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## (Um)welt-ethos Creation, ecology and environment in ecumenical perspective

### (Um)welt-ethos Stworzenie, ekologia i środowisko w perspektywie ekumenicznej

#### Abstract

Christianity is sometimes considered as guilty of the ecological miscare throughout history. The words ‘economy’, ‘ecology’ and ‘ecumenism’ come from the same word (*oikos* – house) and remain very close in their respective developments. But *Welt-ethos* must be preceded by a *Welt-logos* and by an *Um-welt-logos*, that means that Nature has her own voice in our relationship with the Planet. This is a counter-intuitive principle in the history of Christianity, whose position has been sometimes ambiguous. An historical approach can help us to understand better these abstract ideas as incarnated in the present moment. This ecumenical and ecological spirituality is lived not only by monks and friars, but also by all believers in Christ, and the theology of creation is an ecumenical meeting-point between all Christians. In this study we will follow here a biblical, historical, ecumenical and comparative methodology, for understanding how was lived this issue in the Christianity, and how must be lived in the future.

**Keywords:** ecology, creation, ecumenism, postmodernism, ecological spirituality.

#### Abstrakt

Chrześcijaństwo obciąża się nieraz winą za powstałe na przestrzeni wieków zaniedbania w dziedzinie ekologii. Słowa: „ekonomia”, „ekologia” i „ekumenizm” pochodzą od tego samego słowa (*oikos* – dom) i pozostają bardzo bliskie w swym semantycznym rozwoju. Ale *Welt-ethos* musi być poprzedzony przez *Welt-logos* i *Um-welt-logos*, co oznacza, że natura winna określać naszą relację z planetą. Zasada ta kontrastuje nieco z historią chrześcijaństwa, którego stanowisko w tym zakresie bywało niejednoznaczne. Historyczne spojrzenie może pomóc lepiej zrozumieć te abstrakcyjne idee jako obecne w aktualnym czasie. Ekumeniczna i ekologiczna duchowość jest praktykowana nie tylko przez mnichów i zakonników, ale przez wszystkich wierzących w Chrystusa, a teologia stworzenia stała się ekumenicznym punktem spotkania wszystkich chrześcijan. Niniejsze studium, opierając się na biblijnej, historycznej, ekumenicznej i porównawczej metodologii, ma na celu ukazanie sposobu traktowania tej kwestii w chrześcijaństwie w przeszłości i jak należy odnosić się do niej w przyszłości.

**Slowa kluczowe:** ekologia, stworzenie, środowisko, postmodernizm, duchowość ekologiczna.

*Umwelt* means in German ‘environment’, and the *Welt-ethos*, ‘global ethics’; so “*Um-welt-ethos*” is the relationship between both. The natural and ecological roots are a common frame for everyone, that in other religions can be called *thao*, the ten commandments or simply *Weltethos* or global ethics, as Hans Küng studied. And this *ethos* is founded in a *logos*. In these lines we propose an ecumenical approach to the Christian doctrine of the creation in relationship with ecology, sustainability, and responsibility with the environment. Christians speak frequently about the salvation in Jesus Christ, forgetting sometimes God’s creation, but the Bible starts with the words “in the beginning” (Gen 1:1). We can reread now the biblical account of the creation, in order to consider later how the Christians speak about the relationship with the nature and the environment. In these lines we will follow a biblical and historical approach to this sensibility, and look forward to a common and ecumenical understanding of the Christian (*Um-*)*welt-ethos*, with a biblical, historical, ecumenical and comparative methodology.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> About this topic, see for example: Clive Staples Lewis. 1947. *The abolition of man*. New York: Macmillan, passim; Clive Staples Lewis. 2000. *Mere Christianity*. New York: HarperCollins, 3–34; Faith and Order Commission. 1968. God in Nature and History. In *New Directions in Faith and Order. Bristol 1967. Reports, Minutes, Documents*, 7–32. Geneva: World Council of Churches; Charles Birch. 1976. “Creation, Technology and Human Survival”. *The Ecumenical Review* 28 (1): 66–79; World Christian Churches. 1990. *Now is the Time: Final Documents and Other Texts. World Convocation on Justice, Peace and Integrity of creation, Seoul, Korea 5–12 March*. Geneva: WCC Publications, passim; Lukas Vischer. 1993. The Theme of Humanity and creation in the Ecumenical Movement. In *Sustainable Growth – A Contradiction in Terms? Economy, Ecology and Ethics After the Earth Summit. Report of the Visser’t Hooft Memorial Consultation. The Ecumenical Institute, Château de Bossey, June 14–19, 1993*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 69–88; Gennadios Limouris. 1994. *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism. Statements, Messages and Reports on the Ecumenical Movement, 1902–1992*. Geneva: WCC Publications, passim; John Chryssavgis. 2019. *Creation as sacrament. Reflections on Ecology and Spirituality*. London: T & T Clark, passim; Hans Küng. 2012. *Handbuch Weltethos*. Ed. Hans Küng, Angela Rinn Maurer. München: Piper, passim; Hans Küng. 2005. *Weltethos christlich verstanden*. Freiburg: Herder; Pablo Blanco. 2014. ‘In the beginning’ (Gn 1:1, Jn 1:1). Creation, nature and ecology according with Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI. In “*Ins Herz geschrieben*”: *Die Grundlagen des freiheitlichen Rechtsstaates. Aufsätze und Diskussionsbeiträge aus Anlass der Internationalen Tagung am 10. Juni 2013 an der Katholischen Universität Pázmány Péter in Budapest*. Ed. Nadja El Beheiri, János Erdögy, 95–115. Budapest: Pázmány Press. These ideas were developed in the courses *Weltethos and Christianity* in Weltethos Institut of the Eberhards Universität of Tübingen (Germany), from May 18 to 21, 2017; and in the International seminar on Science and Religion cooperation for Environmental Care (ISSREC), in Torreciudad (Huesca, Spain) from June 19 to 21, 2017. A resume was presented in the International Congress of the European Society for Catholic Theology: Creation – Transformation – Theology. Osnabrück (Germany) in August 26–27, 2021. The comments in these sessions were very useful for me, and I would thank the assistants very much for them.

