

Spirituality and Sustainability

Spirituality is not necessarily about religious belief but is about having a positive impact on, and acting positively for, others and the earth. It involves an ethos of care, or loving-kindness. People of all religious persuasions need to heed the calls of their leaders to implement changes in both their personal and professional lives in order to heal Planet Earth. Those with no religious beliefs also need to heed the calls of leaders around the world for the same reasons.

SPIRITUALITY'S RELEVANCE TO SUSTAINABILITY

In exploring links between spirituality and sustainability this essay traverses the nature of spirituality and non-spirituality, whether it is the preserve of believers in God or not, and its effects on people. It briefly reviews major religions' views about the importance of living sustainably while lamenting the ecological degradation wrought by modern society, the influence of the political right, the effects of our pluralistic (which some in the west call post-Christian) society coinciding with neo-liberalism's fetish of economic growth, and the evolution of the understandings of the first biblical texts that led to the current state of planetary despoliation. God's unity with ecology¹ and nature² is illustrated, along with the imperative towards social justice in order for the entire world's interconnected systems to be in a state of wellbeing. To live sustainably, in a way consistent with humanity's will to thrive, is possible and is a real hope for a future fit for every person, creature and nature.

Spirituality is strongly tied to sustainability through its effect of increasing both self-awareness and the sense that there is something greater in and beyond this world that is worth cherishing. It acknowledges evolution, recognises that humanity's knowledge is limited, that what lies beyond is not always knowable, respecting that science is the process of discovery of what can be discovered about what exists. It incorporates an ethos of caring for what we know and have. Believers in God have the hope that healing and restoration will become a reality and expect they will know more about what lies beyond once they pass to the next life. Non-believers who are spiritually inclined stand in awe of the complexity and interconnectedness of what exists and make efforts to care for it.

Spirituality, its definition still evolving, can be described as a personal quality that moves or animates people deeply and positively towards integrating their lives; transcending or bettering themselves in growing in the values they ultimately aspire to. It is not a physical or material concept but involves conscious experience, expending effort towards self-development. Traditionally it was understood as a process of re-formation towards becoming more like God, later incorporating mental aspects of life. Today it also includes values by which people live, often separate from organized religion, but requiring effort in personal growth. Being spiritual has constructive effects, with an awareness of a greater reality within and beyond the material world, giving people's inner lives deeper meaning, leading to virtuousness, for example being wise, compassionate, empathic, loving and kind,

¹ The root word for ecology is the ancient Greek word "oikos", which means home. Planet Earth is our home. Oikos is also the root word for economics and ecumenism. So the meaning of oikos relates to the home and its interactions with the wider environment / ecosystem, both natural and social.

² The word "nature" is a term Christians use for creation, which is the formation and development, or evolution, of the whole cosmos and everything in it.

having a sense of wonder, being grateful, appreciating beauty, among other attributes. It may even result in considering oneself as part of the universe.

All religions, with their beliefs in a loving, living, unseen spirit energizing the cosmos, contain organized beliefs shared by the group while instilling reverence towards it. Indigenous cultures, living so closely with nature, also believe in the spiritual realm with an afterlife. However, individuals not affiliated to any religion can also be spiritual. They do possess self-awareness, having made the effort to develop their inner lives, so that they can express their full human potential that will contribute to making the world a better place. For such people, having a sense of purpose and positively affecting the world is not seen as needing to acknowledge a loving intelligent Primordial Energy Who intentionally formed the universe. Ironically some who admit to religious affiliations may not always appreciate the depths their religious faith beckons them towards, rather enjoying the comfort of a promise of salvation through belief without analysing or acting on social or environmental teachings.

Being non-spiritual is usually understood as outwardly seeking personal satisfaction, concerned with looking after oneself before someone else gains first advantage. It afflicts many, including the successful in the world, evidenced by their feeling unfulfilled and unhappy despite their apparent success. Some work on their mental and emotional lives, which Fromm, Frankl, Ketchell and Pickett for example, have so wisely articulated. Constantly striving to acquire more or to be more does not lead to satisfaction because inner peace, being concerned about issues affecting others and sensing that there is “something more”, requires stillness to perceive other realities, which cannot always be fathomed. Humble self-knowledge through a journey of personal growth in overcoming human frailty leads to fulfilment and healing of personal scars. Conversely, holding grudges, being angry, aggressive, condescending or careless towards others and the world, along with other destructive attitudes or practises, are obstacles to genuine peace and spirituality.

Environmentalists often lean towards being spiritual, having been disillusioned by the theory of economic growth that exploits the earth for its resources, imperilling nature and humanity by releasing toxins into the environment, and directly impoverishing many while failing to deliver illusory promises for the lucky. Others are disillusioned with organised religion, judging it to be hypocritical in its lack of compassion towards some others, yet they sense there is “something more”. The “spiritual void” is now openly discussed; it is obvious to many that humanity has broken relationships with Planet Earth, neighbours of all types, and God (Roewe, 6 Nov 20). People now yearn for ethics. Science cannot mobilize authenticity, wisdom and meaning, which is becoming more pressing for more people the more the planet manifests more drastically its anthropogenically-generated extremes.

