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THE SPIRITAN OPTION FOR THE POOR AND THE CARE OF CREATION



Brian O'Toole, C.S.Sp.

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Introduction

Pope Francis when declaring September 1 to be an annual "World Day of Prayer for the Care for Creation" said:

As Christians we wish to contribute to resolving the ecological crisis which humanity is presently experiencing. In doing so, we must first rediscover in our own rich spiritual patrimony the deepest motivations for our concern for the care of creation. We need always to keep in mind that, for believers in Jesus Christ, the Word of God who became man for our sake, "the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us."¹

I am honored if this essay makes some contribution to understanding the seriousness and urgency of the challenge created by today's environmental crisis and by climate change. I am not an academician or scientist, nor a theorist of ecology or climate change. My particular focus is on what challenges "care of creation" issues present for us Spiritans avowedly committed to serving among people experiencing poverty.

It is often said that environmental challenges require us to "think globally but act locally." For this reason, in this essay, I visit many parts of the world where Spiritans are present on mission, places where climate change affects food production, coastal populations, forests, ecosystems and whole communities.

While acting locally, we cannot ignore what happens elsewhere. We live in an increasingly inter-connected world and what happens half way around the globe can impact all of us. Whether referred to as "climate change," "global warming," or the "greenhouse effect," the phenomenon describing the consequences of increasing the concentration of atmospheric gases absorbing solar radiation cannot be reduced to a single metric or indicator.² Others include glacial melting, changes in precipitation patterns, ocean heat content, and sea level rise. The conclusion that climate change is occurring rests

on an assessment of all these indicators. Consequently the importance of assessments by groups of experts such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.³

Cardinal Peter Turkson, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, in his address on climate change at the United Nations in New York on 30th June 2014 said “Through its Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nations has availed itself of the best scientific research available.” We need to allow such scientific conclusions to touch us deeply so that we see and hear how the poor suffer and how the earth is being mistreated.

Integrity of Creation

...it is only in the recent past that the term, Integrity of Creation, has been used.

The Judeo-Christian tradition has always held that the world of nature and all living things, including humanity, are created beings – the work of God. However, it is only in the recent past that the term, *Integrity of Creation*, has been used. In 1983 Jürgen Moltmann convinced the World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly “that ‘peace and justice’ was meaningless unless it took place within a *whole* creation, a creation ‘with integrity.’”⁴ The phrase, integrity of creation, was intended to convey the dependence of creation on its Creator and also the worth and dignity of creation in its own right (that is, its own intrinsic value). In 1990 the WCC adopted the title *JPIC*, Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Spiritans began to use this phraseology at the General Chapter of ITAICÍ in 1992.

Integrity invests creation with a fresh meaning not fully captured by the terms nature or environment. Integrity implies that we are called to be narrators of the story of creation. Our missionary role is to help people tell the story of the God who loves the universe, Earth, and all creatures, especially human beings. The story is about land, water, air, food, shelter and security, who we are, where we are and how we relate and belong. The integrity of the ecosystem within which human life exists is vital to respect for the work of God and the well-being of future generations.

Our dealings within the Earth environment are bound up to a Creator-God who speaks through creation. Appreciation and respect for the sacredness of creation becomes a fresh and vital mission task. *Ecological conversion*

calls for a deliberate consciousness about how we live on the Earth and what is happening to our planet.

As Spiritans we make a deliberate choice to respond because the climate change debate tells us life systems are being threatened and eroded. We face the negative aspects of ecological and environmental reality: the exploitation of resources; pollution of the natural environment; wealth and prosperity in the face of hunger and poverty; tension over land, water, oil, minerals, crops, seeds and food distribution. We ponder a vision that generates life for the world with integrity and dignity, with sensitive care for the Earth and a reverential sense of the sacred in all of creation.

Spiritans at the Coalface where Climate Change is not a Theory

Involvement in Spiritan mission takes us beyond information and statistics to see the human face of the negative effects of climate and environmental destruction. Our long Spiritan missionary tradition teaches us that the key to flourishing is in our ability to adapt to local situations; that the key to overcoming environmental problems today lies in the local community. Our missionary confidence tells us that if we can create vibrant, increasingly autonomous and self-reliant local groupings of people that emphasise sharing, cooperation and living lightly on the Earth, we can avoid some of the fate warned of today. Worldwide, Spiritans with resilient communities are responding in many different ways.⁵

"Creation is a dynamic reality. It renews itself every day."