## 1. Biblical Foundations

*Bereshit Yahvé*: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” repeats the first verse of the Bible. In this section, we refer to only two texts in *Genesis*, although there is the sapiential books of the Old Testament, which also contain important elements of biblical theology of creation. But in the *Genesis*, firstly, we prospect the origins of the universe in the Bible and in some Christian authors, distinguishing at least *three different levels*:

- a) “Environment” (*Umwelt*) means that nature has its own language or a grammar written in its own being, that could be compared to a compass or a *gps* – so to speak – for each creature’s behavior.
- b) In the same line, this *Weltethos* – also called *naturalis lex* – is “written in our hearts,” as Paul said in Rom 2:15, so it can be known through reason and conscience.
- c) In this sense, human laws must therefore recognize the value of nature, the environment and this natural law itself, but at the same time we can consider the scientific objections to this religious account about the origin of the world.<sup>2</sup>

So for Christians there is a link, a connection between natural and supernatural, evolution and creation, science and religion. When we reread the first verse of the Bible, it speaks about the origin of the universe, but what does this exactly mean?

- a) “In the beginning...” the transcendent intervention of God takes place in the world, in the history which gives rise to all the elements; the universe is not therefore eternal and has not been created by itself.
- b) “... God created ...,” “left out” himself and created the world out of love and sense; then the world has a personal origin in him. By having a personal origin – conscious and beloved –, nature does not depend solely on chaos, chance or need, because it comes from reason, freedom and love.
- c) “... Heaven and earth,” that is the whole, all the universe, so there is a difference between the Creator and the creatures, God and nature. Christians reject either idolatry or worship of any creature, i.e., the panentheism or

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<sup>2</sup> About this topic, see Martin Kessler, Karel Deurloo. 2004. *A Commentary on Genesis. The Book of Beginnings*. New York – Mahwah: Paulist Press, 13–18; Pablo Blanco. 2010. “Logos and dia-logos. Faith, reason and love according to Joseph Ratzinger”. *Anglican Theological Review* 92 (3): 499–511; Marie Turner. 2013. The Liberation of Creation: Romans 8:11–29. In *Creation is Groaning. Biblical and theological perspectives*. Ed. Mary L. Coloe, 69. Collegeville: Liturgical Press; Anthony Kelly. 2013. Christ and Creation: Logos and Cosmos. In *Creation is Groaning. Biblical and theological perspectives*. Ed. Mary L. Coloe, 108–109. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.

the confusion between nature and God.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the biblical exegesis explains that there are two different tales in the *Genesis Book*, with different origins and contents.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1. Priestly Tradition

A Levitical priest of the sixth century BC narrated the six days in which God creates the whole universe: light and darkness, plants and animals, woman and man (Gn 1:1-2,4a), and it concludes with these words: “This is the story of the creation of heaven and earth” (2:1). These numbers or verses contain a whole teaching about God, the world and humanity, but not a cosmological tale in the sense understood by current science.<sup>5</sup> In these words, we discover more complementary sentences:

- a) “Let us make man in our image and likeness” (Gen 1:26). In the plural of the verb can be understood that the whole Trinity takes part of creation as an *operatio ad extra*. Irenaeus of Lyon used the image of the two hands with which the Father created the world: the Son and the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> All the creation has been made by the Father according to the Logos (cf. Jn 1:3), while the Spirit is usually seen in the breath (*ruah*) that blows over the waters the day after (cf. Gen 2). The creation is also understood as an act of *eros* and *logos*, love and knowledge of three divine persons, so all this gives sense to nature and creation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Kessler, Deurloo. 2004. *A Commentary on Genesis*, 13–19. Nature is not something inferior neither “romanticized” nor viewed in a Darwinian way, neither worshiped nor seen as mere natural resources. It is neither something passive, just a thing: is “highly dynamic”. There is therefore a strong link (and an otherness) between God and the creatures, which has also nothing to do with the primitive contrast between good and evil, spirit and matter, more typical of Manichaeism. God created “heaven and earth”, not good and evil or the *yin* and the *yang*. The origin of the universe is – before everything – a “Big Bang of reason and love;” because it does not come from the chaos or the struggle between opposites (cf. Ernst M. Conradie. 2014. “What on Earth Did God Create? Overtures to an Ecumenical Theology of Creation”. *The Ecumenical Review* 66 (4): 446–447, 449).

<sup>4</sup> See Donald E. Gowan. 1988. *From Eden to Abel. A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 1–11*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans – Edinburg: The Hansel, 12–15; Kenneth A. Matthews. 1996. *An Exegetical and Theological Commentary of the Holy Scripture. Genesis 1:11–26*. Vol. 1A. Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 145–149.

<sup>5</sup> See Gowan. 1988. *From Eden to Abel. A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 1–11*, 2–3, 38–40, 47–51, 58–61; Matthews. 1996. *An Exegetical and Theological Commentary of the Holy Scripture. Genesis 1:11–26*, 1A, 60–61; Kessler, Deurloo. 2004. *A Commentary on Genesis. The Book of Beginnings*, 13–15.

<sup>6</sup> *Adversus Haereses* IV. Praefatus 4; 20:1.

<sup>7</sup> About this: Mary L. Coloe. 2013. Creation in the Gospel of John. In *Creation is Groaning. Biblical and theological perspectives*. Ed. Mary L. Coloe, 71–90. Collegeville: Liturgical Press; Margaret Daly-Denton. 2017. *John: An Earth Bible Commentary. Supposing Him to Be the Gardener*. London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 34–35.

- b) This priority of manhood does not mean tyranny<sup>8</sup>, although humans are one of the most important elements of creation. In fact, he or she is almost a “self-portrait of God,” who can see himself in the mirror of creation and especially in each of us. “Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground” (Gen 1:28). This rule does not mean a random or arbitrary decision, because we must take care of nature as a gardener, and do not obscure this “image of God” that remains in us and in the nature.<sup>9</sup>

## 1.2. Yahwist Tradition

This text calls to the Creator “Yahweh” that means a familiar and close God; humans are settled in the middle of creation in the figures of Adam and Eve (Gen 2:4b-25). “The crown of God’s handiwork is human life,” and God created the animals but man “put a name” to them (Gen 1:26; 2:19). He created Adam from *adamah* ‘clay’ (as *homo* in Latin comes from *humus*), and blew over the mud a *spiritus*, a ‘breath of life’ (Gen 2:7). Both material (mud) and spiritual (blow) principles can be respectively found in this tale, because we are both, matter and spirit, like an animal that can think, speak or love. Eve comes from “Adam’s rib,” so the fundamental equality of woman and man is out of question: “This is my own flesh and bones!,” exclaims an astonished Adam (Gen 2:23). In this sense, Yahweh established a covenant with all the humanity but later it was broken by us.<sup>10</sup>

This original design does not reject human freedom, because God just desires our free cooperation with his love. At the end we have a wise and beloved nature created and kept by God, and laid in our hands although they are unfortunately stained. The Deep Ecology critics maintain that the Judeo-Christian tradition puts man over all nature, and that ethical rules come from above because “nature knows best.”<sup>11</sup> The Bible maintains that “God blessed them and said: ‘Be fertile

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Lynn Jr. White. 1967. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”. *Science* 155: 1203–1207.

<sup>9</sup> See Gowan. 1998. *From Eden to Abel. A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 1–11*, 2–3, 38–40, 47–51, 58–61; Matthews. 1996. *An Exegetical and Theological Commentary of the Holy Scripture. Genesis 1:11–26*, 61; Kessler, Deurloo. 2004. *A Commentary on Genesis. The Book of Beginnings*, 13–15.