Striving for greater self-awareness, an aspect of spirituality, sensitizes people to their neighbours, nature and the realization that everything is interdependent; that people are actually part of nature in a relationship that must be symbiotic for life to thrive. It requires transcending earlier programming in order to achieve self-mastery, live more humbly, act more justly and understand what loving-kindness entails, an imperative concisely articulated in Micah 6:8 of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). As it is, Planet Earth is more polluted, forests and food sources are shrinking, and our planet is less liveable for both humanity and nature through changing climate, biodiversity loss, profligate waste, pollution, viruses

escaping their natural boundaries having nowhere else to go, and other negative consequences. This is the antithesis of a healthy symbiotic relationship.

Major religions of the world have become concerned about planetary degradation.

- Judaism teaches extensively about eco-Judaism. R. Fred Scherlinder Dobb and Jacobs, M. provide comprehensive bibliographies compiled for the Hebrew year 5777 Global Day of Jewish Learning (the 'Reconstructionist hour') and the public respectively.
- Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* imploring humanity to live sustainably and mindfully and practising forgiveness describes in effect an ecology of the whole world.
- Statements by Greek Orthodox Patriarchs reinforcing that message declare that respect for the environment is an "act of doxology of God's name" (Bartholomew, Patriarch, 1997).
- Protestants through the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation make similarly strong statements against exploitation of the environment and people (WCC Report of the Greed Line, 2014).
- Muslims believe that the destruction of creation is an offense against the Creator (Bilal, 2017). Islam's eco-theology promoting responsibility for creation through principles of stewardship, moderation, celebrating the unity of humanity and nature, among other virtues (Bakar, 2012) also testifies to the unity of thinking about ecology and the environment as physical signs of a sacred creator.

All make powerful messages urging humanity to change course.

A spirituality of nature has developed, especially since scientists raised awareness of human-induced environmental degradation in the 1960s. Pope Francis is particularly concerned about the environment and his encyclical *Laudato Si'* has been instrumental in inspiring many, believers and non-believers alike, to work more urgently for the planet. The so-called "end times narratives" of the Gospels (Matt. 24:6-8³; Mk. 13:8⁴; Lk. 21:9-11⁵) and other religions enables us to reflect on what is happening today, that is, they can be applied to the problems the world is currently experiencing, for example, climate change and social unrest, among other things, before evolving into something new. "End times" does not mean the end of the world, but probably the end of the unjust and unsustainable world that we know, which implies transitioning towards something better and, some believe, the reign of God on Earth. Knowing how to live respectfully and sustainably will be an essential attribute for whatever the future holds.

It is considered by some that current society, starting with the philosopher Descartes then followed by Enlightenment thought, is an aberration in discarding a sense of an awe-inspiring, transcendent, unseen God who is the original source of the cosmos. Through

³ ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come.

⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.

⁴ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

⁵ ⁹ When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away."

¹⁰ Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

religious spiritual eyes the cosmos is evidence of the first “written book”, the Book of Creation that sits together with the Book of Scriptures. This concept had been lost over time but is now, through the understandings of science, returning to prominence by the religiously inclined. Indigenous cultures also hold that a healthy relationship between God, land and people exists. Non-believers consider belief in God to be superstitious, especially after noting practises reflecting cultural and political distortions over-laying the original teachings, making Christian beliefs indeed look superficial and superstitious. However, without proof of God or not, and the difficulty of interpreting the layers of meaning in the Word, it rests on faith to believe or not. It cannot be ignored though that in this pluralistic age where no particular religion predominates, and which converges with the materialism of neoliberal capitalism’s doctrines, i.e. belief in unlimited economic growth that depends on continued extraction, consumption and waste, is also the age when the planet and society, with all their interdependent systems, are broken at a global scale. However, a transition towards a just society that heals people and the earth and which offers hope is also beginning to emerge. The Bibliography illustrates many budding shoots.

It is ironic that environmentalists and scientists often with no faith affiliations, rather than the churches, have been at the forefront of the growing awareness of environmental despoliation along with its consequences. Some fundamentalist churches even now deny climate change while often also preaching a gospel of wealth that is at root of current exploitative practices. Others do not seem to realise that the point of Christianity is to apply all its teachings to their lives. Their version of Christianity is more akin to a cosy salvation club for its members. Other churches again have their financial assets entwined in the world’s systems making it difficult to operate consistently by their beliefs. Conservative Christians fail to preach a gospel of love towards the planet, often because some liberals have a different view of pre-birth life or understanding of the social milieu that contributes to such decisions, preferring to look only through narrow lenses after being captured by the political right whose policies are leading to the destruction of nearly all planetary life.

The political right’s strategy of purporting to be pro-life, in order to collect support for their policies from right-wing conservative Christians, is a deception; their strategists are not concerned about Christian values towards life at any stage of development. It is inconsistent for those purporting to be pro-life to support right-wing policies that promote the sale of weapons of mass destruction to warring factions around the world, that support environmental destruction with no consideration of the consequent harm to people and their planetary home, while supporting the accumulation of massive wealth for this elite at the expense of impoverished others. Making no effort towards fair redistributive mechanisms has revealed their acquisitive mind-set. It has led to the massive social inequality afflicting society today. The Koch brothers and a clique of like-minded wealthy elite influencers were instrumental in this duplicity, outlined by Meyer in her book *Dirty Money*. Such a mind-set is the antithesis of both sustainability and the Judeo-Christian ethic. It is a stumbling block to many who judge churches as being hypocritical given that billions, not millions, of lives are imperilled by supporting right-wing policies, usually slowly and invisibly, by modern economic practises and addiction to energy-dense fossil fuel that was buried eons ago, enabling human life to emerge. However, since Western culture that is profligate, and the neoliberal financial model both predominate, nobody in this modern age is free from some degree of culpability in participating in unsustainable practises that may also be unjust.