Gabon. "Creation is a dynamic reality. It renews itself every day. What must we preserve in it? We think that each one at his level and in his own precise pastoral area is confronted with safeguarding the integrity of creation ... The socio-economic difficulties with which our people are surrounded do not encourage this pastoral approach. But it will not be good to pull back, but rather to pursue our policies for the good of future generations." (Jean Simon Ngele, C.S.Sp.)

Haiti. "The parish where I worked in Haiti was on average 1,500 metres above sea level. On my arrival, I got the schoolchildren together so that they themselves could prepare the saplings for

planting. The future beneficiaries pointed out to us the species they wanted to be planted in their area. Why? Because, often, re-planting efforts fail if the beneficiaries are not involved from the beginning ... It seems to me that wherever you are involved in education, you should make the children and students aware of this kind of activity.” (Jean-Yves Urfié, C.S.Sp.)

TransCanada: “In my experience simple living is anything but simple. It takes more time and effort to take public transport or walk, to cook from scratch, to look for fair trade products, to recycle, to wash and reuse containers, to check labels, to try to use locally produced and in season food, to give handmade gifts ... Often the fruits of simple living are not evident in terms of immediate results or effective impact on the ecological crisis...Ultimately voluntary simplicity is a spiritual quest...” (Joy Warner, Lay Spiritan)

Reunion. “The latest technology has given me the chance to meet people of all beliefs, belonging to all kinds of groups, going beyond the usual circle of our Church ... All I know is that sustainable development, respect for creation, reduction of rubbish, new ways of travelling about, the history of slavery on the island, awareness or inequalities and initiatives to protect the environment are now taking their grip on the individual and collective conscience of the people of Reunion (Jean-Yves Carré, C.S.Sp.)

Brazil. “In the Prelature of Téfé, this impressive story of Spiritan commitment to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation was partly played out by our confrères through the Movement for conservation and lasting development which emerged from the Basic Christian Communities ... but when the communities were set up, the people started to farm and fish for their own needs and to sell whatever remained over. They also came to appreciate the importance of preserving the fisheries for the future ...” (Bishop Sérgio Castriani C.S.Sp.).

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Because poverty and vulnerability are so closely intertwined, climate and disaster resilient development must be central to the global goal of ending poverty and promoting shared prosperity.

These examples show us that the poor are already resilient, both by nature as well as necessity; however, they need further funding, information and support to escape poverty traps and to cope better with weather-related disasters. Because poverty and vulnerability are so closely intertwined, climate and disaster resilient development must be central to the global goal of ending poverty and promoting shared prosperity.

A New Geological Period

Very many scientists and anthropologists are using the term *Anthropocene* to describe a new geological period in which we are living. This succeeds the post-Ice Age Holocene epoch which lasted 12,000 years. Anthropocene refers to the idea that humans have had such a dramatic impact on the Earth's ecosystem as to alter its natural evolution. This new epoch is driven by a radical change in humanity's relationship with the rest of the Earth's systems so that global-scale social and economic processes are now becoming significant features of its geological functioning. In the Anthropocene, humans are largely responsible for changes in the Earth's climate. Future predictions on the effects of anthropogenic climate change are often bleak, however, if we follow the Gospel imperative, if we change our ways, if we change our destructive practices in relation to the Earth, we may be reconciled with it and live.

To reach this point of understanding has been a rapid and existentially steep learning curve for all of us. A short twenty-five years ago, for most of us, the word *environment* simply meant "surroundings." Only scientists had heard of the *biosphere* and *ecosystems*. In 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio the ecological problems of Earth started to become clear, so did the obstacles to solving these problems emerge. Warnings went out listing the crises in the atmosphere, water resources, the oceans, the soil, the forests and biodiversity. Although the technologies and the ecological problems they created are new, the human obstacles to solving them are as old as greed, vested interests, power structures and property interests.

