

# Christianity, science and technology as indicators of humanity's changing relationship with its environment (Revised and extended essay)

## Introduction

The first correlation of Christ the Saviour and the exigencies of the natural environment that come to mind is the necessary production of food and its equal distribution among the masses. Jesus Christ went unto the people to deliver his message at a time when the increasing Roman dominance sent the Israëlite nation into a spasm of messianic mongering. This essay hopes to explore one of the fundamental characteristics of a pre-supposed environmental movement. Not just the fair production and distribution of food for the providence of a staple diet, and its relation to the development of the Eucharist tradition, but also the possible environmental changes occurring at the time that threatened the moral religious status quo of a Roman-occupied nation. Were moral values being eroded at a time when Roman technology radically changed the way traditional people lived? And secondly, with a move to a more technological society, does Jesus offer a way back to traditional values and the spiritual strength it hoped to confer? The distinction between science and technology will be elucidated on further into this essay, suffice to say that Roman life was not a science-based mentality but rather a technological, action-orientated one; in fact it buried to a crucial extent the legacy of Greek science. The role of the Virgin Mary will also be looked at as an icon of technology, represented as such during the late Middle Ages at the time of the Renaissance and the emerging scientific revolution. But predominantly this essay will address whether the figure of Christ can expand a modern message about the current needs of today to return to traditional values, congruously depicting his role as a prophet for our time.

As one progresses in its reading the role of the Church through the ages and more particularly its historical unfoldment is kept uppermost in my mind. Since the time of Jesus the Church came to be deemed the Body of Christ because its origins are placed within the community of followers and disciples that congregated around his teaching and life. It is in this light that one must take a view of the environmental changes in the world accorded to an allegorical as well as a literal approach of his presence.

## Is the modern environmental movement afraid to call itself a religion?

In light of my claim that history repeats itself Hanson and Oakman highlighted a number of social factors during the time of Jesus Christ that I have indicated to have parallels today.<sup>1</sup> These include:

- The influence of technology over the social system in terms of its production power. (The evidence is consistent to suggest that technological determinism has contributed towards the creation of excess wealth and exploitation of social capital.)
- Domestic education and religion helped in socialising children and transmitting culture. (This is akin to the role of family-run education systems like home-schooling and the Waldorf schools - Steiner philosophy. One of the main tools for freedom of education has been the world-wide web, very much independent from government control and managed by an ever-increasing number of articulate bodies including hackers and free-loaders.)
- Domestic economy was premised on consumption. (Environmental incentives seek to develop local economies through schemes like localised currency, and LETS – Local Exchange Trading Systems where the power of the individual is more directly related to fictive kinship.)
- Political religion enforced loyalty to the deity and thus the payment of taxes through divine law. (The Aramaic term for wealth is *mamona*<sup>2</sup> which subsequent environmentalists have derogated to represent the ideological ‘god’ of the wealthy. However, the Roman construction program was very much premised on the wealthy making large financial contributions. Thus said, much of the environmental movement embraces charity – a type of secular ‘god’ - as its surrogate *mother* and is replacing the social responsibilities that governments once held and implemented through taxation measures. Most of the UK’s grant funding comes from the National Lottery)
- Organised schools of scribes institutionalised political education. They also concerned themselves with law. (One finds that conventional education systems polarise individualism with political acculturation.)
- Both Hellenistic-Roman law and Judean civil law affected the lives of the peasants, the latter through divine sanction. (The environmental movement seeks to mobilise power through the European Community as well as through local representation. Early Christianity manipulated these value systems through patrilocal and inter-city memberships within the Jewish Diaspora before it eventuated to become institutionalised itself.)
- Israélite history fashioned a strong sense of the eschatological as well as the political. (The eschatological motif in environmentalism can be seen in the cry of global warming as a direct result of over-industrialisation.)

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<sup>1</sup> K. C. Hanson & Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, pp16-17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p122.

The impression one gets here is that through social and behavioural patterns we are continually coming to terms with the same age-old problems. What is changing are its value systems accorded to the cultural conventions of the time, for instance kinship ties, and these are mainly exploited and institutionalised by élite groups. It is of my opinion that only through patronage will environmentalism form the bedrock or ethical base value for political authority.

Elsewhere in the appendices I offer a model (*The Holistic Design chart*) that regards my personal experience of the ecological as integrated within spiritual practice. It illustrates the creation of a mindscape for the development of the individual and how the individual relates to society through evolutionary measures. Despite my continued allusion throughout my written works of the economic basis of civilisation, actual experience for me follows the psycho-spiritual nature of existence on the thinking of Alistair McIntosh and Liberation Theology per se. Ultimately, questions of the nature of reality, suffering and the meaning of life are rudimentary for the social movement of any peoples, religion apart. However, it is necessary to draw parallels with religion in order to understand the environmental movement in terms of a social and psychological phenomenon that also defines the bulk of religious sentiment.

The environment includes both the natural world and human society. In particular one sees a vibrant strand of eco-feminism within the environmental movement that has strongly taken up the mantle of the feminine qualities of nature and its natural correlate of the independent mother. This has tended to see the development of the traditional role of women in domestic or household economics move out into the world of career management and the equality of position that they should now harbour. Hence, not long ago one could encounter the conditions not unlike that of Philo in ancient Palestine who talked of two types of state, the larger or “cities”, and the smaller or “households”; men for the larger (polity) and females the smaller (economy).<sup>3</sup> (*Special laws* 3.169; 171) represented by their perceptions of gender within social roles, behaviours, dress, spaces, times and attitudes. Cities then, as they were during Victorian times, were cited as the main centres where political and economic change could potentially be enacted from, where the role of woman within this context of urban polity resided in the subservient nature of industrial home-life.

Women played a major role in the life of Jesus,<sup>4</sup> albeit much of the history was downplayed due to the conventions of a patriarchal society. Within the Catholic tradition the Virgin Mary would come to represent one of the greatest periods of technological and economic change that occurred, mainly from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>5</sup> The relationship of Mary to God is considered Creation in its right manifestation. However, this representation also parallels nature’s ‘contract’ to humanity playing God, and patriarchal mastery through his conventions and justifications. The shift in the perception of nature, and hence of women throughout Europe, was then subtly moving into the 17<sup>th</sup> century where previously undefined roles

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p25.

<sup>4</sup> Knut Schaferdiek, ‘Christian mission and expansion’, p67.

<sup>5</sup> Sarah Jane Boss, *Empress and Handmaid*, p87.

were now being polarised between the social divisions of work and home life.<sup>6</sup> Even the naturalists of the 1800's had set themselves apart from the traditions and superstitions of rural people in preference to the intellectual centres encountered in cities where such issues were being discussed.<sup>7</sup> So, even though the pre-scientific Western models frequently contained the idea of sharing genetic or hereditary material, for instance blood types,<sup>8</sup> Cartesian dualism foisted these kinship ties into the social demarcations of post-industrial life and the new gender roles it harboured. This was not unlike the dialectical relationship between master and slave that has always played throughout the history of social reform. More often than not one sees the gathering centres of people's homes or the kinship shared on industrial labour sites as the place where the boundary of a protected 'family' ethos or fictive kin is maintained.<sup>9</sup> This is very much akin to the phenomenon one sees today amongst eco-villages and the new drive for communal representation. For a modern example Alistair McIntosh was quick to credit the role of women and likewise the spiritual representatives who maintained this fictive kin regarding the success of the super quarry prevention on the Isle of Harris in the Western Hebrides.<sup>10</sup> To reiterate then, family structure, including fictive kin, was likewise integral to Philo's Mediterranean culture, religion per se, as it is today.<sup>11</sup> The home functioned as a sacred space for the development of altruistic values and the sharing of resources.<sup>12</sup>

GEN (Global Ecovillage Network) officially represents the growing mass movement of alternative village lifestyles. The website describes it such, "Ecovillages are urban or rural communities of people, who strive to integrate a supportive social environment with a low-impact way of life. To achieve this, they integrate various aspects of ecological design, permaculture, ecological building, green production, alternative energy, community building practices, and much more".<sup>13</sup> It is quick to point out that ecovillages have been around for millennia. At their heart they maintain four tenets, that of community, ecological awareness, spirituality and economical self-reliance often through the creation of their own currency. In the main, most of the root issues are founded on the accessibility of land and the equal distribution of wealth. This land is generally held in some form of trust. The proactive ethos of such a movement is apparent. *The Land's* manifesto makes a case in point:<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, p61.

<sup>7</sup> Greg Garrard, 'The Romantic's view of nature', p114.

<sup>8</sup> Vigdis Broch-due, Ingrid Rudie & Tone Bleie (eds.), *Carved Flesh Cast Selves*, p12.

<sup>9</sup> *Made in Dagenham* is a recent film that highlighted the plight of working factory women in East London who fought for equal pay in American-owned Ford plants. After a walkout Ford were resigned to giving a pay rise. Legislation was put in place, assisted by the Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity, Barbara Wilson, under Howard Wilson, at the time, with the Equal Pay Act 1970. Most industrialised countries in the west followed suit.

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/quarry/ending.htm> and <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/quarry/lafarge-panel.htm> and the book based around McIntosh's experience with the community of Harris entitled *Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power* (2004).

<sup>11</sup> K. C. Hanson & Douglas E. Oakman, *op. cit.*, p20.

<sup>12</sup> Further stories can be extracted from the wealth of articles in magazines like Permaculture Magazine, Caduceus, Holistic Living Magazine & Positive News.

<sup>13</sup> [http://gen.ecovillage.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=92&Itemid=215](http://gen.ecovillage.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=92&Itemid=215)

<sup>14</sup> 'Manifesto', *The Land Magazine* found at [www.thelandmagazine.org.uk](http://www.thelandmagazine.org.uk)

“Access to land is not simply a threat to land owning élites – it is a threat to the religion of unlimited growth and the power structure that depends on it... Anyone who has land has access to energy, water, nourishment, shelter, healing, wisdom, ancestors and a grave.”