Some of the earliest biblical texts pertaining to sustainable living and social justice are found in Exodus 22:21-27⁶ and reinforced through time through many prophets, for example Psalm 112, Isaiah and others. The bible also acknowledges the source of the universe, which people of faith believe is God Who is everywhere and in everything in the cosmos. Most Hebrew Bible books are recognized by Jews, Christians and Muslims and much of what is written in them also reflects the ethics of other ancient religions. If the ethical precepts as set out were adhered to, a civilized, peaceful society existing in a thriving, natural world would result.

Believers have missed the environmental imperative. Mistranslation of Genesis 1:26 " ... Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over ... "in the first few centuries CE resulted in a word that probably denoted a parent-child relationship between God and humanity being interpreted as having "dominion over". It was a homely concept, but further thought development over time resulted in God eventually being seen as separate from nature. Francis of Assisi understood the interconnectedness of nature that included humanity, but his views did not gain traction until recently. Genesis 1:26 is probably better understood when read in conjunction with Genesis 2:15 "The Lord God took the man (humanity) and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it", which implies being more caring and respectful towards nature by serving and protecting it in partnership with God. It became more strongly slanted towards the exploitative concept of domination after about the time of Descartes and the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s. The Protestant Reformation saw Earth in more mechanical terms, after which the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution permitted nature's minerals and other resources to be exploited for their wealth potential, with no thought of respecting nature or considering that a primordial originator, who may be alive, may be involved. By then, for believers God was seen as either absent or as an absent landlord. While Christians laboured under the delusion that it was acceptable to exploit the planet for its resources, exploitation of humans has never been endorsed.

God was perceived to be residing in nature from the earliest times, with God and humanity being in a sort of partnership in a sacred world imbued with its own life force. In attempting to understand the original Hebrew meaning, recent scholars have used the word "stewardship" but that, too, is problematic as it still connotes an anthropocentric orientation and is often used as a "green wash" term by big business. Jesus and His early followers reserved use of the term for financial matters. However, now that awareness has surfaced about the destruction of finite Planet Earth the concept of ecological sin against God and the environment has emerged in Judaism, Christianity and Muslimism in particular (see section on World Faith Communities' statements). Religious leaders of all major faiths are united in their concern for Planet Earth caused by human activity and wastefulness and are calling it out as sin against God Who fashioned and abides in everything. The logic is that if the world belongs to the Originator Who also abides in it then destroying it is sin, because sin means to

⁶ 21 "You must not mistreat or oppress foreigners in any way. Remember, you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt.

²² "You must not exploit a widow or an orphan. ²³ If you exploit them in any way and they cry out to me, then I will certainly hear their cry.

²⁴ My anger will blaze against you, and I will kill you with the sword. Then your wives will be widows and your children fatherless. ²⁵ "If you lend money to any of my people who are in need, do not charge interest as a money lender would. ²⁶ If you take your neighbour's cloak as security for a loan, you must return it before sunset. ²⁷ This coat may be the only blanket your neighbour has. How can a person sleep without it? If you do not return it and your neighbour cries out to me for help, then I will hear, for I am merciful.

hurt of offend God. Ecological sin is also viewed as social sin due to the abuse of resources using cheap labour feeding selfishness and profligate consumption. Failing to see the earth as sacred, a sacrament⁷ of its originator, shifts awareness towards self-centeredness with no self-restraint. Calls for a degree of asceticism pulls believers and non-believers who appreciate the stretched times in which we live, back towards gratitude and appreciation so that resources can be preserved for future generations.

Books in both the Hebrew and New Testaments abound with teachings about social justice, which when carried out is deemed as proof of living what adherents believe. It means living in a sustainable society, for example, Proverbs 21:3 “To do righteousness and justice is more desirable to the Lord than sacrifice” or Isaiah 10:1-2 “Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless”. Other Hebrew Bible books similarly strongly condemn injustices towards the less fortunate. Jesus condemned such practices so strongly that He was crucified for claiming as God’s human son that upholding such unjust laws was hypocritical. Such teachings are particularly relevant under neoliberalism’s unsustainable economic doctrine practised by large corporations and political conservatives and which, like ancient Israel, is leading to the collapse of nature as well as society.

The history of Israel illustrates the cyclical nature of human progress in its growth, then arrogance in its unsustainable practises, before failure and that the ancient Israelites were a representative sample of humanity rather than the reviled race that crucified the Christ (as was prescribed by the law for those claiming to be God, which Jesus knew). Now the gentiles (whose officials carried out the crucifixion millennia ago, thus pointing to both Jews and gentiles being culpable), the unspiritual, the apathetic, the greedy and the unaware, are crucifying the whole planet, another type of God’s offspring! Arrogance and greed blind people to the effects of their behaviour. With the effects of gross exploitation now being global, there is no further opportunity to change direction without widespread adversity, or perhaps without a(nother) divine visit to save us from our own folly.