The advent of anthropogenic climate change puts not only a new slant but also a new urgency into the Spiritan *option for the poor*. The poor are least responsible for the excessive carbon consumption that causes climate change. However, they are the most immediately vulnerable to the impact of climate change. In total, more than 90% of

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those who live in extreme poverty reside in sub-Saharan Africa and South and East Asia. The majority of the poor in developing countries are to be found among rural populations, 75% of whom are small scale subsistence farmers engaged in fishing and pasturing. Furthermore, most of these people have little or no access to healthcare, education or credit systems.⁶

In this context the understanding of the option for the poor must be widened because the wellbeing and destinies of the poor and all creation are intertwined. "We will either bequeath to the next generation a fruitful, beautiful, and vibrant planet for the wellbeing of all creatures or all future generations will be diminished."⁷ The struggle for the defence of the natural world is thus a new way of living the option for the poor. We Spiritans need to find new ways to articulate and live out our option for the poor, or else live in an ever more degraded and degrading world.

Ecological Conversion

At the personal and community level, a starting point is by responding to the invitation to *ecological conversion*, a term first coined by then Pope John Paul II in 2001. He identified a spiritual and moral crisis of alienation from the natural world which has allowed us to dominate and despoil it. The term means a complete change in relation to how we interact with the environment and other living organisms. It suggests a change for the better, or for some sort of improvement to our environment. Today, creation can no longer sustain the dichotomies of rich versus poor, spirit versus matter, or ecology versus spirituality; it is up to us to reconcile these historical "opposites" for the life of the world.

Pope Francis frequently refers to what he regards as the creeping "culture of waste" enveloping our lives. He says that a throw-away attitude towards material resources infects the way we treat people. There's a connection between a culture that squanders the *gifts of creation* and societies that place little value on the *gift of life*. Ecological conversion graces us with being able to see clearly. We see the countless scars on our earth. We see the shifting climate wreak havoc on farmers with drought, on fishing communities with storms. We see, again and again, that the poor bear the heaviest burdens of our heaving world, shoved closest to the precarious edges of a slipping planet. We see pictures, we see statistics, and we

see YouTube clips. Flashes. Echoes. And we can never turn away, never put out of sight, never forget.

All developing Regions are Vulnerable to the Impacts of Climate Change⁸

Limited human and financial resources and weak institutions drive the vulnerability of these regions. But other factors, attributable to their geography and history, are also significant.

Sub-Saharan Africa (with 1,263 Spiritans by appointment) suffers from natural fragility (two-thirds of its surface area is desert or dry land) and high exposure to droughts and floods, which are forecast to increase with further climate change. The region's economies are highly dependent on natural resources. Biomass provides 80% of the domestic primary energy supply. Rain-fed agriculture contributes some 23% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), excluding South Africa; this region employs about 70% of the population. The impacts on agriculture with lower crop yields for maize production further compound the direct impact on human health by increasing the rates of undernutrition and reduced incomes, ultimately producing negative repercussions for economic growth. Inadequate infrastructure could hamper adaptation efforts, with limited water storage despite abundant resources. Malaria, already the biggest killer in the region, is spreading to higher, previously safe, altitudes.

Asia (with 44 Spiritans by appointment). A major driver of vulnerability is the large number of people living along the coast and on low-lying islands - over 130 million in China and 40 million in Vietnam. It is an area where income and employment depend on agriculture. In the **East Asia** Mekong River basin, the rainy season sees more intense precipitation, while the dry season lengthens by two months. The region's economies are highly dependent on marine resources—the value of well-managed coral reefs is \$13 billion in **Southeast Asia alone**—which are already under stress by industrial pollution, coastal development, overfishing and the runoff

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from agricultural pesticides and nutrients. Rising temperatures and reduced precipitation in **Central Asia** exacerbate the catastrophe of the disappearing Southern Aral Sea (caused by the diversion of water to grow cotton in a desert climate) while sand and salt from the dried-up seabed are blowing onto Central Asia's glaciers, accelerating the melting caused by higher temperatures. In **South Asia** water resources are likely to be affected by climate change through its effect on the Monsoon, which provides 70% of annual precipitation in a four-month period, and on the melting of Himalayan glaciers. Rising sea levels are a dire concern in the region, which has long and densely populated coastlines, agricultural plains threatened by saltwater intrusion, and many low lying islands. In more severe climate change scenarios, rising seas would submerge much of the Maldives and inundate 18% of Bangladesh.