Often, these centres of community provide temporary homes to the itinerant worker and teacher/mentor alike. They are experiments in sustainable living. Embodying the wider principles of permaculture it is not difficult to see how members of the environmental community are drawn towards a pagan spirituality because of the closer proximity to nature these centres provide, and maybe because of their disconcertedness about the major religions.<sup>15</sup> Likewise the Transition Town Movement, itself an offshoot of the Permaculture movement, has grown from strength to strength with viral consistency.<sup>16</sup> The whole working philosophy is based upon the end of peak oil and the necessary powering down required for the assimilation of culture as we know it.<sup>17</sup> Rob Hopkins, the founder, is adamant that governments don't act quick enough, hence small village-size districts are empowering themselves through strategic resource pooling, including finance and labour. As the name suggests, most of its centres are situated within urban environments where the concentration of wealth is most apparent and where “power down”<sup>18</sup> will hit the hardest. Critical to their approach is a set of goals that need to be achieved if transition is to be as harmonious as possible. A lot of it is to do with the growing of food (currently dependent as it is on fossil fuel economies) and energy management. Like their ecovillage counterparts its main roles are to provide educational services and community support.

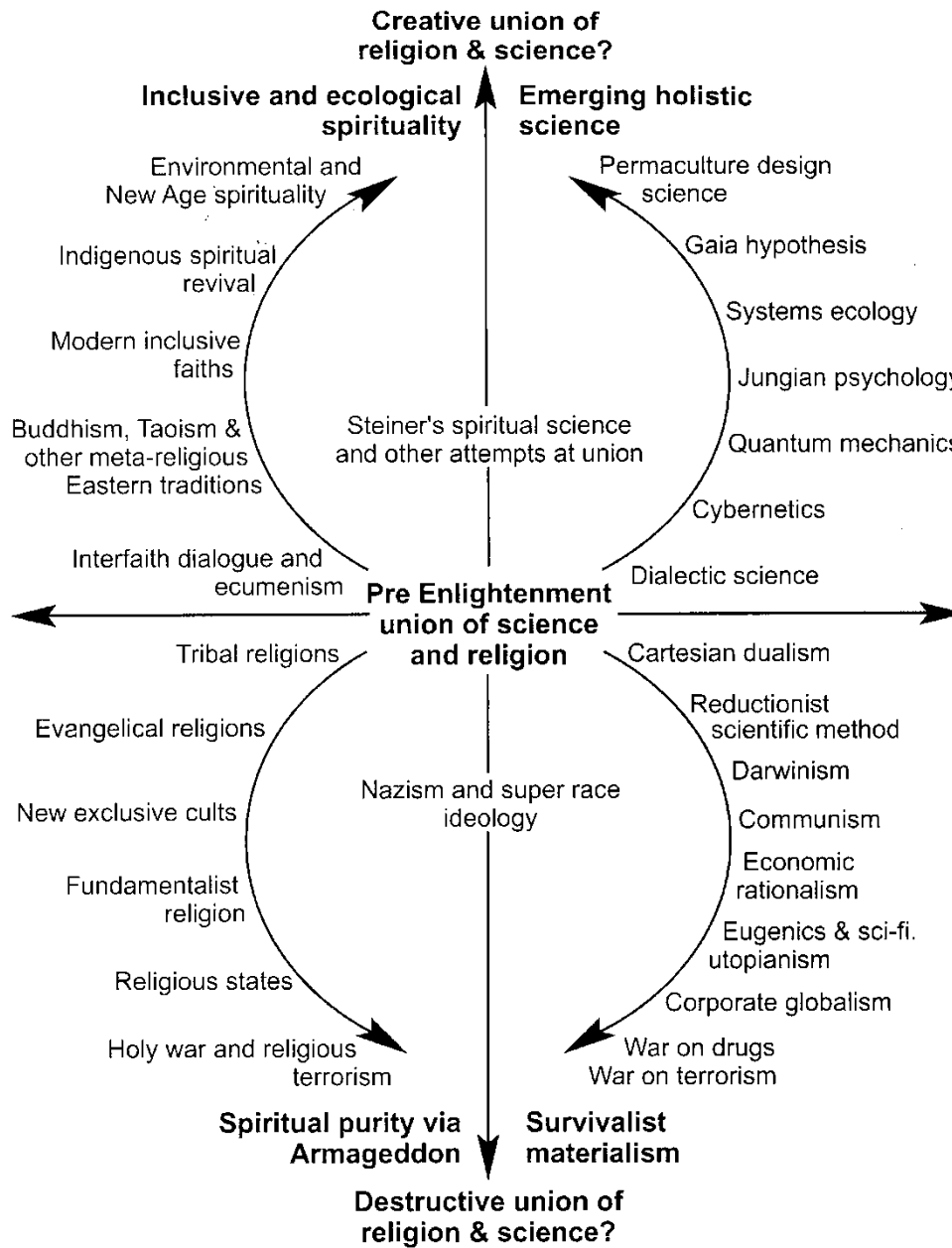
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<sup>15</sup> There are a multitude of Christian religious variations that practice forms of simple living. These include the Amish, the Hutterites and the Quakers. There are also religious naturalists who espouse the concept of the interconnectivity of nature without supernaturalism. My own Petriarchy is an example of this.

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/> for a full listing of current documented activities and projects. Transition Town Totnes is the founder's constituency and first official town.

<sup>17</sup> See Rob Hopkins, *The Transition Town Handbook*, (2008), especially chapters 1 to 3.

<sup>18</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp46-47 cf. for a list of projected scenarios including that of “powerdown”.



David Holmgren's Emergent Union of Materialism and Spirituality. (*Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability* p4.) I have made references to some of the above practicing philosophies. Of course, there are many more. What's interesting to note is that Bill Mollison, co-founder of the movement, explicitly states that religious intervention of any kind is not welcome. In *Permaculture: A Designer's Manual* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Tagari: Tyalgum, Australia 1988) he promotes a pragmatic approach that omits visions or beliefs classified as spiritual or mystical. (506) Holmgren largely does also even though he offers a model here for its relative understanding, and rather follows the system's thinking of H. T. Odum.

The social parallels are again apparent with ancient Palestine. By the end of the first century itinerant charismatics (similar to modern day pioneers and entrepreneurs) had been replaced by teachers (apologists) who propagated the Christian faith as the true theology/philosophy towards its institutionalisation.<sup>19</sup> It seems the paradigm shift was not heeded by the Jewish élite who rejected Jesus as the Messiah. But it is the philanthropic attitudes of these communities per se, both modern and ancient, that reflect their social stability and solidarity. If one then is allowed to continue with this parallelism we are led to believe in the resurgence of an environmental movement as contextualised in the ‘apocalyptic’. (Mk. 13 cf.) “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines; this is but the beginning of the birth pangs”. The Christian apologists in the wake of seeing the temple destroyed, fulfilling as it does the prophetic message of Jesus, would continue to experience centuries of Roman rule albeit under persecution. Through technological and bureaucratic expansion and environmental degradation the cultural relevance this endures is plain to see. Akin to this milieu, Rappaport asserts the collapse of the modern world and further environmental destruction as a factor of the regulation of ecosystems in accordance with economic reference points.<sup>20</sup> The crux of the matter, if environmental collapse is to be offset, is to devise a model whereby investment pertains to values beyond that solely of an ecosystem, which as modern concepts go necessitates their prioritising. There are hierarchies of values here, from specific lower order systems (i.e., making money, accumulating wealth, physical pleasure etc.) to generalised higher order systems (freedom, social cohesion and happiness etc.). It reminds me of Holmgren’s and Odum’s system thinking of tripartite altruism found in nature - higher-order system controllers, lower-order system providers, and metabolic self-maintenance.

If I may continue to analogously refer back to first century Palestine again one may hearken to the notion that Jesus was not directly against the role of taxation (overall ‘metabolic self-maintenance’ of the State) but rather what had become of the central institution of the Temple as a hoarding centre. The ‘banditry’ was a redistribution system that benefited only the few.<sup>21</sup> The banks are guilty of the extraction of product and control of labour energy.<sup>22</sup> Hanson goes on to say that peasant religion was always *ex opere operato* (based upon the performance of sacred ritual intrinsic to social integrity) and so were reliant upon the priests to ensure fertility of the land.<sup>23</sup> But Hanson furthers the idea that the temple as a “House of Prayer” exposed the possibility that it could fall under the control of the Jesus groups who inferred a greater spiritual authority. As such Jesus’ arraignment was against the establishment and hearkened to the old Israelite law of a decentralised, simple sacrificial communion with God (Exod.20:24 ‘an altar of earth’) without the anxiety of materialism. Such a reform was characteristic of Amos and Jeremiah. And we see it today in which Mehdi Hasan likens him to the left-wing social activists who rallied against the banks during

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<sup>19</sup> Knut Schaferdiek, *op. cit.*, p67.

<sup>20</sup> Fiona Bowie, *op. cit.*, pp110-111; Roy Rappaport, *Ecology, Meaning and Religion*, p100.

<sup>21</sup> K. C. Hanson & Douglas E. Oakman, *op. cit.*, pp155-156.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p126.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p153.

the financial crisis whilst still paying out big bonuses.<sup>24</sup> The Temple then, acted as a bank as well as a warehouse. Every Judean male had to support the continuous flow of sacrifices (half a shekel or 2 denarii).<sup>25</sup> The greater picture included the imperial prefects like Pilate (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.60) and Florus (*War* 2.293) who extracted funds from the temple and who were in fact, auditors and overseers. Josephus' (*War* 6.335) account clearly states how rich the Temple was whilst the Jews made preparations to attack the Romans. After its destruction the Romans simply redirected the tax to Rome. Frequently unpaid debts resulted in the confiscation of land. Between the Roman and Temple taxation systems debts were sure to increase leaving the "landless" to continue to seek recall of the hoped-for messiah.

