is true, all of the voices gathered here are worth listening to and spending time with, so that we may be moved to solidarity with them, and to engaging in insightful prayer and meaningful action.

British churches have become increasingly adept at suggesting lifestyle changes for their members and congregations — recycle this, use LED lighting here, put up a bat box there, get your buildings to Net Zero. In this book, Hannah Malcolm's aim is to enable the church to see clearly both what has already been lost due to climate change, and what will inevitably be lost if humanity continues on its present path. Added to this is extinction debt, in which the conditions necessary for the future existence of some living things that are not extinct yet, and that appear healthy at present, have long since disappeared. For example, certain insects whose native habitat is the hollow interior of 700-year-old oak trees still survive, because there are

still a few of these trees remaining. However, there are fewer 600-year-old oak trees, because they were either cut down or never allowed to grow to such an age, so in 100 years' time there will be no 700-year-old oak trees and therefore no habitat left for the insects.[1]

This is the future that Malcolm wants us to face squarely. And she wants us to truly feel what it is like to face it. For only in truly feeling will we respond with effective actions. Only when the Holy Spirit reveals the depth of sin, brokenness and loss can we lament appropriately, seek forgiveness and then work with God for reconciliation.

Therefore, for those whose islands are being gradually submerged in the Pacific as a result of climate change, we must see not just the loss of land and earnings but also a loss of home and hence identity. If you are forced to become a climate refugee, who are you in the new land to which you flee, no matter how safe you now are? If your name, your tribe's name and your nation's name are all the name of the river by which you live, and you can see the life of that river dying, are you not dying, too? The Māori have a saying, *Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au*, which means 'I am the river, and the river is me' (p. 16). The economic impacts of climate change which seem to drive so much of the discussion at COP meetings are therefore almost irrelevant to such circumstances. No amount of money paid for loss and damage can replace your identity, and the world cannot even agree on loss and damage.

There are often more questions than answers. What do you do if you have worked hard to become an environmentally aware person and activist, only to find that all your education and privilege were gained through an oil well that your family has owned for years, as described by Kyle B. T. Lambelet in 'My Grandma's Oil Well' (pp. 26–32)? How do you evaluate your life when you realise that your own family's retreat to a simpler existence is contributing to the destruction of that existence, as described by Caleb Gordon in 'The Edge of the World' (pp. 64–70)? If the poor in Indonesia have depended on the free and hard-won bounty of the sea and now the fish are gone, as described by Elia Maggang in 'The Sea and the Poor in the Indonesian Archipelago' (pp. 145–50), what are they supposed to do?

It certainly is not the job of this book to provide answers. Often, however, despite the unanswerable questions, the great loss, the unchanging direction of the news, the apparent futility of campaigning, and the varied voices from all over the world that speak of the same disaster that is both coming and already here, there is a clear call to hope — to hope in the God who, through the death of Jesus, brought life. This hope is to be lived by

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[1] Anne Sverdrup-Thygeson, *Extraordinary Insects: Weird, Wonderful and Indispensable. The ones who run our world*, (London: Mudlark, 2019), pp.167–9.

sharing the love of God through demonstrating his care for all of creation, for all people and creatures, for their economic wellbeing, and for the sense of place, home and purpose.

That care for all of creation can be expressed on a global scale, on a local scale and on a very individual scale. John Duns Scotus teaches us that 'God doesn't just love roses, but each and every rose, God doesn't just love a species, but each individual in that species' (paraphrased on p. 156). For we must know by now that the answers do not lie only in our own hands, but in those of God. We have never known everything, we never think we know enough, we never think we have the strength to bring about real change, but we do know someone who promises peace beyond understanding, gain even beyond loss, and life beyond the now all too apparent 'dying world'.

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John Van Maaren, The Boundaries of Jewishness in the Southern Levant 200 BCE–132 CE: Power, Strategies, and Ethnic Configurations
(Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022). xviii, 316 pp. Hardback ISBN 978-3-11-078745-0; pdf ISBN 978-3-11-078745-0; eBook ISBN 978-3-11-078748-1

This book explores the complex and contested nature of Jewish identity during the periods of Seleucid, Hasmonaean and Roman rule over the land whose name and boundaries are themselves contested, and which mutated with shifts in the balance of power, and with the policies of the regional superpowers, through this period. Van Maaren carefully limits this study to the traditional homeland of the people of Israel and Judah in the Hebrew Bible, and, for methodological as well as practical reasons he excludes from his discussion Jewish, Samaritan and other related communities of the diaspora. The study is dependent on extant documents whose provenance can confidently be located within the designated geographical area and the temporal parameters of the three quite distinct periods identified. Documents of the diaspora are excluded, as are Christian writings, on account of their contested place within Judaism.

Van Maaren is very conscious that documents are not, or at least cannot be assumed to be, representative of the largely non-literate population of the area. Rather, texts reflect the perspectives of privileged cadres, however these may relate to the politically dominant groups in society at any particular time. He is careful to locate the texts that he discusses as clearly as possible, allowing the diversity of modes of Jewish

self-identity to be more fully appreciated than has been the case in many previous studies of the subject. He notes how the usage of such terms as conventionally rendered in English as 'Israel' and 'Jew', and their cognates, was not consistent, but rather it was fluid and, at least in some contexts, contested. The criteria for identity, or ethnicity, were similarly complex, and fluctuated in importance and in relative value according to a variety of internal and external factors. Even common ancestry, whether conscious construction or naive conviction, was not as uniformly determinative as it is often assumed to be, and the same is true for such cultic and cultural observances and institutions as circumcision, dietary laws and the temple in Jerusalem.

The work is informed by the sociological model of ethnicity developed by Andreas Wimmers. Technical terminology is used with some sensitivity to readers who may be unfamiliar with it, and although much of the discussion is highly technical, the text is eminently readable and thoroughly annotated. This is an impressive book that should be widely welcomed, studied and appreciated.

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