Latin America and the Caribbean (with 144 Spiritans by appointment). Most critical ecosystems are under threat. The tropical glaciers of the Andes are expected to disappear, resulting in water stress for at least 77 million people as early as 2020, and threatening hydropower, the source of more than half the electricity in many South American countries. Warming and acidifying oceans will result in diebacks of coral reefs in the Caribbean, which host nurseries for an estimated 65% of all fish species in the basin and are a critical tourism asset. Damage to the Gulf of Mexico's wetlands will make the coast more vulnerable to more intense and more frequent hurricanes. The most disastrous impact could be a dramatic dieback of the Amazon rain forest and a conversion of large areas to savannah, with severe consequences for the region's climate—and possibly the world's.

North Africa (with 61 Spiritans by appointment). The world's driest region; water is the major vulnerability. The region has few attractive options for increasing water storage, since close to 90% of its freshwater resources are already stored in reservoirs. The increased water scarcity

combined with greater variability will threaten agriculture, which accounts for some 85% of the region’s water use. Vulnerability is compounded by a heavy concentration of population and economic activity in flood-prone coastal zones and by social and political tensions that resource scarcity could heighten.

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Spiritans as Advocates for the Poor

As climate change impacts the planet and peoples across the world, our ecological and missionary duty is to be **advocates** on behalf of the poor about what is happening in creation. The climate crisis ultimately offers Spiritan mission the privilege of experiencing a fresh sense of mission to the ends of the Earth. Creation must be given a voice. We must listen to the people who fish the sea, harvest the forest, till the soil and mine the earth, as well as to those who advance the conservation, protection and preservation of the environment. We recognize numerous obstacles to participation. People often lack the political or economic power to participate fully.

Included in our mission is concern about what sort of world, environmentally and economically, culturally and spiritually, future generations will inherit from us. It is not just an environmental and economic issue, or a political and business one but rather a moral and spiritual one. Concern for the wider Earth community is part of a new moral order. “The climate change issue calls us to seize the moral imagination and embark on nothing less than radical transformation.”⁹ As missionaries we carry the conviction that a religious element is at the heart of ecology and the environment. At its core, climate change is about the future of God’s creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both the human environment and the natural environment.

To proclaim and demonstrate the value of environmental responsibilities, we are all called upon to act. As individuals and in families, we are urged to improve the ways in which we impact on and interact with our environment. “Recycle,” “Reuse,” “Repair,” and “Reduce” must become our environmental watchwords. We are stewards of the common patrimony of the planet. We are part of the universe, the universe is bigger than us, and dealing with it we have to respect its system. As John Paul II has cautioned:

There is an order in the universe which must be respected and [...] the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order for the well-being of future generations.¹⁰

While we Spiritans are a small group, our attempt to reduce our carbon use is an evangelical sign of our commitment to recognizing that all is gift, and to celebrating and protecting that gift. By seeking to reduce our carbon use in a measurable way, we stand in solidarity with the poor and with the vulnerable earth and we bear witness to the integrity of creation.¹¹

To find the living God in solidarity with the poor of the Earth remains an enormous challenge for Christian faith. Commitment to the poor and commitment to the well-being of life on this planet must go together as two interrelated dimensions of the one Christian vocation.¹² Ecological conversion is not opposed to, but intimately involved with, conversion to the side of the poor. We therefore need to advocate on issues relating to, for example, Ecological Generational Debt and Climate Debt, to mention but two.¹³

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Creation-centred Formation

There is a need for more formation on creation-centred theology. There has always been sensitivity towards the Earth within the Catholic Church, but it was far from mainstream.¹⁴

Thomas Berry, an American Passionist priest, made it his life's work to explore the connection between humans and the Earth. Described in Newsweek magazine in 1989 as "the most provocative figure among the new breed of eco-theologians,"¹⁵ Berry felt all religious communities needed to see themselves in the context of creation and to play a role in preserving the environment. He taught that the "great work" of our time is to establish a mutually enhancing human presence on our planet. He felt the planet's environmental crisis was fundamentally a spiritual crisis, with huge implications for religion.

Creation theology gives us hope for today's world in giving us a deeper awareness of our interconnectedness with our world.

Creation theology gives us hope for today's world in giving us a deeper awareness of our interconnectedness with our world. Initial and ongoing education and action on global warming issues need to be a significant feature

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of all Spiritan mission during these years. We need to be able to think theologically about this crisis in the light of the Christian tradition.¹⁶ A critical task for missionaries is to organize programs to motivate communities and partners to play their part in responding to the call to "Care for Creation." Here there is a need for the bringing together of all our gifts and talents. The scholars discover in Scripture and theology insights to share with and animate others. The moral and prophetic voice of the activist is an inspiration in public policy debates. Poets and contemplatives critique the situation and evoke a fresh imagination.