One discovers here that non-élite religion, especially since many Jews lived far from the temple and the large cities, focused around the great pilgrim festivals (Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles) when communion sacrifices prevailed.<sup>26</sup> Pilgrimages were a strong-group experience and, despite the heavy demands it put on the peasants, the solidarity celebrations found their ritual fulfilment at the temple.<sup>27</sup> It was at these times of joy where a different kind of redistributive economy was associated with the divine will, one that Jesus emphasized. Campbell makes sentiment here that the individual is but a fraction of his society, a social construct, an organ for the beautiful festival-image of man.<sup>28</sup> The totality of man is in the body of society as a whole. Tribal ceremonies serve to translate the individual's life-crisis and life-deeds into classic, impersonal forms. From the standpoint of the social unit, the broken-off individual is simply nothing – waste. It can be seen that the itinerant nature of man comes to light, a social fabric that binds one through commonality, central to the sense of new beginnings. Bakhtin likened it to the universality of the carnival experience that transcends hierarchies, both social and spiritual.<sup>29</sup>

Again, one finds plenty of modern examples of liberated man within the festival setting, where ritual is unconsciously and consciously evoked. Despite the policing of most of the events protesters from Climate Camp and various other factions generate a sense of freedom as often restricted areas of the countryside are now opened up for political and social interchange. It parallels the counter-urban culture that Simon Farlie referred to when, in his analysis, no matter how rich a person became, he would always be happier if he moved to the country.<sup>30</sup> The experience can be considered a holi-day. The combination of education, music, dance, art & craft, food and intoxication provide important insights into some of this 'religious' behaviour. Likewise the element of eschatology and sense of prophecy (rising sea levels, global warming, land, sea and air pollution, loss of biodiversity etc.), again all things that are prevalent, combined with what Rudolph Otto called the "numinous" experience when confronted with the holy or "wholly other", satisfy partially the

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<sup>24</sup> Mehdi Hasan, 'What would Jesus do?', p26. That the banks were bailed out by the tax payer, in this case the Royal Bank of Scotland, is subsidiary to the accruing Third-world debt the IMF and World Bank are amassing in light of its 'development' towards a Western-style economy.

<sup>25</sup> K. C. Hanson & Douglas E. Oakman, *op. cit.*, pp151-152.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p157.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p154.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, pp382-383.

<sup>29</sup> Fiona Bowie, *op. cit.*, p78; Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, pp26-27.

<sup>30</sup> S. Farlie, 'Is urbanisation a temporary phenomenon?', p29.



requirements of religious behaviour.<sup>31</sup> We have already seen that Jesus was portrayed as a political activist. The modern scientific grounding in most political environmentalism through such channels as the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) can be likened to the necessary mythological and doctrinal dimensions of informed doom prophesying, what Ninian Smart refers to as para-historical narrative that man must enter into.<sup>32</sup>

The scientific argument for the false expectation that God will be discovered remains one of the perennial difficulties that provided the basis for resistance in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to Lyell's developmental geology and Darwin's theory of natural selection of animal species.<sup>33</sup> Religious experience however, does not require a theocentric basis to thrive, for instance the Buddhist belief of the non-existence of God. But there are many religionists who would shy away from the association of any religion with modern environmentalism and likewise many environmentalists who reject a cross-cultural analogy with religion. However, it is related to the age-old scholastic argument between an environmental and cultural determinism, going back to the ancient Greeks at least. As such, the ideological and materialist perceptions of the world are issues as new as they are old. But it is important to iterate, that materialism within the environmental movement fosters upon it a scientific vindication and political activism, and can outweigh any deep spiritual motivations, at least from the outside. In this light one discovers the influential work of Marx who, as has often been said, informs the socialist views of many left-wing activists. And one should be frank, Marx was not religious. Firstly, Marx was a materialist, not an idealist. Human labour is the basis from which all ideas are formed, which I concord from the perspective of a natural work ethic of similar vein found in medieval monasticism as well as early Protestantism. Regarding religious ideas he considered them illusory and dangerous and thus took a humanist view towards the betterment of society. He asserted that religion was being used for the exploitation of one class over another, i.e. the “sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world... It is the opium of the people”.<sup>34</sup> In religion one could *realize* the human essence but first required “the demand to give up a condition that needs illusions”.<sup>35</sup> In this vein he saw good and evil as factors of social forces, not of religion. Ultimately, the theory of history gives a pragmatic diagnosis of the condition of human beings, rooted as it is in materialism. But it is man who makes religion. Religious illusion must be eliminated before true happiness can be sought. Indeed, he disregards the spirit also.

To continue then, it may be worth making the comparative model with Marx. For instance, I liken his materialism to technologism and the basis of human survival and identity from a primitive state; hence true

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<sup>31</sup> Ninian Smart provided various dimensions that a religion should fulfil. These included the doctrinal and philosophical, the narrative and mythological, the ethical and legal, the social and institutional, the experiential and the emotional, and ritual. Without too much effort one can articulate various environmental examples of each. See Ninian Smart, *Dimensions of the Sacred* (1998).

<sup>32</sup> N. Smart, *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion*, p104.

<sup>33</sup> John J. Compton, ‘Science and God’s Action in Nature’, pp35-36. Born 1809 – 1882 he published his *On the origin of Species* in 1859 which most people came to accept before the end of his life.

<sup>34</sup> Marx, ‘Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right’, pp.41cf.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p35.

religious experience performs the role of environmental determinism as opposed to cultural.<sup>36</sup> Coming as he did during the social upheavals in Europe, by which he was influenced by German classical philosophy of Hegel for the theory of history, an economic theory rooted in British political economists, and French revolutionary theory, Marx concluded that human beings do affect change in history but only through materially-generated ideas. The terms historical materialism or dialectical materialism were foisted upon him afterwards. Philosophical criticism he considered vain though. It was the practical application of human activity that establishes the reality, power and reason of the perceived material world.<sup>37</sup> He was a realist and a reformist, by which he advocated the need for religious freedom as well as the requirement to attend to one's corporeal motives.<sup>38</sup> Aware of the threat of totalitarianism,<sup>38</sup> and with the perception of the constraints that capitalism imposes upon the free world, freedom meant environmental freedom - freedom *to*, not freedom *from*. Freedom from the constraints of others was a delusion although political emancipation he is quoted as saying was a great step forward. In this vein I can be considered Marxist only that Marx never saw the connection between environmental freedom and First Man – Adam.

One shouldn't doubt then that Marx directed his interpretation of the oppressive means by which labour is exploited towards the bourgeoisie society. In fact, the Jesus milieu can be adequately explained through his ideas of capitalism - the alienated essence of human interaction was reflected in the market place between the relationships of commodities.<sup>39</sup> He referred to it as fetishism: a social relation existing between products. Capitalism was based on the exploitation of labour in which the worker is forced to sell his time for the price of the necessities of life, what I have ere referred to as freedom *from*. Hence the Fallen Adam found himself alienated from grace forever onwards and made to till the soil for it.

From here one can view the Roman imperialist mindset which continued into the modern era. In this analogical light one may understand why the Jewish peasantry looked towards their priests and ancestors in trust of their judgement during periods of occupation. A deeper exegesis though will reveal the segregation that occurred within the Jewish ranks itself and it is here where Jesus directed his accusations of 'banditry'. But as I say, this harangue was specifically against the Jewish class system at the top of which were the aristocracy who were puppets to the Roman administrative system. For much of the peasantry who travelled from afar to the major festivals, in reality could not question these issues, not least how segregation within the Temple structure itself ensured that many could not draw towards its political albeit highly religious authority. Those in the know would probably have had to live or experienced substantial time within Jerusalem itself. Hence the dichotomy of motive found between materialism and spiritualism was already prevalent in the ancient world and continues into the modern era as a legacy of one occupation after another. It is this same dichotomy of sentiment that continues into the modern environmental movement who do little more than follow its 'client-kings' into upholding conventional methods of political protest. There will

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<sup>36</sup> See my book *Patriarchy: The Law of the Land*, self-published by South London Permaculture.

<sup>37</sup> Marx, *op. cit.*, pp41-42; Frederick Engels, 'On Historical Materialism', pp51, 243.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p36.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Sowell, *op. cit.*, p34; (See *Capital* Vol.1 p297).

always be a hardcore element but they do little more than receive bad press. It is in this light that I truly believe an environmental movement hardly exists anymore because of its politicisation. Under these terms I can scarcely call it religious, although there are undoubtedly spiritual elements about it.

The cultural similarity then, between Marx and Jesus, was their call for reform from the capitalist system yet under different contexts. However, their understanding of oppression was quite probably identical - it stemmed from the appreciation of the natural world and the requirement for solidarity to keep the wheels of simple economic existence turning, as in the French *environner* - "to turn around", whilst leaving people to freely explore their personal values.

## The edge between religiosity and secularism

Now, in order to try and locate this historical dichotomy one can look to the simple question of why nations like Islam and China had stagnated in their development. Development in this sense is more akin to technological and scientific progress at the expense of religious nurturing. One might also be referring to some distinct personality make-up here of the Judaeo-Christian heritage which, as alluded to before, vindicates a social phenomenon grounded in land economics. And we can align this argument with the subsequent development of Christian practice throughout the centuries, in each case delineating a new appraisal of the landscape now imbued with an "augmented" sense of relationship to it. Scientific progress was not a perpetuating factor of the religious Greco-Roman world, or the Orient as a matter. It was with the Christian influence when Greek and Semitic texts were translated into Latin during the 12<sup>th</sup> century that only then would the modern concept of science start proper.<sup>40</sup> In roughly the same period Islam, after four centuries of scientific study of the Greek manuscripts,<sup>41</sup> had turned inward to the study of the soul.<sup>42</sup> In fact, scientific philosophies as wide apart as Marx (*historical materialism*) and Islam (*non-rational enlightenment*) about worldly phenomena would be considered Judaeo-Christian heresies. Yet up to the 12<sup>th</sup> century Christian belief systems were as much under-developed as was the knowledge of unknown lands. It

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<sup>40</sup> White, Jr., *Medieval Religion and Technology* p.84

<sup>41</sup> Scholars from this civilisation studied the science, mathematics, and medicine of antiquity through the works of Aristotle, Archimedes, Galen, Ptolemy, Euclid, and others. These works and the important commentaries on them were the wellspring of science during the Medieval period. Sociologist Toby Huff claimed that Islam lacked the "rationalist view of man and nature" that became dominant in Europe. The Persian philosopher and historian of science, Seyyed Hossein Nasr saw a more positive connection in "an Islamic science that was spiritual and antiseccular" which "point[ed] the way to a new 'Islamic science' that would avoid the dehumanizing and despiritualizing mistakes of Western science." Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (1968). "The Principles of Islam", *Science and Civilization in Islam*, Harvard University Press. ISBN 094662111X. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/nasr.html>. Retrieved 2008-02-03. Nasr identified a distinctly Muslim approach to science, flowing from Islamic monotheism and the related theological prohibition against portraying graven images. In science, this is reflected in a philosophical disinterest in describing individual material objects, their properties and characteristics and instead a concern with the ideal, the Platonic form, which exists in matter as an expression of the will of the Creator. Thus one can "see why mathematics was to make such a strong appeal to the Muslim: its abstract nature furnished the bridge that Muslims were seeking between multiplicity and unity." Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Introduction in *Science and Civilization in Islam*, New American Library. NY 1968.