<sup>10</sup> For example in: Gowan. 1988. *From Eden to Abel. A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 1–11*, 39–40; Matthews. 1996. *An Exegetical and Theological Commentary of the Holy Scripture. Genesis 1:11–26*, 62; Kessler, Deurloo. 2004. *A Commentary on Genesis. The Book of Beginnings*, 1–3; Turner. 2013. The Liberation of Creation: Romans 8:11-29, 65–66; Annette Mosher. 2016. “Christianity, Covenant, and Nature”. *Baptistic Theologies* 8 (1): 62–72.

<sup>11</sup> White. 1967. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”, 1203–1207; Michael E. Zimmermann. 2000. Possible Political Problems in Earth-Based Religiosity. In *Beneath the Surface*.

and grow in number. Fill the earth and be its master. Rule over the fish in the sea and over the birds in the sky and over every living Thing that moves on the earth'." (Gn 1:28). But the only principle that rules nature is God not man, obviously part of the nature.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.3. Jesus of Nazareth

In the New Testament the dominion of man among the nature is a governance, an administration, a "servant stewardship", although there are also important New Testament texts on theology of creation (e.g., Rom. 8, or the prologues of Eph., etc.) that interpret creation christologically. But at the same time, it is also true that Christianity has paved the way for science and technology that have devastated the planet. But is this just a Christian modernity, or maybe a simple secularization of it? God even offers to man and woman the power to share freely his Providence, entrusting them with the responsibility of "subduing" the earth and having dominion over it. Though often unconscious collaborators with God's will, we can also enter deliberately into the divine plan by our own actions, prayers and sufferings. Then we fully become "God's fellow workers" and co-workers for his Kingdom.<sup>13</sup>

"In ecotheology – comments Conradie – , a concern for that what is material, bodily and earthly has returned to the centre of attention".<sup>14</sup> In fact, "the Logos became flesh" (Jn 3:14) and Jesus really started a new era, that confirms and improves all the teachings in the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> Then after having read the *Genesis* in order to understand its message better, we can follow the historical evolution of these ideas in different Christian authors, not only in Jesus of Nazareth but also in some medieval masters – as Benedict and Francis – , in modern authors (Luther, Galileo, Marx and their postmodern critics) and some recent spiritual leaders as Bartholomew of Constantinople, Benedict XVI, Pope Francis and some Protestant authors.

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*Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology*. Ed. Eric Katz, Andrew Light, David Rothenberg, 169–171. Cambridge, Mass. – London: MIT.

<sup>12</sup> About this topic Gowan. 1988. *From Eden to Abel. A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 1–11*, 40–42; Matthews. 1996. *An Exegetical and Theological Commentary of the Holy Scripture. Genesis 1:11–26*, 159–164; Kessler, Deurloo. 2004. *A Commentary on Genesis. The Book of Beginnings*, 13–15.

<sup>13</sup> Jim Ball. 1998. "The Use of Ecology in the Evangelical Protestant Response to the Ecological Crisis". *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* (50): 35–38; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nr. 307, citing Col 1:24; 1 Cor 3:9; 1 Thess 3:2; Col 4:11.

<sup>14</sup> Conradie. 2014. What on Earth Did God Create? *Overtures to an Ecumenical Theology of Creation*, 434.

<sup>15</sup> Turner. 2013. *The Liberation of Creation: Romans 8:11-29*, 57–58; Kelly. 2013. *Christ and Creation: Logos and Cosmos*, 95–97; José Granados. 2020. *Teología de la creación: de carne a gloria*. Madrid: Didaskalos, 63–83.

Jesus of Nazareth was a *techtón*, an artisan, a travelling tradesman: neither a mystic nor a monk (in the usual understanding of this term), but more a country peasant who combined marginal farming with village crafts. He used frequently the natural images in his parables with a universal meaning: there “is not only human life that is observed, but nature as well, man in nature”.<sup>16</sup> For example, the parables of the soil (Mk 4:1-9), the self-producing earth (Mk 4:26-29) and the transforming earth (Mk 4:30-32) have a spiritual meaning. Sowing and reaping, harvests and vineyards, births and flowers, plows and yokes are frequent symbols that Jesus employs. These Parables “constantly surprised and frequently shocked his audience”.<sup>17</sup>

The symbol usually translates a human situation into cosmological terms, and also Funk has made a suggestive comparison: “The world of the parable is like Alice’s looking glass world: all is familiar, yet all is strange, and the one illuminates the other”.<sup>18</sup> In these parables, Jesus speaks about the process of agriculture as an ecological activity calling for human cooperation with the role of nature, and we can learn from

