

CATHOLIC THEOLOGIANS RESPOND TO HUMAN-FORCED CLIMATE CHANGE
A Project of the Interest Group on Catholic Theology and Global Warming
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Essay Proposals and Papers

Sophia Wisdom and global warming--Suzanne Franck, St. Joseph's College (NY)

This chapter will attempt to provide a theological response to the human induced causes of global warming. Drawing primarily on the works of Denis Edwards and Elizabeth Johnson, I will explore the notion that Sophia Wisdom became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth and how the Incarnation alters the universe. A reinterpretation of scripture, such as Proverbs, Wisdom, the Gospels, and Corinthians reveals that Sophia Wisdom is God's presence in the universe. Wisdom was with God in the beginning and is dynamically present in all creation. Creation then, is a reflection of the divine and is intrinsically valuable because of its relationship with God. Sophia Wisdom is concerned with the whole of creation and with the interrelationship of all human beings, the rest of creation, and God. Sophia orders creation and pervades its every development. Wisdom is intimately related to the activity of creation; she is the giver of life (Proverbs 4:13). Wisdom works to establish justice in all the earth (Proverbs 8:32-36). The Spirit of God, hovering over and in all creation, challenges humanity to work to establish justice in all the earth and to be stewards of creation. It is my development of Wisdom Christology in this chapter that attempts to generate an ecological and theological praxis that leads to environmental change.

Creation and covenant in the theology of the Apostle Paul--Annemarie S. Kidder, Ecumenical Theological Seminary

When Pope Benedict XVI declared 2008 the year of the Apostle Paul, people worldwide began reading Paul's letters with renewed interest. They also began noting that biblical commentators had been trying for some time to retrieve from them answers to contemporary problems, such as global warming, the ecological crisis, and world hunger, seemingly joining the efforts of scientists, humanitarians, and peace activists. In recent years, a new hermeneutic lens of "hearing" Paul that permits reading the ancient texts in light of contemporary issues has yielded fresh insights and new connections without the insistence on a concordance. Does Paul offer answers to the current ecological crisis even though he never makes mention of ecology? Are Christians those in whom "the new creation" has begun by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that their minds and bodies by virtue of a "new covenant" have become intricately intertwined with the rest of creation and the earth?

This essay will explore Paul's theology of creation and covenant and its consequences for us regarding the earth's well-being and creation's care. Among Pauline exegetes and commentators explored in connection with ecological questions are N.T. Wright, Brendan Byrne, S.J., Joseph Fitzmyer, S.J., and James D. G. Dunn. The main New Testament passage examined is Paul's letter to the Romans 8:18-30, along with passing references to 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Corinthians 5, and the potentially Pauline creation hymn of Colossians 1.

Eschatologies in the biblical-patristic Christian tradition--Elizabeth Groppe, Xavier University

Climate change is already causing loss of life around the globe and scientific projections for the future are quite dire. These projections include mass extinctions of species and even the possibility that the planet could become incapable of supporting human civilization. We are "passing a point of no return," stated Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, chair of the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and strong action is necessary "if humanity is to survive." These grim warnings raise issues of eschatology. Christianity's resurrection faith in a new creation, as Sallie McFague emphasizes, can sustain us as we face the challenges before us. Christian eschatology, however, has sometimes been used to deflect concern for the earth through its emphasis on the other-worldly salvation of the human soul. An eschatology for our time must not only offer a vision of a new creation but also strengthen our sense of responsibility to care for all the threatened creatures of this earth. It must also be consistent with the natural sciences, which teach us that human existence is inextricable from that of other life forms.

My essay will: 1) identify eschatologies in the Christian tradition that are cosmic in scope, including that of St. Paul, Irenaeus, and Maximus Confessor; 2) probe the reasoning that led Athanasius, Augustine, and Aquinas to develop eschatologies limited to human beings; and, 3) articulate a renewed cosmic eschatology for our own era.

Franciscan Christology as a resource for ecological conversion--Dawn Nothwehr, Catholic Theological Union*

Franciscan Christology provides a framework for a theological response to three questions Sallie McFague claims are ultimately at the heart of, if and how humans will act to halt global warming: "Who are we? Who is God? How shall we live?" In Jesus, we discover the divine clue to the structure and meaning not only of humanity, but of

the entire universe. In Franciscan Christology the incarnation is not an isolated event but it is integral to the possibility of creation itself; one is integral to the other. Christ is not accidental or an intrusion in creation but the inner ground of creation and its inner goal. Thus, Franciscan theologians held that "a world without Christ is an incomplete world, that is, the whole world is structured Christologically" (Hayes, *Christ*, 6).