<sup>42</sup> White, Jr., *op.cit.*, p85.

is my opinion that the retaking of Jerusalem had a way of centralising the Catholic faith after centuries of *re-habitation* of the landscape in the post-Roman period. A good precedent for this is the concept of peregrination that developed through the monastic movement. Shelldrake makes a number of enlightening statements here. In particular one is looking towards the formation of a Christian Celtic monastic movement in the wake of a receding Roman Empire and the degeneration of urban life. Through the influence of John Cassian and other monks Christians began exploring different forms of worship particularly those brought over to Gaul and Britain from Egypt and Palestine.<sup>43</sup> These ascetics adapted their models of the ‘desert’ to islands and forest enclosures. The likes of Martin of Tours were engaged in evangelisation and brought together in a sort of haphazard way buildings grouped within a boundary wall; the loosely structured community became the model of the emergent Celtic monasticism. The relatively amorphous and decentralised structure of Celtic Christianity, with its fluidic and organic ministry, contrasted against the more rigid urban administration of the Roman organised dioceses.<sup>44</sup> However, centralised western Catholicism only really began from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, for in light of the romantic imagery painted upon the Celtic Church during the modern period it would appear not to have been a separatist organisation, since there was even greater cultural, legal and liturgical pluralism in the basis of the Catholic transition from orthodoxy more so than was the case during the later period of the High Middle Ages. Saying that, bishops of the Celtic Church expressed a more spiritual administration; religious, political, social and cultural sites tended to blend into each other.

I am fond to dwell on the Scottish theme in the wake of my environmental claims for I think it highlights to a very high degree the nature of the landscape as influential in the make-up of society, whether religious or secular. Take for example my recent visit to the island of Iona. That the most important monastic sites have traditionally been sited on major trade routes,<sup>45</sup> Iona is no exception. The ‘inaccessibility’ of the landscape lends to it a sacredness embedded in the surrounding wilderness. The growth and passion of the monastic church during that time can only be akin to the discovery of new lands in which the pagan frontiers, both the Picts in the north and the Anglo-Saxons to the south, form the metaphorical edge that monastic life cultivated between the inner transcendent reality of the monk with the outer interaction of God's immanent kingdom. As such they developed spiritually-based power relations with surrounding kingdoms. Monastic settlements lined the boundaries of kingdoms, but the monk's deeper motives were one of liminality and living on the edge, which depended a great deal on traditional markers in the landscape with a long spiritual history, for instance the site of wells and the social gatherings of markets and burial centres.<sup>46</sup> For Celtic Christians both ‘place’ and ‘journey’ are transition points that focus both the immanence and transcendence of feeling.<sup>47</sup> One is required to go inwards in their reflection of the outside

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<sup>43</sup> Philip Shelldrake, *Living Between Worlds*, p13.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp5-6.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p28.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p30.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p8

environment. The boundaries between worlds were the fascination of their beliefs, what the ascetic called ‘the place of resurrection’.

I make the tentative assertion here that the modern environmental movement has at its centre the romantic appeal of a ‘golden age’ like that exhibited in Celtic lore towards a spiritualization of the landscape. Central to its appeal is not just the *eschatological* motif but the *apocalyptic*, very much the pattern of early Christianity and its prophetic voice. This is in line with the resurgence in recent times of the more biblical view of nature over the redemptive message where both neo-orthodoxy and existentialism had led the modern approach of separating nature from personal existence.<sup>48</sup> In reference to John Compton nature is a historical field of evolving forms where understanding human “salvation history” requires the sympathetic reading of the quality and direction of natural history,<sup>49</sup> a parallel, one could agree, to ecological awareness-raising. William Pollard refers to “...the immense potentiality of matter as organised on the Earth to rise to ever and ever more complex modes of organisation culminating in the phosphorescence of thought and spirit that now clothes the Earth in her noosphere”.<sup>50</sup> Both man and nature require a new understanding in reflection of the extreme rarity of the conditions, what Daniel Day Williams highlights as a potential-making for the exploration of the possibilities of nature to give shape to both risk and hope to human visions.<sup>51</sup> Limits are set by God's power and structure but He responds to the real freedom of His creatures.<sup>52</sup> He sums up by saying that the biblical story offers a pattern of understanding of the meaning of history. But the historical literalness of the hope of the Promised Land must be qualified by the insight into the transcendence of the Kingdom over specifiable earthly hopes, the liminality between the inner and outer worlds. Thus for the history of nations the eschatology in the Book of Revelations keeps the political dimension in its ultimate hope without demanding a political utopia in history. It may be that the modern environmental movement is the other side of the same coin, that in excusing the historical need of a spiritual utopia it also keeps the spiritual dimension in its ultimate hope. That is, it is a pragmatic question of immanence and transcendence.

In referring to Marx again, one may view the material world as the means by which solidarity is achieved and ideas generated, and it is with this model that the environmental movement follows, albeit I would argue here that the means do not justify the ends. In reiteration to William Pollard above and especially to Callum Coats on his exegesis of Viktor Schauberg's work, matter rises to ever more complex forms. I believe this to be the true essence of the Judaic Christian heritage evolving as it does from a collectivist to an individualistic experience. The Protestant tradition is sure indication of this. The inner transcendent hope is the quest of the individual but the outer mundane reality is the sense of emancipation one receives when material resources are successfully exploited – God's providence. But of course there is a

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<sup>48</sup> Ian G. Barbour (ed.), *Earth Might be Fair*, p7

<sup>49</sup> John J. Compton, ‘Science and God's Action in Nature’, p45.

<sup>50</sup> William G. Pollard, ‘The uniqueness of the Earth’, p93

<sup>51</sup> Daniel Day Williams ‘Changing concept of nature’, p55.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp57-58.

fine balance between having excessive demands and the maintenance of a frugal relationship with the environment that lends towards a spiritual existence and the acknowledgement of material limits. For instance, in times of hardship solidarity is the best foot forward, but in times of freely-available resources the individual's sentiments can be usurped and do no more than isolate the person into materially selfish gain. With this in mind one may find the environmental movement failing in its cause in those countries where wealth is considerably paramount, even when its solidarity stems from materialistic ideas, and is thus subjected to intellectual tendencies for the common advancement of scientific protocol. When it reverts back to more radical forms of protest then one may appreciate more the frugality of existence and thus its inner spiritual incentive.

Now one would continue the argument here for a scientific utilitarian expansion if only to vindicate the ends; I reiterate that one is referring to a particular mentality. However, where a discursive religious logic is shared between the object and the subject during ritually based magical enactments,<sup>53</sup> in science there is no such representation; the myth is consumed in the enlightenment.<sup>54</sup> Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum* of 1621 proposed to establish a new method of acquiring knowledge – a 'new engine' that will quickly lead men to the discovery of truth.<sup>55</sup> In this method there is no scope for the freedom of mind, it is materially bound, thus affecting a mechanical end.<sup>56</sup> Bacon proposed that the freeing of knowledge from ethics, in so doing censoring those who tend to mix natural philosophy with religion and faith, this alone will generate power. The values of good and evil are replaced by what is useful and useless.<sup>57</sup> The Baconian truth requires an 'other' - nature in other words. This nature obviously includes man; thus knowledge is power over man.<sup>58</sup> Hence it lends to a historical disconnectedness which, for all intent and purposes, had as its motive an elitist attitude that made a scapegoat of the Church as to the cause of why good and evil originated. Marx saw through this as a delusion of misinterpreting social dynamics and never completely disregarded the individual's need to explore his or her inner reality.

Rationale then, is a materialistic outlook of the phenomenal world, albeit one can still see the same principles being applied by Marx, that what constitutes the spiritual is somehow independent from material causes. If one views my Holistic Design chart<sup>59</sup> this material determinism itself must stem from the ecological imperative located at the centre of all life for the management of resources, but as such is a limited perception of the world because man is culturally bound. Hence the self-conceitedness of humanity, prevalent also in the historical materialism of the Church and other religions, disregards the precedence set by evolution and the natural homeostasis of all life forms on this planet when taken in the whole of Creation. It can be noted that the very act of denying this precedence is the cause for the relegation of cosmic forces

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<sup>53</sup> Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer 'The Concept of Enlightenment', p9.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p12.

<sup>55</sup> Jatinder K. Bajaj, *op. cit.*, p25.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p28.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp44-45.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p49.

<sup>59</sup> Fully expounded in *Patriarchy: The Law of the Land* and self-published by South London Permaculture.

now at the disposal of man to manipulate. Thus the social forces that Marx refers to, in his view giving basis to good and evil, is by extension a human construct since homeostatic interaction between all life-forms are the basis of why life continues to exist on this planet; it gave rise to the condition that humans have themselves evolved *to*. So Marx was ‘right’, but he was limited; his argument is entirely humano-centred. Elsewhere I have argued that this materialist outlook is nothing new, it has been in existence since the dawning of consciousness. What changes is the instigation of culture and the concentration of resources to lead to a condition of disconnectedness from nature and its environmental determinism. This could have only happened through the creation of large settlements and later, cities. The more this phenomenon continues the more fragmented are conceited man’s efforts from the greater picture. Hence the likes of Bacon and Marx are products of their culture and the standardising principles of a homogenous society in which pedagogic education systems merely reflect this materialistic outlook. It can be no coincidence that the Roman model of antiquity has the blueprint of modern cultures; its construction program and standardisation of worship for its legal citizens ensured that obedience was rewarded with material wealth and privilege – cultural power.