- a) the patience of the peasant (passive element), the humility of humanity as part of nature, the providential care of God that makes nature not wild and cruel but rather something like our sister, a daughter of God;
- b) work and effort of the peasant (active element) about the frugality, the care, the respect, the beauty, and the ecological sensitivity.<sup>19</sup>

So the process of agriculture and the growing of plants is a reversal of human experience, like the patience in the parable of the sower (Mt 13:1-23; Mk 4:1-20; Lk 8:1-15), where the main character is a Galilean peasant, a day laborer and not an elite and anxious urbanite. In the seed there is an action of the sower and the cooperation of the seed (as God with our freedom), and the peasant goes to sleep. The arrival of the kingdom of God is like this sowing: made by both God through freedom and time, and the patience which is given 30, 60, 100 percent as fruit, as in the parable of the mustard seed states (cf. Mt 13:31-32): “grain is a representation of plenty”. Nature, therefore, is to be looked upon as sacred, rather than as a mere agent of utility for human

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<sup>16</sup> Amos Niven Wilder. 1964. *Early Christian Rethoric*. London: SCM, 82.

<sup>17</sup> John Fuellenbach. 1995. *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today*. New York: Orbis, 70–71; V.J. John. 2002. “Kingdom of God and Ecology: A Parabolic Perspective”. Bangalore Theological Forum 34 (1): 93–123 (15.3.2022). <http://www.religion-online.org/article/kingdom-of-god-and-ecology-a-parabolic-perspective/>.

<sup>18</sup> Robert W. Funk. 1966. *Language, Hermeneutic and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology*. New York: Harper & Row, 159.

<sup>19</sup> John. 1995. “Kingdom of God and Ecology: A Parabolic Perspective”. B.1; Turner. 2013. *The Liberation of Creation: Romans 8:11–29*, 69.

needs. At the same time Jesus compared himself with the wheat seed that must be buried and dies for giving eternal life (cf. Jn 14:24).<sup>20</sup>

## 2. Ecumenical Perspective

A Christian (*Um*)*welt-ethos* comes from an (*Um*)*welt-logos*, we have explained, so we must go forward the anthropological, ethical and also religious roots. Ethics, science, religion and environment must be prospected together, and in these days we have heard of some Christian leaders preaching about creation, which is also a revealed truth, a part of the Christian creed. These voices came also first of all from the east: *ex oriente lux*, once again. This Christian ecological sensitivity was firstly developed in the east with the eremitic and monastic experiences – as we have seen – and continues in our times.

### 2.1. The Orthodox Contemplation

A good example of this Orthodox eye is Bartholomew I (b. 1940), the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople who has been a pioneer in this field of eco-theology. During the last four decades, Bartholomew of Constantinople, named “the Green Patriarch”, has been involved in various activities focused on environmental protection.<sup>21</sup> “The main stress in this tremendous work [...] is laid on uniting theology with ontology and indicating that there exists more continuity between natural and human spheres than discontinuity,” wrote Leśniewski.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time Bartholomew remembered that the human person constitutes the crowning of creation, because he or she is able to express love and reason, knowledge and freedom, and also they maintain God’s Kingdom. Then there is a uni-verse which has a *logos* that constitutes a *cosmos*, not a *chaos*; the *logos* gives us an *ethos* which takes care of the *cosmos*. Bartholomew’s point of view is neither Anthropocentrism nor “Anthropomonism”, but rather an anthropological and ecological Theocentrism, that includes inside the other spheres. For eastern Christians, nature is not only connected with the Creator, but also with the Trinity,

<sup>20</sup> John. 1995. “Kingdom of God and Ecology: A Parabolic Perspective”, 2.

<sup>21</sup> See Krzysztof Leśniewski. 2011. “Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s ‘Green message to the world’”. *Roczniki Teologii Ekumenicznej* 3 (58): 33–45; Patriarch Bartholomew. 2010. *In the World, Yet Not of the World. Social and Global Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*. New York: Fordham University, and id. 2012. *On earth as in Heaven. Ecological vision and initiatives of ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew*. New York: Fordham University. See also John Chrysavgis. 2019. *Creation as sacrament. Reflections on Ecology and Spirituality*.

<sup>22</sup> Leśniewski. 2011. “Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s ‘Green message to the world’”, 37. See also Gennadios Limouris. 1994. *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism (Statements, Messages and Reports on the Ecumenical Movement, 1902–1992)*. Geneva: WCC Publications.