The ray of hope lies in the death-resurrection cycle leading to awareness that nature and spirit are one and are constantly renewed. For believers in God, nature is not independent but reflects God’s ownership, presence and care (Lev. 25:23⁸; Matt. 5:45⁹) enlivening, sustaining and caring for all nature of which humanity is a part (Matt 6:26,30¹⁰; Luke 12:6¹¹). Jesus identified so closely with elements of nature that He called bread and wine His body

⁷ The outward sign of an invisible reality

⁸ The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers.

⁹ For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

¹⁰ Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

³⁰ Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

¹¹ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God.

and blood (Mt. 26:26–27¹², Mk. 14:12–26¹³, Lk. 19–20¹⁴) and the temple as his body (Jn 2:19¹⁵), signifying that God is present in both matter and space-time. The bread and wine, which are elements of the earth, are infused with the primordial Divine Spirit at Mass. Acknowledged as “fruit of the vine and work of human hands”, the divine energy in the blessed bread and wine sustains not only communicants but also reverberates beyond to embrace the whole earth in unending love.

Everything is connected by energy in never-ending lifecycles and webs of interdependence. The spiritual see nature as the hiding place of the Primordial Energy, whom believers call God, who is living, the source of love, wisdom and justice. Each atomic particle through to each creature and cosmic element is imbued with this Energy generated about 15 billion years ago, connecting everything in an ecological symphony vibrating throughout the universe. Conversely, pollution and environmental destruction breaking ecological webs, unleashing pandemics and other pestilences, all remind us how disconnected we are from God and Nature. Planet Earth, being also one of God’s “children” like the cosmos, is now asking humanity to pause for reflection to change its ways before our planetary home loses its ability to sustain life, including humanity. Transforming our ways is achievable through practising principles of social and ecological justice, and appreciating that we are all part of nature united with the Divine Energy in a still-evolving cosmos.

A sound appreciation of what sustainability means for us personally requires a profound ecological conversion towards a comprehensive and vibrant inner life (O’Leary, 2017) whether people are religious or not. For believers God, or the Primordial Energy, encompasses the whole universe with living completeness akin to the perfect marriage (Isa. 62:5¹⁶; Rev. 19:7¹⁷). Such yearning for unity and a “something more” is beautifully expressed in the book Song of Solomon. The restlessness people feel is nature’s invitation to connect with the Great Spirit, directing us away from external novelty, egoism and materialism that afflict the modern world, towards gratitude, service and responsibility. The Integral Ecology that Pope Francis teaches in *Laudato Si’* would, if practised, harmonise nature, society and the cosmos through uniting with the one energy field. This energy field perceived by the spiritually inclined, including Buddhists who seek to attain deep insights into the nature of life, and Hindus who seek to reach ultimate unity with everything, is perceived as imbuing wholeness and harmony, leading to love and reverence for the whole cosmos and all life.

Both believers and non-believers can be spiritual, the difference being that believers see the whole cosmos as alive with the spirit of the Primordial Energy as well as the spirits of other beings. Living by an ethic that acknowledges some greater reality, not all of which is known,

¹² 26 While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread. He said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take it, and eat it; this is my body.” 27 Then he took the cup, said the blessing, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from this all of you. For this is my blood of the covenant, shed for many for the forgiveness of sins.

¹³ 22 As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take it, for this is my body.” 23 And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 And he said to them, “This is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice for many.

¹⁴ 19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

¹⁵ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.’

¹⁶ As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

¹⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.

and regardless of belief, is indeed the only sustainable option for both society and the planet because since we do not know everything, widespread disturbance of nature can have unforeseen negative consequences in the incompletely understood ecological webs as they unravel, with the potential to destroy humanity. Sustainability is ultimately about practising an all-embracing love, awe, reverence and wisdom towards people, creatures and the earth, along with other constructive behaviours allowing life to flourish by living more simply and less profligately. If we love nature and our fellow creatures by making way for them to thrive, nature and our fellow creatures will love us in return by providing clean water, air, soil and all the ingredients for our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing in a healthy planetary home. Wisdom, with its evolving insights and appreciation of the complex ecology of the multiple interconnected facets of nature's systems, not all which are known or understood, is necessary to manage the multiple environmental and social elements working together synergistically. Unless we become more spiritual our full potential and the potential of the planet runs the risk of not being fully realized.

Readers of this essay will realize that I am a believer, though neither a theologian nor a reverend, or a right-wing conservative or a fundamentalist. Others more qualified about matters spiritual, however, have critiqued this essay.

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March 2021*

WORLD FAITH COMMUNITIES' STATEMENTS AND OTHER REFERENCES

##AP Adrianos, L. ##D 9 November 2021. ##P *Oikoumene*. ##T Tackling the climate crisis through repentance and ecological conversion of "homo economicus".

<https://www.oikoumene.org/blog/tackling-the-climate-crisis-through-repentance-and-ecological-conversion-of-homo-economicus> . ##S A Blogspot acknowledging the inspiration from Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the recommendations of the World Council of Churches, the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical, the ecumenical season of creation movement and the eco-theology and ECOTHEE Conferences. "Humanity has crossed the red line of sustainability behaviour with respect to the earth's capacity to host "human life" so political leaders must recognize the ethical and spiritual roots of the current ecological and economic crises."

##AO Australian Religious Response to Climate Change. <https://www.arrcc.org.au/> . ##S A grassroots organisation that mobilises people of all faiths to take effective action for climate justice. Being independent of government grants and large institutions, they can fearlessly speak truth to power.