In terms of the spiritual one must look at the rest of the world where the governing principles of nature or Creation defined the individual’s relationship and role to the environment. A deeper exegesis is valid here.

## God as a paradigm for change

During the first century AD direct Roman rule brought on heavy taxation especially on the rural population, and often disregarded Jewish religious feelings.<sup>60</sup> In order to appease the developing unrest Herod of Idumaeon under Octavian (Emperor Augustus) became the greatest builder in the country, rebuilding the temple and the fortress at the Rock of Masada. In canny synonymy of this the Church at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century embarked on a crusade to retake the Holy Land and Jerusalem in particular. During this feverish period it instigated the re-figuration of the Eucharist, locating in its heart the ritual of mediation, with the effect of creating a new ritual in the mass.<sup>61</sup> Emerging from disparate, separate, only loosely connected economic and political entities, enthused with the new agricultural revolution, albeit only sporadic in its extensity, the culture of the high Middle-ages created a symbol of utmost overarching uniformity. This was in contemporary reflection of the Popes who were attempting to make claims of primacy and universality against regional political powers and local liturgical customs. By the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the new Eucharistic cult sought to express a distinct Catholic piety, to the effect of wanting to bring God to Earth.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Yehuda Karmon, *Israel: A Regional Geography*, p46.

<sup>61</sup> Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp11-12.

<sup>62</sup> White, Jr., *Medieval Religion and Technology*, pp33-34.

It was now being discussed among the rituals of the 7 sacraments – baptism, ordination, confirmation and extreme unction, eucharist, marriage and penance.<sup>63</sup> The new sacramental rite which dates from the 1100's embraced the dominant earthly tale of order and hierarchy, sin and forgiveness, marriage, birth, and death as might be expected during this tumultuous time.<sup>64</sup> It would be removed from that which it had traditionally been associated, like the worship of relics, because it represented God's body, and not a sign of holiness used for the consecration of altars.<sup>65</sup> The dogma of transubstantiation was expanded in 1215 and the Feast of Corpus Christi instituted in 1264. The Latin Church centred its devotion upon the actual physical substance of its deity. Symbolic readings applied to the Eucharist referred to it as refreshing food for the hungry, weighted in images of feeding and nurturing.<sup>66</sup> Eating and food, vessels and nourishment, were essential parts of Eucharistic symbolism; a powerful assimilation of eating into the economy of the supernatural. It vindicated the promise of being one with God in a bodily sense, in which through the same mouth that Adam had eaten the apple so man would be saved by the Eucharist.<sup>67</sup> The urgency of hunger and the satisfaction of food would be forcefully combined in the image of eucharistic food. As such the northern races moved into a new era of dominance through its renascent objectivity and religious subjectivism expressed in agriculture and warfare – its fields of moral activism.<sup>68</sup> Christ was no longer to be depicted as the orthodox priest-king blessing with outstretched arms. Rather, after the 13<sup>th</sup> century his royal diadem became a crown of thorns and his figure a blood-bathed image. It brought home the new realism, a shift from divine grace to human drama.<sup>69</sup> This shift was both physical and psychological, which ultimately broke the unity and authority of the Church. It was this emergence of drama out of a sacramental rite that bore witness to the Gothic Bourgeois interest in direct personal experience of earthly fact – a shift away from the contemplative meditations of the Greek Church.<sup>70</sup> The perception of nature was now fully objective and the realm of the spirit subjective – a complete reversal of its earlier position.<sup>71</sup> The Eucharist would become the heart of human action through the interweaving of the natural and the supernatural into an interpretation of a meaning-laden symbol.<sup>72</sup> It is in this light that Jesus should be seen now as an icon representing technology.

It is important here not to see this materialistic objectivity as the beginning of materialism per se. It cannot be, but the I indicate that the precedence for this turn-around of events in the Church is a factor of its spiritual development through its largely localised and varied interpretations of the scriptures grounded in the agricultural revolutions of the preceding centuries and the discovery of new lands (Providence). Increased material wealth brought about a self-conceited individualism that eventuated towards ever-increasing numbers of bourgeoisie to consolidate their power relations outside the Church. But it was the

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<sup>63</sup> *Miri Rubin, op. cit.*, pp35-37.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p9.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp35-37.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp26-28.

<sup>67</sup> In 'Piers Plowman', (written c. 1370-90 by William Langland), Passus XIX lines 383-385, the whole moral allegory was centred around images of ploughing and food production, a merging of the physical and spiritual foods.

<sup>68</sup> White, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp33-34.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, pp36-37.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p35.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p37.

<sup>72</sup> *Miri Rubin, op. cit.*, p1.



spiritual impetus embodied in the highly versatile peasant masses that gave rise for the desire of an overarching uniformity. I have elsewhere indicated this as the true evolution of individualism where the relative independence of small societies nurtured the ecological spirit of the individual who could now govern his or her own sustenance needs; as a religious sentiment this is analogous to the bridge that the iconography of the Christ provides to the “fallen” Adam who was made to till the soil. It thus reflects the transcendent growth of virtue and creativity among the humbling successes of a providential landscape; environmental determinism per se. From this arose a social capital subsequently exploited by materialist élites prevalent in the Church as much as anywhere else, and hence informing the city-bound populace of a segregated means of production through the concentration of wealth. It is an urban mentality.

I ask: was this spiritual fervour any different to the Greek symbolic mentality that bore witness in the persons of Parmenides, Empedocles, Democritus and eventually the Sophist of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC in the rise of a new science? With Parmenides one discovers a world of continuity and homogeneity. The likes of Empedocles attempted to introduce observed cosmic change and plurality by postulating 4 basic elements – earth, fire, water and air.<sup>73</sup> These qualities could not be diminished or increased in any way but through the principles of attraction and repulsion working on them the phenomena of generation, alteration and destruction could be explained by their arrangement. Within the limits of the whole, independent units could survive for a time, even as rational gods, but eventually they would be drawn into a world of conflict.<sup>74</sup> (If I may be bold here, this is sounding something like the historical materialism of Marx.) On the other hand Anaxagoras pioneered the idea of an indefinitely expanding universe and the working of the ‘Mind’ on material. (This may go some way to vindicating individualistic human behaviour caught up in the complexities of a universal moral order.) Later still the atomists, Leucippus and Democritus, stipulated the eternal, immutable, indivisible atom (which means ‘unable to be cut’) as having no qualitative difference. Any knowledge was of a bastard form and tied to the perceiver’s subjective experience; itself transitory since atoms were intangibles.

The strain of thought remained the contemporary thinking of the time until Plato of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and hearkens to the modern notion of objective/subjective relationships of matter and experience. At the same time it avoids any direct intuitive (common-sense) experience that Shelldrake attributes to emotional and unscientific behaviour.<sup>75</sup> When two thousand years later Francis Bacon, in his technocratic utopia depicted in *New Atlantis*, included a scientific priesthood that makes decisions for the good of the state,<sup>76</sup> how does this differ to the legacy of Greek classical science? In reiteration then, the key to this new era of power was organised research; knowledge would be kept under strict control from the masses; it was elitist. In fact, it was directed mainly for the benefit of the gentry, at the time numbering 12,000.<sup>77</sup> The rest of men

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<sup>73</sup> M. R. Wright, *Cosmology in Antiquity*, p22.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp23-24.

<sup>75</sup> Rupert Shelldrake, *The Rebirth of Nature*, p2.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p42.

<sup>77</sup> Jatinder K. Bajaj, *op. cit.*, p50.

were left with a vague hope - the golden sprite at the bottom of Pandora's box. On reflection, Jatinda can only be referring to the exodus of people leaving the country for the city to its new de-spiritualised industrial centres. All of Bacon's books are addressed to the King; he concludes that his method is an exhortation to war and power.<sup>78</sup>

Now if it can be shown that the Greek philosophers of the classical period were 'masters' of nature then we have a case for expressing a continuum of scientific thought. But it is not the case. Rather what we have is a Greek mentality based upon elucidation through the dialectic. The realm of the spirit was still very much an objective state. But this also has interesting parallels to the new Eucharistic environment of the Late Middle Ages. With William of St. Thierry and Peter Lombard the sacraments evolved an Augustinian view that the visible sign (*sacramentum*), and the sacramental reality behind it (*res*), required intelligence in its unravelling, a working of the spirit through visible signs.<sup>79</sup> It was also stressed that the Eucharist was a special type of sacrament, an arch-sacrament. Unlike baptism, marriage and extreme unction it could not be administered by a lay person. Hence, the religious sentiments of the day were beginning to have an air of authoritarianism about them, to the effect of seeing the Church take the bulls by the horn, so to speak, and applying it with papal rigor. Thus three centuries before the dissolution of the monasteries one is aware of the encroaching dynamic of scientific and technological achievement that offered signs of an oncoming secularism and Bourgeoisie elitism, reflected in the fervour of the Latin Church to maintain a hold over the philosophical venture, and the concentrated peasant masses congregating in new industrial and commercial sites. As such, the growing lack of intuitive grounding coupled with the formal authorisation of social standards centred in and around its power centres, namely the cities, is where de-spiritualisation was a factor of the loss of intimacy with providence in nature.

There are other social parallels here also to the early scientific rationale of the Greeks. The Sophists of the 5<sup>th</sup> century offered an education in statecraft and public speaking.<sup>80</sup> They were influential in forcing a division between those who accepted a finite universe governed by law and reason and one unlimited and happening by chance; cultural as opposed to environmental determinism. As teachers or 'professors' who travelled the Greek world they carried that same air of psychological dominance that the rational scientific thought of the Reformation and the subsequent Enlightenment period fostered upon its adherents. And maybe this is the mentality one is trying to corroborate, one of cause; the justification and acquisition for new knowledge, whatever form, was itself consciousness raising and an act of evolution and change (adaptation). And as I say, it required living on the edge between the inner world of transcendence and the outer world of immanence. The difference was the use of experimentation in the modern era as the means to opening up nature's hidden secrets, yet in another light experimentation is a form of experience which the dialectic achieves.