This paper will first explicate the relevant tenets of Franciscan Christology to show a hope-filled vision of the intimately related and interrelated reality: God : God-Human : All Creation. In such an interrelated world humans are co-creators with the divine and are called to take on the mediating role as guardians of creation. Informed by this Christology and the IPCC "Summary for Policy Makers," behavioral application will be made for the Christian moral life ("eco-penance" and "eco-conversion").

Thomas Aquinas and the cosmic common good--Daniel Scheid, Duquesne University**

In their 1991 pastoral letter "Renewing the Earth," The U.S. Bishops urged people to pursue the "planetary common good." While fighting global warming certainly fulfills this task, it raises a deeper question of whether the planetary common good ultimately exists to serve humans, or whether humanity fits into a broader purpose that God intends for all creation. Is global warming just bad for humans, or for the planet itself?

Thomas Aquinas can be a resource for addressing this question because he articulates a theocentric vision of what might be termed a "cosmic common good" shared by humans and non-humans alike. I will highlight three concepts in Aquinas: first, the whole universe surpasses in excellence any individual creature, and its most valuable feature is the order among its various parts. Second, the ordered interconnections among creatures signifies what today we might recognize as a "cosmic common good" toward which all creatures should contribute. This contribution acknowledges God's goodness and wisdom by upholding the order that God has instituted. Third, this cosmic common good glorifies God, which is the ultimate end of every creature and the universe as a whole.

Aristotle/Aquinas' directives on "mastering" human acts--William French, Loyola University of Chicago

Aristotelian /Aquinas asserted that the distinctive feature of the human over the animals is that due to rationality the human is (as Aristotle puts it) the master of his/her own actions. A model of complete control. Yet if, as the ecological sciences are showing us, we are not factoring into our assessment the full range of our impacts on the earth, then we really don't know basically what we are doing. In that sense we are not, as Aristotle would say, "masters of our own action." Without green taxation schemes, I would argue, we don't know what we are doing and hence we don't even know who we are. Cause--we don't know what we are doing. I could link Aquinas and Aristotle to contemporary discussion of green taxation issues. If we don't impose such green taxes, then I would argue people don't know what they are doing. And that means people do not have the full information about what they are engaged in.

Teilhard's evolutionary dynamic toward "ultra-humanity"--Richard Kropf, Diocese of Lansing

Part I (the thesis) will briefly review the general of Teilhard's analysis of the evolutionary dynamics as presented in his 1937 book *The Human Phenomenon*: namely the process of global compression or *convergence* resulting in increased *complexity* which in turn leads to *consciousness*. (This evolutionary dynamism will be further substantiated from a secular viewpoint by recourse to Eric Chaisson's *Cosmic Evolution: The Rise of Complexity in Nature* [Harvard University, 2001]) Part II (the antithesis) will focus on the counter-evolutionary phenomenon of *entropy*, that is, the eventual dissipation of energy (and the resulting breakdown of complexity and consciousness) within closed systems, both as exemplified by current cosmology—at least that based on observational astronomy—as well as the current understanding of global climate change, particularly the phenomenon of *global warming* as analyzed by the IPCC. Although the latter was not foreseen by Teilhard, it exacerbates the problem which he did foresee, that posed by the general limits of growth imposed by the obvious fact that it is impossible to have infinite growth (at least within the same order of being) within a finite universe. Part III (the synthesis) will explore the alternative posed by Teilhard, which increasingly preoccupied Teilhard in his later years (see the final chapters of *The Future of Man* as well as the later essays in *The Activation of Energy*). This alternative was the transformation or consciously chosen redirection of the evolutionary dynamic towards what Teilhard terms "ultra-humanity" or "superpersonalization"—both terms though which he focused on the spiritual progress of humanity. The conclusion of the paper might pose the question as to how this further evolution might be accomplished.

A Teilhardian value-supportive worldview--Robert Faricy, S.J., Gregorian University (ret.)

We need some kind of motivating world view, at least a general world view, to do anything besides a band-aid treatment of global warming. The American problem in this regard is the traditional Reformation Protestant world view underlying much of American culture: a view that separates (not only distinguishes) nature and grace. This same view understands nature, human nature included, as utterly fallen, sinful, and under God=s judgement. It sees the person-nature rapport as antithetical rather than as positive and productive, and it leads to

harmful exploitation of the earth, to legalized abortion, and to other serious global social problems. Most if not all Americans are strongly influenced by this world view usually in a mostly unconscious and unreflective way. Teilhard de Chardin's spirituality is a Christian ethic of love built on a theology that integrates biblical doctrine, and especially the Christology of St. Paul, within a contemporary evolutionary perspective; it understands the person-nature rapport as positive, not as oppositional but as unitive. By nature here I include the idea of human nature.