##AO Islamic Declaration on Climate Change: https://www.arrcc.org.au/islamic_declaration . ##S The Declaration calls on the world's 1.6 billion Muslims to do their part to eliminate dangerous greenhouse gas emissions and commit to renewable energy sources.

##AP Bartholomew, Patriarch of Constantinople. ##D 1 September 2020. ##P *Ecumenical Patriarchate Latest News*. <https://www.goarch.org/-/patriarchal-encyclical-indiction> . ##S Orthodox Church year begins with call to take action for creation. Patriarch Bartholomew calls to live without destroying the environment.

##AP Bilal, M.G. ##D 1 April 2017. ##T Islamic Ecotheology: A Religious Call to Protect Ecosystem. <http://www.khaleafa.com/khaleafacom/islamic-ecotheology-a-religious-call-to-protect-ecosystem>

##AP Brockopp, J. ##T Introduction to Special Issue: Islam and Ecology: Theology, Law and Practice of Muslim Environmentalism. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43809776> . ##P *Worldviews*, ##V 16 (3), pp. 213-217. 2012. ##S For religious Muslims, preventing climate change and loss of habitat can be thought of as the preservation of God's revelation. This essay provides an introduction to how Islam is engaged in protection of the environment

##AP Benedict XVI, Pope. ##T Letter of His Holiness to the Fifth General Conference of the Council of Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://www.celam.org/aparecida/Ingles.pdf> ##S The Vatican has realised the importance of ecological and environmental issues since 2007. Then-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio headed the Commission that wrote the document.

##AP Curwood, S. ##P *PRI The World*. ##T Spiritual leaders seek to spur 'ecological conversion'. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2021-05-13/spiritual-leaders-seek-spur-ecological-conversion> . ##S Science and policy are vital in building a more sustainable world, but they often don't convey the values that engage and encourage people to participate in the process. A podcast that outlines how traditions, from Native American to Eastern thought to mainstream Catholicism, spiritual teachings call on humanity to live in harmony with nature.

##AP Dobb, R. Fred Scherlinder. ##D 20 November 2016. ##P Reconstructing Judaism. ##T Eco-Judaism: Is There Any Other Kind? How Torah Pushes the Sustainability Envelope. https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/sites/default/files/eco-judaism_is-there-any-other-kind_fsd-2016-8pp.pdf. ##S Explores some Talmudic teachings in relation to the environment.

##AP Fraser, B. ##D 30 October 2021. ##P NCROnline. ##T Eastern Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew says young people can 'save democracy and our planet'. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/eastern-orthodox-patriarch-bartholomew-says-young-people-can-save-democracy-and-our>. ##S In his remarks at Notre Dame, Bartholomew stressed the importance of making political decisions based on scientific evidence and the need for people of faith to work together toward solutions. The patriarch also called for ecocide to be declared an international crime. Both climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic raise ultimate questions about life and death.

##AP Glatz, C. ##D 13 May 2019. ##P Crux. ##T Pope invites young people to pledge to build a new economy. <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2019/05/pope-invites-young-people-to-pledge-to-build-a-new-economy/>. ##S Pope Francis has invited young economists and entrepreneurs around the world to help create a "new and courageous culture" that finds new ways to do business, promote human dignity and protect the environment.

##AP Glatz, C. ##D 7 September 2021. ##P NCR online. ##T Choose life by choosing to care for creation, Pope Francis and other Christian leaders say. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/choose-life-choosing-care-creation-pope-francis-and-other-christian-leaders-say>. ##S The joint message was signed by the pope, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, an early leader in the Christian ecology movement, and Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury, England. It was the first time they felt compelled to address together, the urgency of sustainability, environmental impacts on poverty and the importance of global cooperation.

##AP Gutiérrez, L.T. ##D June 202. ##P Mother Pelican 16 (6), June 2020. ##T The Climax of Religious Patriarchy and the Renewal of Human Relations. <http://www.pelicanweb.org/solisustv16n06page24.html>. ##S Since religious patriarchy and the patriarchal culture are inextricably connected; and since the historical combination of these cultural forces is the main driver of social/ecological injustice worldwide, we urgently need a renewal of human relations to balance the masculine and feminine polarities of human nature, competition and collaboration, efficiency and resilience, power and tenderness. We must balance social / ecological relations, resilience and efficiency / productivity, and exercise responsible parenthood; to foster a renewal of humanity in harmony with the human habitat, celibate women should be ordained to the priesthood and the episcopate.

##AO Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. ##D 12 July 2022. ##P Medical Express ##T Spirituality linked with better health outcomes, patient care. https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-07-spirituality-linked-health-outcomes-patient.html?utm_source=nwletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily-nwletter.

##S Spirituality, the way individuals seek ultimate meaning, purpose, connection, value, or transcendence, could include organized religion but extends well beyond to include ways of finding ultimate meaning. For healthy people, spiritual community participation is associated with healthier lives, greater longevity, less depression and suicide, and less substance use.

##AP Jackson, J. ##D 24 December 2021. ##P *Common Dreams*. ##T Don't Let the Deeper Meaning of Christmas Be Lost in Materialism. <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2021/12/24/dont-let-deeper-meaning-christmas-be-lost-materialism> . ##S Jesse Jackson made the point that the practical imperative of Jesus' teachings, demonstrating the power of faith, hope and charity, the importance of love is relevant today - he called upon us to care for the stranger. In an age of global pandemics, good will to all is not merely a holiday slogan, it is a survival imperative. In this secular age, we should not let the deeper meaning of Christmas be lost in the wrappings. Jesus called us to turn to, not on one another.