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.* p49.

<sup>79</sup> *Miri Rubin, op. cit.*, pp35-37.

<sup>80</sup> *M. R. Wright, op. cit.*, p24.

Elsewhere I have referred to Solheim's and Borchgrevink's existence of a gendered pre-linguistic symbolic understanding rooted in *bios*.<sup>81</sup> Where the rational mind evolves towards metaphorical semantics, the intuitive or common-sense understanding is more closely aligned, I believe, with the essential biological makeup of human animals, and defeats the cultural rational model limited in its perception of what is natural. Thus one sees these innovative scientific modes as a masculine current in the sense that nature is feminine and must be treated like a virgin, i.e. the new experience.<sup>82</sup> As Joseph Campbell says in his illustration of Goethe's masculine guide in *Faust* – Mephistopheles, "...he is the lurer of the innocent soul into the realms of trial".<sup>83</sup> I believe this is where Greek and Western rationale distinguish one from another in their methods for the quest for Anaxagoras' 'Mind' (*Nous*). In the former spiritual enquiry is still very much motivated from the unconscious, for the intuitive apprehension of knowledge, towards the inner transcendent experience of the individual, as propounded through symbolic associations. In the latter this aspect of the metaphysical venture is subject to an act of rational apartheid leaving one to 'lick the wounds' as a result of the secularisation of culture. Anaxagoras' "vortex" that arose in an ever-expanding universe is no more than the human endeavour to translate the event horizon. In this light it was the legacy of Greek philosophy for every plant or animal to participate psychically in the life processes of the world's soul, intellectually in the activity of the world's mind, and materially in the physical organisation of the world's body.<sup>84</sup> On the other hand modern science took its leave because of the material surplus the West experienced, I believe, through technological mastery. Where before all human souls were linked to form one elaborate soul, the Reformation period undeniably consolidated and drew divisions of the world into manageable parts. The growing Bourgeoisie exploited the concentration of resources in cities, including its labour force. Bacon, for instance, saw in the dissection of nature a form of 'recovery' of power for man in the increasing de-spiritualised centres of cities and whom, in those capitalist environments ever exposed to change and instability, required redemption from the Fall,<sup>85</sup> i.e. the Judaeo-Christian heritage for the salvation of man was vindicated in the justification for early scientific experimentation. As such it was considered a power given by God, but when nature itself could be materially concentrated into its 'hoarding houses' then effectively it provides a boundary to environmental deterministic laws and the intuitive unconscious motive for the belief in God's providence. Hence human culture becomes an urban phenomenon stemming from the surplus of materials and loss of spirit.

So the message had changed here. We ask, 'What happened to the redemptive power of God, the soteriology of Jesus Christ, Son of God, to save our fallen souls and return us to a paradise lost?' Jesus himself, as already noted, went through an interpretive change also, which did not happen overnight. The 'suffering' servant, dislodged from his or her natural environment, becomes a symbol of the need to relinquish the toils of nature. Machinery and technology in general would prove to be the answer, but getting

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<sup>81</sup> Again, see my book *Patriarchy: The Law of the Land* self-published by South London Permaculture.

<sup>82</sup> Rupert Shelldrake, *The Rebirth of Nature*, p43.

<sup>83</sup> Campbell, J., *op. cit.*, p73.

<sup>84</sup> Rupert Shelldrake, *The Rebirth of Nature*, p45.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p41.

there ushered the Church towards a transitional period of hermeneutics before it could fully uphold the moral justification of the need of technology over human labour. It would itself move into the realm of Bourgeoisie mentality that is middleclass and capitalistic. The Church, through pastoralism, had become some of the richest real estate in the world, against the dictate of the Franciscan code that private property was against the law of Christ.<sup>86</sup> It was this increase of wealth, and political and economic hegemony that eventually corrupted the monasteries, and attracted the secular crown resulting in their dissolution. The loss of divine stewardship of the monastic influence, and the subsequent legitimisation of mercantilism and capital coupled with the new practice of usury led to the commoditization of goods and nature that Max Weber argued developed within Protestant theology.<sup>87</sup> The relocation of God's activities to the self was a protestant means to redeeming nature from its "fallen" state. That is, traditional worldviews and spiritual objectification is reshaped into humano-centred subjective belief systems ensuring the private logic of modern value orientations.<sup>88</sup>

Once dominating 14<sup>th</sup> century art, it may be shown that the cult of the Virgin Mary, stemming from a long-line of Marian worship, was a reflexive position of her devotees to this masculine current of concentrated power. Her role as Mother Nature indicates the Cosmic Christ as her offspring, legitimising the ultimate position of her status. Human she may be, and conferring her humanness to God, she is exalted to a position higher than the angels, as the Queen of Heaven, Mother of God.<sup>89</sup> Nicholas of Cusa has a point on this matter, that giving birth to the Son of God necessitates an incorrupt virginity; an infinite fertility corresponding to the most fecund conditions.<sup>90</sup> It is an issue undisputed by the major Protestant reformers but that only 20<sup>th</sup> century northern Protestant Europeans find hard to comprehend. The Eucharist, associated with the doctrine of Incarnation, requires the presence of Mary and the life-giving properties of the Earth, and so is very much tied in with salvation through Jesus.<sup>91</sup> On this note we find a reference to the role of Jesus as beyond judgement, for many of the shrines which house Virgin in Majesty figures are locations in the wild or semi-wild, away from human habitation and hence its rationale modes of thinking.<sup>92</sup> One should make direct reference here to other imbedded qualities of Christianity that adhere to a naturalness of living viz. its feminine qualities. In the history of Marion devotion the theme of Mary as the Mother of Sorrows is played out frequently in echo of the 'birth pangs' expressed during her Son's Passion.<sup>93</sup> It can also correlate to the passive qualities of nature and in particular to Mary as a receptacle for the Holy Spirit.<sup>94</sup> What one observes here are two streams of consciousness, either of which temporally surfaces at the provocation of the other. Luke 10: 38-42 is an example of how an historical exegesis can change in meaning, as I say, a movement from bios to logos as from intuition to metaphorical semantics. In this example Martha is rebuked

<sup>86</sup> Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, p51.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, pp53-54.

<sup>88</sup> Habermas, J., 'Technology and Science as "Ideology"', pp.98-99.

<sup>89</sup> Sarah Jane Boss, *op. cit.*, p4.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp187-189.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p171.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p7.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p200.

<sup>94</sup> White, Jr., *Medieval Religion and Technology*, pp240-241.

by Jesus, her role is active and representative of the temporal. Mary, on the other hand, is seen as passive and eternal - irrational. This Greek exegesis, which advocates Mary's significance as the contemplative model, is subverted by Saint Augustine. For the perfect life is carried by both Martha - the life of the soul in time and space, and Mary - in eternity. But this hermeneutic had troubled the Middle Ages because the primacy of action over contemplation had reached almost absurd heights by the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In this, one can make reference to Meister Eckhart's view of how the technological mood is fostered, one in which Martha is now interpreted as being wise to allow Mary to grow out of this contemplative state.

## Measure and orderliness in God's name

The large degree of technological activism was now fully prevalent across the Medieval West. For example, and referring back to Martha's temporal status, clocks, when first invented, were banned from inside the shrines of eastern churches. The Latin Church counterpoised these conditions by allowing great numbers inside and out, this for the purpose of visually demonstrating God's cosmic orderliness.<sup>95</sup> During the 13<sup>th</sup> century *maze* or "measure" was synonymous with temperance in the popular mind. Brunetto Latini tells us that Aristotelianism gave rise to the supremacy of Temperance.<sup>96</sup> *Temperantia* had also begun to be identified with *Sapientia* or wisdom, the figure of which had connotations with the Christ during the early Medieval Ages, having associations with labour, technology and self-control.<sup>97</sup> The *Horologium* (AD1334) distinguishes these virtues as the regulators of Christian life, i.e. the voice of Christ the *Logos*.<sup>98</sup> By the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Italian influence of time/*temperantia* entered the European courts, eliciting the need to regulate our bodies like mechanical clocks. And with this, in *Du Ciel* came Oresme's divine clockmaker whereby the escapement mechanism was based upon the action of friction.<sup>99</sup> One can see the analogy here with action or labour, really quite beyond the contemplative mentality of the Greek Church. Not least it supports my theory that *logos* or metaphorical semantics is in continuum with a progressive technology-bound mentality to distance itself from the symbolic motivations of a gendered pre-linguistic understanding that formed much of the basis of Greek iconography and the general meditative qualities of Eastern peoples, Gnosticism per se. Indubitably, what I have hitherto referred to elsewhere as *culturalism*, it shows that the intuitive grasping of life experiences, its common sense behaviour, is the bedrock for both symbolic and action-orientated behaviour; they are genetic dispositions stemming from a primary consciousness environmentally determined in *bios* but as such are affected by the need to manage an outside material reality - the liminality between transcendence and immanence. It is from this standpoint that the concept of Providence illustrates the means for its vindication. Temporal myths were unknown to the Greco-Roman

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p187 .

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p190.

<sup>97</sup> Sarah Jane Boss *Empress and Handmaid* p159.

<sup>98</sup> White, Jr., *Medieval Religion and Technology*, pp192-193.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p195.

world;<sup>100</sup> the intellectual cleansing of sin through illumination was quite simply an Eastern inheritance, but this would change with the Latin Church and the dichotomy of East and West.