We need to be learners in the school of hope. We need to be mystics. Karl Rahner has said that the Christian of the future will be a mystic or he or she will cease to be anything at all.¹⁷ What he has in mind here is the "the mysticism of everyday life."¹⁸ He believes that there is an experience of God that occurs in every life. In such experiences there is an openness to mystery; the experience of grace. In the light of Christian revelation we can see this as the place of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This is the mysticism of daily life. What then would a mysticism of ecological praxis look like? I suggest that it might embrace some of these kinds of experiences:¹⁹

The experience of being caught up in the beauty of the natural world.

The experience of being called to solidarity with the creatures of Earth, of being called to an ecological conversion.

The experience of conversion from individualism and consumption to the simplicity of what Sallie McFague calls "life abundant." And knowing that what matters are the basic necessities, medical care, educational opportunities, loving relationships, meaningful work, an enriching imaginative and spiritual life, time with friends, and time spent with the natural world around us.²⁰

The experience of commitment to the creatures of our Earth community.

Conclusion

In living out the Spiritan option for the poor our mission

concern is about what sort of world, environmentally and economically, culturally and spiritually, future generations will inherit from us. We share a responsibility to those in the poorest countries who will experience the most acute suffering from the effects of environmental degradation. We join in the task of finding equitable ways to compensate and accommodate those who are suffering most.

To be ready for these tasks, Spiritans need to be credible, literate and fulfilled. Along with all disciples of Jesus, Climate Change challenges Spiritans to be people of hope rooted in the realities of our world. Spiritans are being led by the Spirit into a new mission task for our times to be:

Truth Tellers: welcoming knowledge about Earth's systems and the consequence of human induced climate change as advances in truth;

Spiritual Visionaries: accepting changing patterns of climate as another chapter in cosmic revelation and a new turn in encountering God;

Just and compassionate: committing to challenge economic structures that disrupt Earth's ecological systems as a continuation of healing social disruption especially among the world's poor;

Active: leading the way in a commitment to new ways of living lightly on the earth.

Prayer for the guidance of God's Spirit to renew the face of the Earth is central to Spiritans making individual and community responses to climate change: Come Holy Spirit.

In praying her Magnificat and honouring her role as Mother, Mary can help lead Spiritans to respect this planet which nurtures us all and to rightly call it *mother Earth*. The ecological conversion spoken of by Pope John Paul II will require courage as Spiritans choose to make sacrifices and change life styles to reconnect with nature's rhythms.

The Jubilee is a further summons to conversion of heart through a change of life. It is a reminder to all that they should give absolute importance neither to the goods of the Earth, since these are

The ecological conversion...

...will require courage as Spiritans choose to make sacrifices and change life styles to reconnect with nature's rhythms.

not God, nor to man's domination or claim to domination, since the Earth belongs to God and to him alone (Leviticus 25:23).²¹

Spiritans are learning to be more humble in the face of what Earth is saying to us now. The endangered Earth demands a new prophetic way of being missionaries. Spiritans are called to empty themselves as God chose to do in taking on flesh in Jesus Christ, and in doing so they will help bring the transformation that leads to the fullness of life God wishes for all peoples and the world in the Cosmic Lord.

When history records the actions we take or fail to take at this our moment of truth, we will not have the excuse that we did not understand, that we did not know. We have been gifted, in a global communications order, with the knowledge and the opportunity to act.

Would it not be the greatest of all human achievements if we were to succeed in delivering the benefits of science, the shared wisdom, instinct and intuition of diverse cultures, and the products of reason and faith; and in delivering all of these through new, balanced models of development, ecology and society?