##AP Haneef, Sayed Sikandar Shah. ##T Principles of Environmental Law in Islam. ##P *Arab Law Quarterly*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3382024> ##V Vol. 17, No. 3 (2002), pp. 241-254

##AP Jacobs, M. <http://fore.yale.edu/files/judaism.pdf>. ##T Judaism and Ecology Bibliography.

##AO *Jesuit Review, The*. ##D 18 June 2015. ##T Top 10 Things You Need to Know about Pope Francis' Laudato Si'. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_lqFTYLc_4&feature=emb_rel_end . ##S A downloadable book providing prayers around ecological spirituality.

##AP Ketchell, M. ##D 17 November 2017. ##P *The Conversation*. ##T What does it mean to be spiritual? <https://theconversation.com/what-does-it-mean-to-be-spiritual-87236> ##S Article about a study of the millennial generation's search for deeper meaning.

##AP Larrea, C. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264205693_Inequality_Sustainability_and_the_Greed_Line_A_Conceptual_and_Empirical_Approach ##T 'Inequality, Sustainability and the Greed Line: A Conceptual and Empirical Approach'. ##P *The Ecumenical Review*. ##V Vol. 63, Issue 3 (October 2011).

##T Laudato Si! Movement Prayer Book. <https://multimedia.mail.laudatosimovement.org/laudato-B/documents/a6b77671-edd6-4676-a8c1-de0368202dc8.pdf> . ##S A downloadable book of prayer.

##AP McKenna, J. ##D 1 September 2016. ##T Pope Francis says Destroying the environment is a sin. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/01/pope-francis-calls-on-christians-to-embrace-green-agenda> ##S Pope Francis has called for urgent action to stop climate change and proposed that caring for the environment be added to traditional Christian works of mercy such as feeding the hungry and visiting the sick.

##AP Mercado, A. ##D 25 February 2022. ##P ##T Vatican Calls for a 'Cultural Revolution' to Fight Climate Change. <https://gizmodo.com/vatican-calls-for-a-cultural-revolution-to-fight-climat-1848595605> . ##S The Vatican's new website, Laudato Si' Action Platform, named after the Pope's encyclical of 2015 that framed protecting the environment as a spiritual mandate, calls on Catholics to eat less meat, take public transit and drive less, avoid single-use plastics and other wasteful habits, and take part in a "cultural revolution" to change how they interact with the natural environment and financial systems.

##AO Public Library of Science. ##D 30 November 2022.. ##P Medical Express. ##T Five precepts of Buddhism may be linked to lower depression risk. https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-11-precepts-buddhism-linked-depression.html?utm_source=nwletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily-nwletter . ##S The five precepts of Buddhism guide followers not to kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, tell ill-intentioned lies, or use intoxicants. Research suggests that observing the five precepts can boost well-being and quality of life for the general public, including nonserious followers.

##AP Qureshi, Z. ##D 9 March 2022. ##P *Sojourners*. ##T Gen Z is remixing religion. <https://sojo.net/articles/gen-z-remixing-religion> . ##S For previous generations, religious institutions offered solace in times of turmoil and uncertainty, but the Gen Z generation is finding solace through combining and redefining religions. It is sceptical of religious institutions, but remains interested in religious beliefs and questions of morality and justice that are associated with religion.

##AP Roewe, B. ##D 2 October 2020. ##P *National Catholic Reporter online*. ##T Why is Francis of Assisi the patron saint of ecology? <https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/why-francis-assisi-patron-saint-ecology> ##S Beyond pets, Francis is also known as the patron saint of ecology. On 29 November 1979, Pope John Paul II, in making this declaration, made St. Francis of Assisi the patron of ecology and of those who promote ecology, stating "Among the holy and admirable men who have revered nature as a wonderful gift of God to the human race, St Francis of Assisi deserves special consideration."

##AP Roewe, B. ##D 6 November 2020. ##P *National Catholic Reporter online*. ##T Climate crisis, covid-19 demand interfaith action, say religious leaders. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/climate-crisis-covid-19-demand-interfaith-action-say-religious-leaders> . ##S As the world looks to solutions to the dual crises of climate change and the coronavirus pandemic, its religious traditions have much to offer through their shared commitment to care for the Earth. The present moment offers "an opportunity and a grace" for restoration, beginning with religion playing a vital role in nurturing greater respect for creation and people.

##AP Sherma, R.D. ##D 17 February 2022. ##P *Phys. Org.* ##T Can religion and faith combat eco-despair? https://phys.org/news/2022-02-religion-faith-combat-eco-despair.html?utm_source=nwletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=daily-nwletter ##S The author speaks of green spirituality, which seeks to harness the spiritual traditions of the world to energize the effort to restore planetary ecosystems and stop future harms.

Many initiatives and conversations are happening among religions and international bodies, especially the UN and the WWF.

##AP Sullivan, M. ##D October 2019. ##T Sisters of Mercy extend their understanding of 'conversion' in this thought-provoking piece to include Ecological Conversion.