In order to try and unveil the now technologically influenced work ethic and means to increased production it is worth referring back in time again. Respect for labour, as such not a mandate of the retreating Greco-Roman world, had been nurtured during the Middle-ages through monasticism that, against the threat of mass conversions of pagans after the Roman withdrawal, re-asserted the ‘work is worship’ thesis of the Jews.<sup>101</sup> Only the rule of Saint Columba sanctioned a monastic code, east or west, in which manual labour was regarded as pure penance for sin, unconnected with prayer and praise. And despite the Irish mediation of Greek morals in the west they too would have small influence. It was Benedict of Nursia that implemented the need to labour.<sup>102</sup> The Benedictines created a single way of life of the practicality and theoretical skill embodied in a person’s labour. Where the original Benedictines, during the 6<sup>th</sup> century, settled in the hills, the Cistercian branch preferred the valleys that required clearing and draining in its conversion to prosperous farmland. The monks were partners with God in improving His creation, stewards that allowed for the more human expression of wilderness. Despite being devoted to the Virgin in all her associations with wilderness, passivity or sacred nature they led the way in the use of technological powers, especially in the implementation of water wheels. The gap between the manual and the liberal arts had been bridged by the monk’s dualistic approach. Previously science had been traditionally aristocratic, speculative, and intellectual in intent, and technology was considered lower class, empirical and action-orientated.<sup>103</sup> But the Judaeo-Christian teleology had already begun closing this gap by the perpetual progress and application of non-repetitive or linear time and the voluntarist motive of right action. A pictorial illustration of this is alluded to by Sacks. Noah is to be saved from the flood, but it is Noah who must build the ark.<sup>104</sup> Likewise Adam had to till the garden before he could eat from it. (Gen: 2.15-16) Sacks goes on to say that animals find sustenance but mankind creates it. As such Judaism never created an aristocratic or cloistered ethic and they certainly didn’t take Plutarch’s view of low and sordid people. But work also meant more than mere labour. *Melakhah* signified a joint partnership with God in this creation.

On this point it does flag up my view that Jesus’ arraignment was against the aristocracy and that through the nurturing of individuality Judaism could still embody a solidarity that was thoroughly grounded in ethics. However, elitism founded on the success of resource management could only have developed purely from the concentration of resources into city banks and store houses and here the Jewish aristocracy sub-served the greater empire of Roman administration. But individualism was still very much a factor of the need to experience religious freedom and so whereas the poorer peasantry revelled in their joy to God and freedom *to* control one’s own sustenance, the centralised administration of the Jewish puppet-aristocracy

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<sup>100</sup> Rene Dubos, ‘*Franciscan Conservation Versus Benedictine Stewardship*’, pp30-32.

<sup>101</sup> White, Jr., *Medieval Religion and Technology*, pp241-243.

<sup>102</sup> Rene Dubos, *op. cit.*, pp169-171.

<sup>103</sup> White, Jr., *Medieval Religion and Technology*, p27.

<sup>104</sup> Jonathon Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilisations*, pp93-96.

and their material incentives valued freedom as freedom *from* Roman-exercised power and control, most particularly in urbanized conurbations. In this sense Jesus represents an experience founded on, not so much the liberal arts, but an ingrained acceptance of Providence and the need to work the land. Here knowledge could only have developed as a factor of common sense relations between the people and the land, and this originated the new Christian movement who followed in Christ's example of freedom *to* worship. (See my Holistic Design chart for a schematic view of this type of spiritual awareness as compared to applied science founded on purely material values.)

Thus said, when the Conservative theologians pushed the whole of metaphysics into one area of revelation they destroyed the inherited Greek and Muslim, namely Eastern, concept of the metaphysical nature of the philosophical venture; the inclination to validate the understanding of real truth with Greek Aristotelian philosophy had repulsed conservative theologians.<sup>105</sup> This would ultimately lead to the formulation of the modern scientific notion necessitating its eventual release from the Christian hold on it. Thus philosophy was now orientated towards a rational science rather than theological one in light of increased general wealth of the northern races and rising bourgeoisie. As such, the qualitative, philosophical science of Aristotle that expounded a hierarchy of essences was quickly replaced in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries by a quantitative science more related to technology and the expanding marketable economic interest of a commercial class of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance period.<sup>106</sup>

Though it is arguable whether the labour-saving power machines of the later Middle Ages were the direct result of the theological instigation of the need to reduce drudgery,<sup>107</sup> appearing less than human, the precept of labouring to pray was eventually replaced with the desire to end labour entirely. Medieval bourgeoisie made the property of materials the chief interest of the ruling class.<sup>108</sup> This led Le Breton to say that modern individualism (post 15<sup>th</sup> century), otherwise known as the individuation of humanity, is a result of thinking the world around us as an ontological emptiness that only the human craftsman now has authority to fashion.<sup>109</sup> The craftsman and the technician were now regarded with a new respect. One may refer back to Bacon in his assertion that scientific knowledge meant technological power over nature. But science and technology did not marry until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The technology that was to develop was a Western absorption of elements from around the world, most notably China where science did not develop early on.<sup>110</sup> China instead had a large body of naturalistic theory; systematic recorded experimentation backed up with a great deal of measurement.<sup>111</sup> Their simplified mathematics was ideogrammic and indicated generalised quantities and operations; their line of enquiry followed the Tao.<sup>112</sup> It was not until the freedom of Western ships arriving, sailing on the blue ocean, that modern ideas of democracy, scientific and

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<sup>105</sup> White, Jr., *Medieval Religion and Technology*, pp85-86.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p24.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p22.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, pp25-27.

<sup>109</sup> Sarah Jane Boss, 'Does God's Creation Hide or Disclose its Creator?', p180.

<sup>110</sup> Kay Milton, *Loving Nature*, p13.

<sup>111</sup> Jatinder K. Bajaj, *op. cit.*, p57.

<sup>112</sup> Joseph Needham, 'Mathematics and Science in China and the West' pp.324-327.

technological advance, and economic progress were instituted after a millennia of stagnation. On this note I should clarify again the need to understand common sense knowledge based upon personal experience and one's relationship to the landscape, one that is spiritual and intuitive.

My claims for environmental determinism is supported here by the East-West dichotomy, Montesquieu claims, as grounded in climatic and geographical differences that were themselves fundamental to the despotic regimes of the East relative to Western notions of freedom to action. In this light then, and before the end of the first millennium in the West, water had already been applied to milling processes; wind power followed in the 12<sup>th</sup>; clocks in the 14<sup>th</sup>; a superiority of arms, textiles, glass and ships in the 15<sup>th</sup>.<sup>113</sup> The Scientific Revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the Industrial of the 18<sup>th</sup> are significant benchmarks. In fact, viewing the exhibits in the British Maritime museum shows a marked increase in 1600 and 1720 of a flux of technological gadgetry on European ships, giving rise to the idea that the commercialisation of technology happens as economic interest demands it.<sup>114</sup> It does enforce my point that urban societies are run by élites and the bourgeoisie class of interests that exploit it; their success is grounded in their ability to exercise one's own individualism. Crosby gives credence to this case when he says that the Columbian era and the Age of Discovery, with its spirit of individualism, had enriched the Western nations to such a degree that it is considered instrumental in the birth of the Industrial Revolution.<sup>115</sup> And this refers back to Marx and his theory that economic interests generated from human labour are the bedrock of all ideas, whether for good or evil.

## Mind as the vehicle for the reverence of God

To recount, that to argue for the roots of the ecological crisis here and to say that science provides knowledge, and religion a moral justification, is an over-simplification.<sup>116</sup> Horton deposits the view that both science and religion will only explain what lies behind in common-sense understanding.<sup>117</sup> Most would agree that science uses deduction and reduction as a systematic search for knowledge. But in nature it is an arbiter of truth<sup>118</sup> with much the same way that technological innovation, national pride and prestige could explain the Cold war or the American Civil war. Deep-ecologists on the other hand seek a re-enchantment of nature, the spiritual dimension that religion should be imparting. If both science and religion theorize on the nature of truth, the acceptance of which requires, on one hand a rational analysis, on the other hand revelation,<sup>119</sup> is it truly the case that the moral intuitive teachings of Jesus were solely based upon the

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<sup>113</sup> White, Jr., *The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis*, p28.

<sup>114</sup> Visit to the Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London

<sup>115</sup> Alfred W. Crosby, *Germs, Seeds & Animals*, p18.

<sup>116</sup> Kay Milton, *Loving Nature*, p4.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, p8.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p3.

<sup>119</sup> Kay Milton, *op. cit.*, pp7-8.



Hebrew Bible? Wolpert argued for (applied) science as a self-aware endeavour; common sense, though useful, has no continuity here since it is often vague and inconsistent. But many cultures do express continuum which bulks the need for a body of accepted knowledge in any era. The majority of pre-industrial labour was farm work, using natural resources and processes that were not fully understood or controlled.<sup>120</sup> Additionally, science juxtaposes itself against the religious tradition of folk tales and myths, including the cult of the saints. These latter all show an indistinguishable difference between the spiritual and the physical;<sup>121</sup> moreover the Gospel writers were conclusive in the arrival of a ‘new’ paradigm or consciousness. Jesus would have drawn from many traditions including the popular knowledge prevalent at the time. It is highly likely that the historical Jesus, as the son of a carpenter, gained access to different familial influences; classical science would certainly have been partially accessible. Elementary schools probably under the influence of Hillel and attached to synagogues were usually backed up by parental teaching, and access to Hebrew especially around Jerusalem, and some Greek, would have been used by scribes and sages who taught in Galilee. The Greek-speaking cities of Sepphoris and Tiberias were close at hand to Jesus and one must assume that the scriptures in their original languages were accessible. It is probable that just like many Jews in the Holy Land today Jesus would have been bi- and tri-lingual though until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Greek was the first language of the Empire.

Atran gives support here, positing the idea that the inherited symbolic thought of the Greeks and scientific learning of the time could be bridged by any form of this practical common sense. This latter is of course the core of basic knowledge on which theory depends, the strings so to speak, and symbolic thought, though counter-intuitive, is always dependent on the intuitive for its meaning, common sense per se.<sup>122</sup> That prerogative is warranted to Jesus since his teaching contained elements affecting different mental dispositions. Even today, scientists who hold religious beliefs do so because things remain unexplained, in effect setting conflict aside.<sup>123</sup> Religious belief then, exhibits faith in the unknown. The parable stories of the Gospels, many of which are based on real-life experiences, vindicates the common sense understanding of Jesus with this faith, but also the self-endeavour and rational appraisal that is justified by the belief that God will enlighten those who dwell within Him; rational because Judaeo-Christianity is a historical hermeneutic. Man’s fall from grace demands his suffering, for God gave them the Holy Land as an act of faith, and also His only Son as a sacrificial Lamb for the conciliation of Man to Himself. Ramon Llull’s reasoning leads one to enforce this act of faith when he stipulates that reason is governed at every stage by the intention to love and know God.<sup>124</sup> The Holy life, including the proper contemplation of creatures, is a pre-requisite for coming-to-know God.