Jesus and the eucharist, concludes Bartholomew with his liturgical and theological perspective, and in fact the “eucharist of the creation” is also underlined by the western tradition.<sup>23</sup>

“In the beginning was the Logos” (Jn 1:1) repeated also the German theologian Joseph Ratzinger (b. 1927), later pope Benedict XVI. God is *Logos* and *Eros*, a *Logos agapicus*, a “creative Logos”, a *Verbum spirans amorem*, as Augustine said. So the world does not come from chaos or a blind action, a struggle of dark forces or the nothing, the absurd or the meaningless, but from a Big Bang of love and reason that establishes a *cosmos* of sense and freedom. This common origin offers us a principle of love, reason and relationship in the beginning of everything. This explains that there must be also an inner, a “human ecology”. Humanity has always a relative independence or heteronomy: the human nature can open her mind and heart to different and broader possibilities. We find here an interesting convergence with the eastern perspective.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, sustainability is also a commandment in order to maintain the original balance. In the Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate* (2009; cf. Eph 4:15), the pope Ratzinger spoke about truth and love as reciprocal values: *logos* and *eros*, reason and heart, sense and sensibility once again. At the same time, he remembered that we need something more than justice, and that love must be present in social life (cf. nr. 30–31, 33), and established the “gift-principle”, which regards not only the economical profit and considers that the common good (for example, the climate), that has also to do with common sense. The economy without ethics becomes wasteful, because we need both: morals and money.<sup>25</sup>

We must also pay attention to the non-economical foundations of economy such as work, trust, effort or human life in its wholeness. So are a little fur-

<sup>23</sup> Patriarch Bartholomew. 2012. *On earth as in Heaven*, 125, 273; Leśniewski. 2011. “Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew’s ‘Green message to the world’” 37, 43–45; about the biblical foundations see Kelly. 2013. *Christ and Creation: Logos and Cosmos*, 91–115.

<sup>24</sup> After the developments of the popes John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II, came Pope Benedict XVI, who gave a speech in the *Bundestag*, the seat of the German parliament, on September the 22<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Then *die Grüne*, the Green Party proposed to boycott the act for ideological reasons, but in the end they went and remained profoundly surprised. The German pope addressed the ecologists and gave them as an example at the beginning of his speech: they have been able to open themselves and to consider the importance of nature, of the true weight of reality. “I would say that the emergence of the ecological movement in German politics since the 1970s (...) was and continues to be a cry for fresh air which must not be ignored or pushed aside”. In fact, considering the natural environment, it has been an opening of the eyes to the surrounding reality. However, Benedict XVI added, the best way to defend the environment is to refer them back to their origin: “The windows must be flung open again, we must see the wide world, the sky and the earth once more and learn to make proper use of all this”. We are part of the whole, of nature and we also have a natural and a “human ecology” (Benedict XVI. 2014. *The Garden of God*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 125–133). That sense of being at one with nature offers us also an ontological humility (not only moral), because we are the fruit of a former and superior love and sense (see Blanco. 2010. “Logos and dia-logos” 299–234; Blanco. 2014. ‘In the beginning’ (Gn 1:1, Jn 1:1), 95–115; Turner. 2013. *The Liberation of Creation: Romans 8:11–29, 57*).

<sup>25</sup> Benedict XVI. 2014. *The Garden of God*, 139–210.

ther from mere consensus, living according to nature, reason and the natural law – as the pagan Greeks proposed and the Christians remembered – are harmoniously connected. But is a *Weltethos* possible, a common-ground for all religions, cultures and also for non-believers? In the Habermas-Ratzinger dialogue in 2004, reason and religion were the healers of reciprocal pathologies. And also in his debate with Paolo Flores d’Arcais, the Jewish moderator Gad Lerner proposed the ten commandments as a *tao* for all humans. Therefore the *recta ratio* and the natural law – however it was named – are the genetic codes of our nature.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.2. Protestant Eco-Theology

Martin Luther (1483–1546) was critical of the soteriological value of Roman-Greek culture and the new ideas of the Renaissance, and he pointed to the unique salvation value of Christian faith. He wanted to go back to its foundations: Bible, Jesus, faith, grace, salvation. He showed more regard for the “amazing grace,” than creation and nature: Man – preached again and again the German reformer – comes from God and from the nothing of himself; then he goes to God, when he comes back from his nothing. Here the question is whether humans are nothing or maybe someone. For some Protestant writers, nature is not as important as salvation. Jesus and his grace are logically much more valuable, but sometimes there is an ancient suspicion against nature understood as – in the medieval proverb – *gratia praesupponit natura*, grace counts more than nature. But at the same time Calvin considered the stars, planets and galaxies as the “alphabet of theology”.<sup>27</sup>

This one intends to be an ecumenical proposal, and in fact some recent Lutheran studies have rediscovered the importance of creation, and we find positive feedback between other protestant communities, although some early ecologists were not really all Christian believers. In this sense, the Evangelicals proposed also a “servanthood stewardship” with nature and environment, and a rediscovery of creation. They speak about humility and responsibility: not only a wise or scientific use of nature in an anthropocentric or secularized system, but also with a sacral relationship with its Creator, as Christianity teaches.