Theology of creation in Christ: the (Teilhardian) perspective is that adopted by Gaudium et spes: that Jesus risen is the future and active focal point of all, including social, evolution. Theology of redemption (of the cross): progress (progressive unification) inevitably involves waste, breakage, suffering, sacrifice. Personal relationship with Jesus Christ crucified and risen motivates the Christian to co-create, in the structure of the cross, with Christ. Conclusion: not everyone is a Catholic or even a Christian. But to effectively address the global warming problem some kind of motivating value-supporting world view is necessary. This could be Buddhist, Hindu, or Islamic. Or, ideally, Christian.

A Rahnerian hermeneutical perspective and principles--Denis Edwards, Flinders University*

The intention of this paper is to ask about the hermeneutical principles involved in doing ecological theology. To pursue this in a concrete way, the paper explores hermeneutical principles that emerge, on the one hand, from a scientifically informed ecological consciousness and, on the other, from a reading of Rahner's theology. A scientifically informed ecological consciousness brings to the dialogue first of all a sense of global climate change as an urgent issue that theology needs to address. It offers five further hermeneutical principles: the worldview of big bang cosmology and evolutionary biology; the science of climate change and its provisional nature; the costs of evolution; the intrinsic value of nonhuman creation; and the interconnectedness of all things.

Rahner's theology brings a theology of grace which enables us to see engagement with the issue of global climate change as the place of God. It offers five further principles that can contribute to an ecological theology: creation and redemption as distinct dimensions of God's one act of self-bestowal; redemption as the deification of human beings and the whole creation; the transcendent God's relationship to creation as characterized by radical immanence; divine action as noninterventionist action through secondary causes; God's creation as enabling creaturely emergence through self-transcendence. While Rahner's theology provides a fruitful starting point for an ecological theology, the ecological consciousness discussed in the paper challenges Rahner's theology at several points and invites further developments. In particular, it raises questions about biology. Rahner certainly takes matter seriously but seldom discusses animals or the biological world in general. And he does not take us the issue of nonhuman suffering. The costs of evolution, put before us by contemporary science, call for a renewed ecologically aware theology of divine action.

Balthasar's ecological identity--Connie Lasher, John Paul II Institute for Environmental Studies

My forthcoming book, *A Passion for Wholeness: Ecological Identity and the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Herder/Crossroad, 2009), examines the theological achievement of Balthasar in its contribution to the development of a Catholic theology of "ecological identity." Ecological identity seeks to understand the ways in which humans perceive—and understand themselves in relation to—nonhuman nature. Far from being a merely ancillary topic, this often surprising theme is disclosed as one which permeates Balthasar's writings. Rejecting anthropocentric construals, Balthasar's theology, which he termed a "meta-anthropology," encompasses fundamental concerns that have been present across the range of contemporary environmental philosophy/theology throughout their historical development.

This paper presents a summary of the book's findings, and then applies Balthasar's theology to analysis of the specific issue of global warming. Furthermore, it considers Balthasar's constructive contribution to engaging and advancing the treatment of global warming found in recent Church documents (bishop's statements, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, papal writings) by highlighting how Balthasar's Christian humanism challenges the politicization and cultural polarization that dominates media/public discourse and too often influences ecclesial responses.

Lonergan and Global Warming—Richard Liddy, Seton Hall University

Almost alone among 20th century theologians, Lonergan explicitly linked his theological work with the concrete analysis of the methods of modern sciences and scholarship. Such analysis led him to formulate a vision of world process as "emergent probability," that is, sequences of interlocking "schemes of recurrence" statistically operating through large numbers and long periods of time allowing for the emergence of higher levels of being. Among the characteristics of emergent probability are those generally acknowledged by modern scientists: statistical techniques, indeterminism, breakdowns, emergence, etc. Ultimately emergent probability operates through human understanding and decision-making, for in the human person the process becomes self-conscious and free. [I]t the same time violations of the normative demands of intelligence and rationality bring with them their own sanctions. "What goes around comes around." The human family ultimately pays for stupidity and irrationality.

Within this context, the Christian seeks to link her theological convictions about God's creating and redeeming action in Christ with the concrete issue of humanly induced global warming. Lonergan's contribution is to provide the methodological framework or heuristic for thinking about the many levels involved in this issue. His emphasis on method can help us separate the pieces, take into account the biases that can afflict reflection on global warming, and shed theological light on human *praxis* in this area. Such theologically enlightened *praxis* responds to the question: What are we going to do about it? This paper will employ Lonergan's methodological reflections to elucidate the many levels involved in the issue of humanly induced global warming and their inter-connection with theological convictions and *praxis*.