Then we might say, that when facing the fullness of our challenge, we made the decisions that offered a shelter that protected the vulnerable of the present, and at the same time, offering creative and imaginative possibilities for future generations. Let us succeed together.²²

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Endnotes

¹Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Establishment of the "World Day Of Prayer for the Care of Creation" [1st SEPTEMBER] at <https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2015/documents/papa->

²Optimal amounts of naturally occurring greenhouse gases, especially water vapor, are necessary to maintain the Earth's temperature at inhabitable levels. Without greenhouse gases, Earth's temperature would be too cold for human and most other life. However, excessive greenhouse gases cause Earth's temperature to warm up considerably which cause major, and occasionally catastrophic, changes to weather and wind patterns, and the severity and frequency of various types of storms. Major sources of greenhouse gases generated by mankind are:

- Burning of fossil fuels, which includes oil and gas, coal and natural gas.
- Chlorofluorocarbons, commonly used in refrigeration, cooling and manufacturing applications.
- Methane, which is caused by emissions from landfills, livestock, rice farming (which uses methane-emitting bacteria), septic processes, and fertilizers.
- Deforestation

³The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is a scientific intergovernmental body with the purpose of providing comprehensive scientific assessments of current scientific, technical, and socio-economic information worldwide about the risk of climate change caused by human activity, its potential environmental and socio-economic consequences, and possible options for adapting to these consequences or mitigating the effects. Thousands of scientists and other experts contribute (on a voluntary basis, without payment from the IPCC) to the writing and reviewing of reports, which are then submitted to government officials. The main purpose of the IPCC isn't to make new studies, but to review and put together other studies, basically summarizing all relevant research and drawing conclusions from it.

⁴Berry, Robert James, *God's Book of Works: the Nature and Theology of Nature*, London: T&T Clark, 2003, 179.

⁵Taken from *Spiritun Life*, no. 19 (May 2010).

⁶<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/>

⁷Sean McDonagh, *Climate Change: the Challenge to Us All* Dublin: The Columba Press, 2006, 173.

⁸*World Development Report 2010: Development and Climate Change* The World Bank, Washington D.C., 1-6.

⁹Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006), a documentary built around Al Gore's turn on the lecture circuit concentrating on the causes and consequences of Global Warming.

¹⁰Message of Pope John Paul II for the 1990 World Day of Peace, January 1st 1990.

¹¹The total set of greenhouse gas emissions caused directly and indirectly by an individual, community, organisation, event or product is what is commonly called their *carbon footprint*.

¹²Boff, Leonardo, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2005.

¹³"The ecological generational debt of country A consists of (1) the ecological damage caused over time by country A in other countries or in an area under jurisdiction of another country through its production and consumption patterns, and/or (2) the ecological damage caused over time by country A to ecosystems beyond national jurisdiction through its consumption and production patterns, and/or (3) the exploitation or use of ecosystems and ecosystem goods and services over time by country A at the expense of the equitable rights to these ecosystems and ecosystem goods and services of other countries or individuals." Paper on *The Concept of Ecological Debt: An Environmental Justice Approach to Sustainability*, presented at the 7th Global Conference on Environmental Justice and Global Citizenship, July 2008, Oxford, UK, by Gert Goeminne and Erik Paredis.

The concept of Climate Debt incorporates two distinct elements: *Adaptation debt* which represents the compensation owed to the poor for the damages of climate change they have not caused; *Emissions debt* which is compensation owed for their fair share of the atmospheric space they cannot use if climate change is to be stopped.

¹⁴From the works by Teilhard de Chardin, Matthew Fox, Thomas Berry, Edward Echin, Sean McDonagh, and looking back several centuries to such environmental champions as Hildegard of Bingen, Mother Julian of Norwich, Francis of Assisi.

¹⁵Berry was influenced by the work of Teilhard de Chardin and was President of the American Teilhard Association for 12 years. He himself was inspirational to a younger generation of eco-theologians, including Matthew Fox and Columban Sean McDonagh.

¹⁶There is an enormous shift in the understanding of nature between the work of Newton and that of Einstein. For a study of the impact of this shift on theology, see John Homer, "Nature, Physics and Theology Naturalized," *Compass* 21 (Summer 1987), 13-18; see also his *The Description of Nature: Neils Bohr and the Philosophy of Quantum Physics* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.

¹⁷Rahner, Karl, "Christian Living Formerly and Today" in *Theological Investigations* Vol. 7 New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.

¹⁸Eagan, H., Karl Rahner: *Mystics of Everyday Life* New York: Crossroads 1998.

¹⁹Edwards, Denis, *Ecology at the Heart of Faith* Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 2006.

²⁰McFague, Sallie, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2000, 209-210.

²¹*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 1998, no. 12.

²²President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins. Address given to the Summit of Conscience at the invitation of President François Hollande on 21st July, 2015.