<https://www.mercyworld.org/about/our-initiatives/mgp-themes/segment-1/theological-imaginings-integral-ecological-conversion/>. ##S The whole Mercy Family talk frequently about "conversion". We may think we have already "done it." But have we, in face of the current, widespread, and severe degradation of Earth and the cries of all its vulnerable life, really surrendered ourselves to the thorough ecological conversion that these realities demand? Or have we, so far, only tinkered around the edges, done a few necessary, but relatively convenient "ecological things" – recycled a few cans and plastic bags -- and then rested upon our oars?

##AP Teertha, Swami Vibudhesha. ##T Hindu Faith Statement on the Environment.

<https://www.interfaithsustain.com/hindu-faith-statement-on-the-environment/>. ##S Hindu religion wants its followers to live a simple life. It does not allow people to go on increasing their material wants. People are meant to learn to enjoy spiritual happiness, so that to derive a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment, they need not run after material pleasures and disturb nature's checks and balances.

##AO Buddhism and Ecology. <https://www.interfaithsustain.com/buddhist-ecology/>. ##S All Buddhist teachings and practice come under the heading of Dharma, or phenomena: Truth and the path to Truth. In this way we can consider everything to be within the sphere of the teachings. All outer and inner phenomena, the mind and its surrounding environment, are understood to be inseparable and interdependent.

##AP Tendis, Rev N. (Ed). ##D 25 April 2019. ##T World Council of Churches ##T Roadmap for Congregations, Communities and Churches for an Economy of Life and Ecological Justice. An Economy of Life for All Now: An Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (WCC). <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/roadmap-for-congregations-communities-and-churches-for-an-economy-of-life-and-ecological-justice-pdf-for-home-printing>. ##S An invitation to congregations, communities and churches to discuss a 5-step programme to change the way we deal with the economy and our ecological surroundings.

##AP Tjelle, E. ##D 9 November 2020. ##T Interfaith advocacy for climate justice and peace.

<https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/norway-interfaith-advocacy-climate-justice-and-peace>
##S Shared commitment to care for the Earth yields not only fruits of the Earth but also the fruits of peace-making

##AP Tveit, Rev Dr Olav Fykse. ##T Creation is not for Sale. WCC 15 June 2016.

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/speeches/creation-is-not-for-sale>. According to Luther, Creation belongs to God; Psalm 24 reminds us we are accountable to God for what we do as partners in God's creation. Do we bring hope for human beings and the whole of creation? This is the question the Christian Church must ask. In the light of the cross and the resurrection, we are accountable for the hope that is given to us.

##AO UN Environment Programme. ##D 2020. ##T Faith for Earth: A Call for Action. <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/faith-earth-call-action> . ##S Describes the reverence that all religions have for creation and nature, and introduces the world's major life support systems, how to care for it and become part of the global interfaith movement that is bringing people together to protect and sustain life on Earth. Downloadable.

##AP Wells, I. ##D 18 March 2020. ##P Venduco ##T People of faith – no need for us to sleepwalk into a climate crisis. <https://www.venduco.net/post/a-faith-journey-to-climate-crisis-how-not-to-sleep-walk> . Living a life of faith is a way many of us aspire us to live better. Live better means contributing everything we have to future generations and disadvantaged people everywhere, who will be impacted by the climate crisis. Science and faith coexist.

##AP Wooden, C. ##D 27 May 2018. ##P Crux. ##T Pope, patriarch call for ethical intervention in economy. <https://cruxnow.com/vatican/2018/05/pope-patriarch-call-for-ethical-intervention-in-economy/> . Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople called on Christians to work together to build a culture of solidarity in the face of growing economic inequality and a lack of respect for the human dignity of the poor and of migrants.

##AO World Communion of Reformed Churches. ##D 2004. ##T The Accra Confession. <http://wrcr.ch/accra/the-accra-confession> ##S The Accra Confession was adopted by the delegates of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana (2004), based on the theological conviction that the economic and environmental injustices of today's global economy require the Reformed family to respond as a matter of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Accra Confession calls upon Reformed Christians around the world to engage injustices in the world as an integral part of their churches' witness and mission.

##AO World Council of Churches. ##D 28 November 2014. ##T The report of the Greed Line Study Group of the World Council of Churches (WCC). <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/poverty-wealth-and-ecology/the-report-of-the-greed-line-study-group-of-the-wcc> . ##S Acena Peralta consolidated works by Lucas Andrianos, Edward Dommen, Bob Goudzwaard, Rosario Guzman, Clement Kwayu, Carlos Larrea, Konrad Raiser, Jung Mo Sung and Michael Taylor.

##AO World Council of Churches. ##D 28 November 2014. ##T An Economy of Life for All Now: An Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (WCC). <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/economy-of-life-for-all-now-an-ecumenical-action-plan-for-a-new-international-financial-and-economic-architecture> The document outlines action areas for churches in tackling public finance and debt, regulation of the financial sector and global economic governance with the aim of realizing ethical, democratic, just and sustainable financial and economic systems.

##AP Yurjevich, M. ##D (to come). ##P SpiritedNZ ##T Spirituality and Sustainability. URL (to come). ##S Spirituality is not necessarily about religious belief but is about having a

positive impact on, and acting positively for, others and the earth. It involves an ethos of care, or loving-kindness, and includes a deep appreciation of nature and the sense that there is something more. People of all religious persuasions need to heed the calls of their leaders to implement changes in both their personal and professional lives in order to heal Planet Earth. Those with no religious beliefs also need to heed the calls of leaders around the world for the same reasons.