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<sup>26</sup> See the confluences in: Küng. 2012. *Handbuch Weltethos*; Blanco. 2010. “Logos and dialogos” 506–509.

<sup>27</sup> Conradie. 2014. What on Earth Did God Create? Overtures to an Ecumenical Theology of Creation, 437. See also Oswald Bayer. 1994. “I Believe That God Has Created Me with All That Exists. An Example of Catechetical-Systematics”. *Lutheran Quarterly* (8): 129–161; Niels H. Gregersen. 2005. “Grace in nature and History: Luther’s Doctrine of creation Revisited”. *Dia-log: A Journal of Theology* 44 (1): 19–29.

The quotation of John 20:15 (“Supposing him to be a gardener”) should be inspiring.<sup>28</sup>

What is the relationship with the rest of creation: dominion or stewardship as *imago Dei*? We find here a non-dualistic division between nature and history which appears frequently in the proposals of the Deep Ecology, that taught us: “nature knows best, and history is always wrong.” This ecological crisis is the consequence of losing the divine balance with nature, so we need to research it further to find and restore it as soon as possible. Only in this direction we can find a complete equilibrium prosecuted by our modern wellness and mindfulness. This ecological mind is for all Christians of every confession, and includes laymen and -women who live in the world, and is not limited to friars and monks, as the Reformers criticized.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.3. Catholic Point of View

There is also a Pope named Francis: it was said that Francis’ *Laudato si’* (2015), the first eco-encyclical letter about the environment and the ecology, could be an opportunity similar to Leo XIII’s *Rerum novarum* (1891), where the workers’ rights in the industrial revolution were denounced. The cry of nature and the poor is heard in unison, says Pope Francis (b. 1936). Is this a global text but now the bishop of Rome takes a step forward: from a global ethics to an ecological document. The respect for creation and God’s blessing for nature is the guiding principle of this first ecological encyclical. The text also has the Franciscan character – as *Pacem in terris* of John XXIII (1963) –, because he is the saint of nature and poor people. And also the patron of the ecologists, as John Paul II established: “for him each and every creature was a sister united to him with bounds of affection” (Nr. 11).<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See the critics of this concept in P. J. Van Dyk. 2015. “‘Responsible stewardship’: the root of all evil in eco-theology?”. *Old Testament Essays* 28 (2): 523–535. This excludes both idolatry and Pantheism, and proposes the respect of them as God’s creatures. Humans are not only servants of God that cultivate the earth, but also part of the creation; they are also stewards, so there is a lord-servant tension. The creation has an intrinsic value, because there is too a cosmic redemption in Christ: creation is not opposed to redemption of course. The “first law of ecology” is that “everything is connected to everything else,” said Muir in an interesting convergence with the last popes (see the documents of John Paul II in 1980, Benedict XVI in 2014, and Francis in 2015). Then there is an “eco-system”, a “bio-eco-nomics paradigm” in these Protestant developments, and also an upper connection which reminds us of the previous religious leaders (see White. 1967. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis”, passim; Jim Ball. 1998. “The Use of Ecology in the Evangelical Protestant Response to the Ecological Crisis”. *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* [50]: 32–34).

<sup>29</sup> Clifford C. Cain. 2011. “Down to earth theology: reclaiming our responsibility for creation and embracing biblical stewardship”. *American Baptist Quarterly* 30 (3–4): 276–281; Sarah Irving. 2015. “Beyond dominion and stewardship: humanity and nature in Puritan theology”. *American Theological Inquiry* 8 (1): 49–59; Daly-Denton. 2017. *John: An Earth Bible Commentary*, XVI.

<sup>30</sup> This “back to Francis!” is not “naïve romanticism”, because the Argentinian Pope asks the Christians for an “ecological conversion”, which will give us a new and special relationship with

Bonaventure – saint Francis’ son and disciple – mentioned that each aspect of creation bears an imprint or mark (*vestigium* ‘footprint’) on creation as it is written in John’s prologue (cf. Jn 1:3). So the Franciscan newness of this perspective was the connection between poverty and creation: “The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis was not merely a veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled” (Nr. 11).<sup>31</sup>