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<sup>120</sup> Peter C. Perdue *op. cit.*, p170.

<sup>121</sup> Sarah Jane Boss, ‘Does God’s Creation Hide or Disclose its Creator?’ pp177-178.

<sup>122</sup> Kay Milton, *op. cit.*, p7.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p8.

<sup>124</sup> Sarah Jane Boss, ‘Does God’s Creation Hide or Disclose its Creator?’, p176.

Of a philosophical line, if symbolic thought is counter-intuitive one may argue a schism better formulated in terms of what is considered natural and unnatural. Boyer says humans have pre-disposed understandings and are thus biased,<sup>125</sup> akin to the gendered pre-linguistic symbolism mentioned earlier. The question is whether this is a natural or unnatural tendency? Milton sees the two poles as a viable debate between human nature and experience, rather than human nature and culture; naturalness ascertains to human nature, not human experience. This mindset can validate for failure and success, and in religion the both contribute to an ethical code as in the story of the Prodigal Son for instance. So in religion one can still be reasonable, only that it carries an act of faith, as the Judaeo-Christian culture entails, in the presence of a justifiable God and the need for intuition or common sense. On this note Geertz says that symbols pervade all culture but that religious symbols create particularly strong emotional responses,<sup>126</sup> deep as they are within the human psyche. Edelman says of these emotional responses being the highest developed faculties of the mind,<sup>127</sup> especially those that pertain to sainthood, for it represents a biological anomaly within which social values cannot be determined by a scientific appraisal.<sup>128</sup> Guthrie extends this line of thought and argues for the anthropomorphism of the world since it had become the natural way of thinking; the impersonal world does not have the same emotional force.

Through the gradual imposition of an impersonal science then, its position as a new post-Greco-Roman phenomenon conduced to the view that emotion, driven by symbolic communion with faith, has come to be considered as suspicious and creative of bias. To surmise this point, in a natural process of understanding and human nature ideas are more likely to take qualitative hold in the mind, and science, with its role of “unnatural” human experience, requires quantifiable repetition. When Jesus said “Do this”, the symbolic action of partaking of the Eucharist is a reaffirmation of one’s faith in a justifiable God in spite of one’s own failures to apprehend the common law. In this sense it can be considered a symbolic bridge. It is a form of embracing within the individual the biological and spiritual. Alternatively, when a scientist observes the entrails of an animal for signs of disease he can be certain that verifiable symptoms are good enough for the identification of that disease. But this does not necessarily give an accurate diagnosis as to its cause, and thus a clear prognosis. The strength of religious emotionalism is in the infallible act of faith, in this case a submission to a (Judaeo-Christian) teleology that has manifested Creation in its entirety.

The impersonalization of theory is not solely attributable to science, since Horton showed that China developed the like of such.<sup>129</sup> To not sound contradictory to my earlier point on China here one must take into consideration how the individual comes to terms with his or her environment and the compromises they take in order to fit into society as a whole. Individualism can be nurtured under many circumstances but the influence that individual contributes to society is the measurable difference of the meaning of concepts of

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<sup>125</sup> Kay Milton, *op. cit.*, p10.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp14-15.

<sup>127</sup> Edelman, G., *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire*, p176.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p163.

<sup>129</sup> Kay Milton, *op. cit.*, p13.

freedom promulgated by either Western or Eastern philosophies. Interestingly Blumenberg's analysis of secularised creation traces back to early Gnostic cosmology where absolute space and time are realms not relationally dependent on the realm of God.<sup>130</sup> The early Christian Gnostics posited that in order for God to bear no responsibility for the material world the latter is fundamentally evil. Here Blumenberg sees the roots of the modern scientific conception, although on reflection his views can be argued out through the dialectic. It is during this time in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century that Irenaeus took up opposition to it. Irenaeus forwarded the concept of the primacy of created things, within the matter of which is located the will of God. Where the Gnostics adhered to the primacy of ideas, Irenaeus in his Trinitarian Father, Divine Logos, and Spirit of Wisdom (Sophia) relationship the creature is related to the transcendent, invisible God through the Son. The Divine Logos is born into the womb of the Virgin by the power of Sophia to bring about salvation.

Gunton, after Blumenberg, furthers his argument that the ecological crisis is founded in the gradual dissipation of the Gnostic concept, which Irenaeus so opposed.<sup>131</sup> The Romanisation and Hellenisation of Christianity obscured early Christian understanding. Blumenberg contends that Irenaeus' synthesis of Creation - Redemption - creation through its redemption by the Son, subject to God's purpose and design, substituted for a more exclusive focus on redemption. The Hellenistic influence was to denigrate a finite corrupted life subject to decay counter-affirming the goodness of the created order of the Hebraic-Christian tradition. Thus, there was growing ambiguity of the nature of matter and the disjunction between human salvation and the corruptible creation.

Again, this seems to ignore the common-sense understanding that drives homeostasis and forms the basis for environmentally determined behaviour that maybe a peasant could better understand. I certainly uphold the idea that human culture is conceited in its assumption of power in the universe and rational analysis of the ultimate causes of environmental degradation. Relative to increasing populations, successful human expansion is premised on a reshuffling of ecological balances, only humanity may not understand why it suffers its own self-induced problems. This for me is the primal role of the Church and the reasons for its origination. It began as a peasant revolution.

## The soteriology of Jesus Christ

To conclude this essay then, as a starting point for Christian ethics the resurrection of Jesus Christ gives a triumphal sacrifice to an otherwise ignominious death.<sup>132</sup> According to St. Symeon the renewal in the man Christ invokes a new dynamic relationship, one which is stable.<sup>133</sup> It is the central doctrine relative to the

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<sup>130</sup> Michael S. Northcott, *op. cit.*, pp206-208.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp209-210.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, pp199-200.

<sup>133</sup> Anestis G. Keselopoulos, *Man and the Environment*, p183.

Hebrew understanding of the created order, the restoration of which is an act of relationality between God, humanity and non-humans. Without such, death would hold dominion. In Pauline theology the power of the Holy Spirit moves through the body of Jesus Christ and fulfils the eternal plan of God, as human history and the created order is drawn to its destiny of harmony. This is the primal Hebraic understanding of the physical sacrifice – the work of restoration. The ecological sensitivities of the earth are drawn into God’s being, re-establishing the relational structure between creaturely existence and suffering, for its salvation.<sup>134</sup> At its heart is the human life. St. Paul affirms this in the founding of the New Testament churches and their communities of place. As such, Keselopoulos says the Church is the organic unity of the entire universe in which man’s responsibility is to graft the world into the Church.<sup>135</sup> The spiritual and essential relationship with God is thus accomplished with the material and sensible Body and Blood of Christ. The Eucharist, through bread and wine, leads us back to God. This selfhood and worldly redemption of God is not a personalism, but neither is it an impersonalism.<sup>136</sup> In fact, it is a challenge to humano-centrism and modern individualism. As Anne Primavesi states, one can no longer disconnect their well-being from that of the whole Earth.<sup>137</sup> Because in traditional theology geocentrism emerges as anthropocentrism, theological listings are humano-centred. She continues that Christians are negatively bound to Adam’s sin by one’s history, but in fact the first three chapters of Genesis have no mention of the word ‘sin’ nor the Fall, giving rise to an implicit understanding of homeostasis. Earth system science, on the other hand, urges us to exercise theological freedom in positing a response of each creature in it.<sup>138</sup> I reiterate, this understanding can only be nurtured through contact with the land and to understand its *gift*.

In 1972, John B. Cobb in *Is it Too Late*, pioneered an ecotheological response to the environmental movement. He talks about imbuing all life forms with intrinsic value.<sup>139</sup> Every past event is organically linked to life experienced now, and as such is guided by God at every point. His process theology shows the relationality of the natural world as a place of equality. The word ‘Christ’ is a synonym for such, allowing the everywhere active, suffering, life-giving reality. God is totally identified with all life, including evil.<sup>140</sup> It is the choice of the individual to seek redemption and understanding. One can see the correlation to the wisdom of the Hebraic bible, the creative agent of Yahweh. The incarnation motivates the universe from its origin to its destiny<sup>141</sup> as Johannine epistemology asserts, the Logos or the divine word comes to Creation as embodied presence. On this note the cultural has its place albeit I feel it is given undue precedence over the environmental. Their bridging is the motive for a modern environmental movement, the message of which has always been intrinsic to religious experience. Likewise individualism is not a new phenomenon, but has been misunderstood within its modern context. With the change of values to one more materially based as a

<sup>134</sup> Michael S. Northcott, *op. cit.*, p204.

<sup>135</sup> Anestis G. Keselopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp183-184.

<sup>136</sup> Michael S. Northcott, *op. cit.*, p205.

<sup>137</sup> Anne Primavesi, ‘Theology and Earth System Science’ in Susan Frank Parsons’, pp26-29.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p33.

<sup>139</sup> Michael S. Northcott, *op. cit.*, pp147-149.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p150.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p206.

result of the development of cities and the concentration of resources so the spiritual has been ousted out and the *first* environmental movement embodied in the belief in God is being lost. The classical Greeks understood God as the Unknown, not unlike modern scientific appreciation of the immateriality of matter. From antiquity the loss of freedom to worship the Unknown shows a correlate exodus of the countryside and loss of intimacy with nature. Individualism was once nurtured in freedom to work with nature but now it is attributable in the West to the exercising of material clout. The simple solution to this spiritual evacuation is to get back to the land.

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## Further Resources

See <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/quarry/ending.htm> and <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/quarry/lafarge-panel.htm> and the book based around McIntosh's experience with the community of Harris entitled *Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power*, Aurum Press (London, 2001)

[http://gen.ecovillage.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=92&Itemid=215](http://gen.ecovillage.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=92&Itemid=215)

See <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/> and <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/> for a full listing of current documented activities and projects. Transition Town Totnes is the founder's constituency and first official town.

See <http://www.southlondonpermaculture.com/> for environmental work sponsored by the author, and for the availability of his books.