BOOKS

##AP Dalai Lama, His Holiness, Cutler, H. ##D 2003 ##T The art of happiness: a handbook for living. ##S 'The world's greatest spiritual leader teams up with a psychiatrist to share, for the first time, how he achieved his hard-won serenity and how we can find the same inner peace. ...Based on 2,500 years of Buddhist meditations and a healthy dose of common sense, this is a book that crosses the boundaries of traditions to help readers with the difficulties common to all human beings.' (LIFT Library)

##A15 Darragh, N. ed. ##D 2014. ##T But is it fair? Faith communities and social justice ##S "Today economic inequality threatens the welfare of many New Zealanders. ... This is a particular challenge for faith communities – communities of people who are brought together by a shared religious or spiritual faith. 31 people tell the stories of faith communities that promote greater fairness in New Zealand." (LIFT Library)

##AP De Chardin, P.T. A Jesuit priest and paleontologist who was ahead of his time in realising the depths of divinity in creation, evolution, and humankind's place in nature. His books include:

##T *The Phenomenon of Man*, 1955. (Evolution is a process that leads to increasing complexity, culminating in the unification of consciousness.)

##T *The Divine Milieu*, 1957. (With the emergence and development of man, the individual could use his free will to cooperate with God and go beyond what seems a purely material process.)

##T *Christianity and Evolution*, 2002. A book of his essays.

##AP Francis, Pope. ##T *Laudato Si'*. ##P The Vatican. ##S Learning to live sustainably on the planet requires more than technical expertise, business and politics - it requires caring, forgiveness and the values we live by. In recognising this and describing an ecology of the whole world, Pope Francis addresses everybody, Christians, non-Christians and non-believers alike in his wise and thought-provoking view of the modern world. Worth a study. Easy to read. Chapters and headings:

- What is Happening to our Common Home (Pollution and Climate Change, Waste and Throwaway Culture, Climate as a Common Good)
- The Gospel of Creation (Light offered by Faith, Wisdom of the Biblical Accounts, Mystery of the Universe, Message of each Creature in the Harmony of Creation, Universal Communion, Common Destination of Goods, Gaze of Jesus)
- The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis (Technology: Creativity and Power, Globalisation of the Technocratic Paradigm, Crisis and Effects of Modern

Anthropocentrism [practical relativism, need to protect employment, new biological technologies])

- Integral Ecology (Environmental, Economic and Social Ecology, Cultural ecology, Ecology of Daily Life, Principle of the Common Good, Justice between the Generations)
- Lines of Approach and Action (Dialogue on the Environment in the International Community, Dialogue for new National and Local Policies, Dialogue and Transparency in Decision-making, Politics and Economy in Dialogue for Human Fulfilment, Religions in Dialogue with Science)
- Ecological Education and Spirituality (Towards a New Lifestyle, Educating for the Covenant between Humanity and the Environment, Ecological Conversion, Joy and Peace, Civic and Political Love, Sacramental Signs and the Celebration of Rest, The Trinity and the Relationship Between Creatures, Queen of all Creation, Beyond the Sun [A prayer for our earth, A Christian prayer in union with creation])

##AP Frankl, V. ##T Man's Search for Meaning. ##D Republished March 2021. ##S Written by a survivor of the holocaust and who shares his struggle for survival in Auschwitz and other Nazi concentration camps. His story provides hope for others through his coining the concept of logotherapy.

##AP Fromm, E. wrote numerous books all highly recommended, including:

##T Escape from Freedom. ##D 1941

##T Man for Himself: An Inquiry Into The Psychology of Ethics. ##D 1947

##T The Sane Society, ##D 1956 ##PP Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

##T The Art of Loving. ##D 1956. ##PP Harper

##T The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, ##D 1973

##T To Have or To Be: The Nature of the Psyche. ##D 1976

##T The Art of Being, ##D 1989

##T The Art of Listening, ##D 1991

##T On Being Human, ##D 1991

##AP Haught, J.F. ##D 2015. ##T Resting on the Future: Catholic Theology for an Unfinished Universe. ##PP Bloomsbury, N.Y. ##S Haught eloquently illustrates that evolution is part of biblical writings from beginning to end.

##P Lane, Fr D. ##D 2020. ##T Theology and Ecology in Dialogue: The Wisdom of *Laudato Si'*. ##PP Paulist Press, N.Y.. ##S Links global warming and Covid-19, the latter being one crisis inside a larger one manifesting in a different way. Integral ecology is interdisciplinary, having radical implications for ethics and theology. Faith is defective if it does not care for our common home.

##AP McDonagh, S. ##D 2006 ##PP Columba Books ##T Climate change: the challenge to all of us

##S This book describes climate change, the various responses to it, suggested methods of dealing with it, and the place of the churches in society's responses. (LIFT Library)

##AP O'Leary, D. ##D 2017. ##T An Astonishing Secret: The Love Story of Creation and the Wonder of You. ##PP Columba Press.

##AP Rushton, K. ##D 2020. ##T The Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor. Hearing Justice in John's Gospel. ##PP SCM Press. ##S Far from being a Gospel that sits at a safe remove from everyday life, it can be preached as an urgent call to hear the voices of the oppressed in our world. This book, appealing to people of all denominations, was written in response to a hunger in the world for both spirituality and concern for the environment, both which are linked to social justice.