As concretization of these teachings, in 2020 the Argentinian Pope published *Querida Amazonia*, in which he expressed “the ecological dream” about the “lung of the planet” (Nr. 41–60). Later came the Corona-Crisis and someone remembered the sentence of Francis: “God always forgives, we men forgive sometimes, but nature never forgives”. In that text remembered the natural, human and social ecology exposed by his antecessor, with which we must take care of persons and ecosystems (cf. nr. 42). *Querida Amazonia* offers us as well positive and negative moments: “this dream made of water” and “the cry of the Amazon region” (cf. Nr. 43, 47–52). As therapy Francis proposed “the prophecy of contemplation” and the “ecological education and habits”, more or

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the environment. “In this way, we will help nurture the sublime fraternity with all creation which saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied” (nr. 221). Following the truth of creation, he speaks about the intrinsic value of it all: “The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us” (nr. 83; cf. Daniel P. Horan. 2015. “The Franciscan Nature of ‘Laudato Si’”; Gregorio Guitián. 2018. “Pope Francis and Catholic Social Teaching on Ecology. Implications for Christians Involved in Business”. *Worldviews* [22]: 169–171).

<sup>31</sup> Daly-Denton. 2017. *John. An Earth Bible Commentary*, 34–35; see also Robert McKim. Ed. 2020. *Laudato si and the Environment. Pope Francis’ Green Encyclical*. London: Routledge, and the comments there published; Turner. 2013. *The Liberation of Creation: Romans 8: 11–29, 57, 72–76, 87–88, 90*; Anthony Kelly. 2013. *Christ and Creation: Logos and Cosmos*, 91–93, 104–105. Against consume and “throw away culture”, the bishop of Rome explains that “the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor” (nr. 2). Ecology, bioethics and Christian charity understood together is the clue of this encyclical: the cry of the earth is the same as the one of the poor people, who are the bigger victims of the ecological crisis. We can also make a synthesis of this Encyclical about the poorness and the environment in some points (see Ignacio Ferrero. 2017. *Oikosnomos: el cuidado de la casa común. Una vuelta a los orígenes de la economía. In Ecología y desarrollo humano. Conversaciones sobre “Laudato si”*. Eds. Susana Aulestiarte, Reyes Duro, 50–56, 49–52. Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra). There can be remembered several points:

a) We must remember “*the Gospel of creation*”, “a sense of deep communion with the rest of nature” (nr. 91) with no Anthropocentrism. Human beings have the responsibility to “‘till and keep’ the garden of the world’ (cf. Gen 2:15)” (nr. 67).

b) *The human roots of ecological crisis* must be prospected once again from a philosophical and religious origin: “Modernity has been marked by an excessive Anthropocentrism” (nr. 116): which has spread a “use and throw away” mentality. The pope mentions blood diamonds and children soldiers, weapons, persons and organs’ trafficking. In this context we must remember “the value of labour” (nr. 124).

c) *Francis of Assisi* is “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology [was] lived out joyfully and authentically”; “the inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, an interior peace” (nr. 10).

d) The final aim is not simply a sustainable economy and an immediate international action on climate change, but also the praise and worship of the Creator. “*Laudato si: blessed be God for the sun, the moon, the water...*,” repeats with the other Francis.

less as Schumacher suggested in 1973 as “the best resource” (cf. nr. 53–60).<sup>32</sup> In 2020 the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Communion of Reformed Churches published *Jubilee for the Earth. Season of Creation*.

As conclusion we can say that this ecological and ecumenical proposal could connect with our original thesis in which we understood the *logos* in the mentioned three levels: the importance of the “environment” or *Umwelt* means that nature has its own language or its own grammar written in the same nature; the *Weltethos* as the law “written in our hearts” (Rom 2:15), as Paul said, not depending on confessions or religions; both concepts could be also enlarged with the neologism *(Um)weltethos*. The Bible and the history have taught us its importance for Christianity in his doctrine of the creation, so human laws and culture must therefore recognize the value of nature, environment, and this *(Um)weltethos* could offer us a new paradigm founded in the *(Um)weltlogos* of the Christian doctrine of creation (cf. Jn 1:1.3.14).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Pope Francis, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Querida Amazonia” to the People of God and to all Persons of Good Will* (2.2.2020). [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20200202\\_querida-amazonia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20200202_querida-amazonia.html); Ernst F. Schumacher. 1973. *Small Is Beautiful. Economics as if People Mattered*. London: Blond and Briggs, 156–158.

<sup>33</sup> See Küng. 2010. *Handbuch Weltethos. Eine Vision und ihre Umsetzung*, passim; Küng, Rinn Maurer. 2005. *Weltethos christlich verstanden. Positionen, Erfahrungen, Impulse*, passim; Blanco. 2010. “Logos and dia-logos” 499–509.

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