Thomas Berry's Groundwork for A Dark Green Catholic Theology--Peter Ellard, Siena College

Parishes, dioceses and grassroots Catholic organizations are mobilizing around the world to meet the challenge of global climate change. U.S. Catholic Bishops, most notably in their 1991 and 2001 Pastorals, have spoken forcefully. And, Newsweek has deemed Benedict the XVI the "green Pope". Catholics are responding to this environmental crisis. However, while progress has been made, I argue that the theological frameworks so far constructed for a Catholic theological response to the crisis have not been green enough. That is, we have not crafted a theology of nature and a theological anthropology, upon which to move forward.

In dialogue with the tradition and contemporary voices, this essay will argue that the thought of Thomas Berry offers the groundwork for a dark green Catholic theological response to global climate change. The earth and universe centered context of the New Story calls for a radically altered theology. The very cosmogenetic nature of our existence, physical and psychic and -treading the orthodoxical line- spiritual, calls for a complete reassessment of all theological discourse. The current state of the planetary crisis demands nothing less than, as Rasmussen has argued echoing Rauschenbusch, "doing our first works over". Berry's own framework, revolving around the primordial intentions of the universe towards differentiation, subjectivity, and communion, will serve as the basic structure of our analysis. His craft of mythopoeticizing contemporary science will be highlighted as a key hermeneutical tool.

White supremacy and global climate change--Alex Mikulich, Jesuit Social Research Institute

White supremacy and human-forced climate change are intertwined issues of U.S. cultural amnesia. In his classic critique of the "souls of white folk," W.E.B. DuBois asked "but what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?" For nearly a century the question pierces the problem of white forgetfulness of the earth, of peoples of color, and of ourselves. And DuBois' response is no less piercing: "Then always, somehow, some way, silently but clearly, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!" This essay draws upon DuBois to interrogate the convergence in the U.S. context between cultural amnesia of racial and environmental multi- and inter-subjectivities, and the need to de-center whiteness as a constitutive dimension of addressing global, human-forced climate change. The U.S. history of domination of peoples of colors is intimately connected to domination of the earth, especially the problem of climate change. Forgetfulness of red, black, and brown bodies throughout U.S. history reveals uncanny resemblances to forgetfulness of God's creation through the desire to dominate both the earth and peoples of colors. I suggest that a mystical-political-environmental remembering of "Do this in memory of me" invites a way of re-learning and re-weaving the complexity of our interconnectedness with all others, past and present, human and non-human. The work of de-centering whiteness and re-remembering our rootedness in the earth is an urgent task in combating global climate change, indeed, of the possibility of an authentic ecological solidarity.

Theology and Teachings of Pope Benedict XVI --Msgr. Charles Murphy and Connie Lasher

From the beginning of his pontificate, Benedict XVI has consistently affirmed the legitimacy of environmental concern and the urgency of the ecological crisis. To those familiar with the theological context which shaped the development of Joseph Ratzinger's thought, this emphasis should come as no surprise: The *ressourcement* 'school' of theological renewal sought to engage the critical issues of the 20th century, not least questions of technology and the human relation to nature which were also central features of nascent environmental philosophy. This paper examines the theological orientation and foundational thought of Benedict as these inform his approach to environmental concern as expressed in papal writings and statements. It considers points of contact and continuity with the environmental legacy of John Paul II, but emphasizes the distinctive contribution emerging in Benedict's pontificate. The paper contends that the latter offers an occasion for fresh, constructive theological re-framing of the issue of global warming and its treatment within the context of Catholic social teaching. In so doing, we discover this Pope's own participation in that renewal by which he challenges theology to "enter into the debates of our time."

Solidarity, subsidiarity, and option for the poor--Jame Schaefer, Marquette University

Catholic social teaching endeavors to direct relationships among individuals, groups, and all humanity because of their relationship with God. Foundational to all social teaching by the bishops of the Catholic Church is

the necessity of cherishing the life and inherent dignity of the human person from conception to bodily death. Other principles flowing from this basic moral vision include the rights and responsibilities that humans have to one another and to their communities, opting to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first, the solidarity of all people regardless of differences, and care for God's creation by living in responsible relationship with other species and the natural environment.

While the principle of caring for God's creation directly addresses the need to mitigate human-forced species extinction and the degradation of biological systems, other principles can be interpreted to apply toward anthropogenic causes of climate change and some can be extended to encompass these major principles from a justice perspective. Particularly significant principles are the solidarity of all people, subsidiarity as a process for addressing concerns at incremental levels of governance, and placing the poor and vulnerable first. All have importance when grappling with global climate changes. In this essay, I will explore these three principles in depth from a justice perspective, show their significance for the human family when addressing climate change challenges today, and extend them to encompass all members of the community of Earth now and into the future. The result will be a system of global justice that is needed and can be shared by some of the world religions from their particular faith perspectives.

Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good--USCCB w/ intro and comments by Jane Russell, Belmont Abbey College

*Completed

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