

Creation as an Ecumenical Problem: Renewed Belief through Green Experience

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Abstract

Loss of a sense of creaturehood and of members has occurred across the lines of divided churches in a secular context. The author explores the question whether green experience of nature can be a path toward a renewed sense of creaturehood. Bernard Lonergan's distinction between faith and belief allows for identifying a primordial faith that interprets the cosmos as numinous. Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises interprets primordial faith with the biblical word of God as Creator. Why not develop local ecumenical experiments in reevangelization that address green experience?

Keywords

belief, Bible, creation, creed, ecumenism, faith, green, Ignatius of Loyola, Lonergan, reevangelizing, sociology, Schleiermacher

Ecumenism has been called “a new way of being a Christian.”¹ This does not mean, of course, that either the ecumenical movement or the World Council of Churches (WCC) has superseded churches. Rather, for more than a century concern for Christian unity has altered the self-understanding of members, leaders,

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1. Jesuits, Congregatio Generalis, “Decree 12: Ecumenism” no. 328, in *Jesuit Life and Mission Today: The Decrees of the 31st–35th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus*, ed. John W. Padberg, trans. General Curia of the Society of Jesus (St. Louis: Institute

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and the churches themselves, and has awakened potential for institutional change. The underlying realization has been that more unites than divides Christians. All Christians believe, for example, that God is the Creator and that the world (all finite reality) is creation.² This article focuses on that element in the common heritage of Christianity. Many committed to ecumenism, however, think 2014 is not a propitious time for anything ecumenical. Despite the 2009 Lutheran/Catholic *Joint Agreement on Justification*, a common evaluation had emerged describing the glacial pace of movement toward unity as part of an ecumenical winter.³ Yet I agree with fellow inhabitants of northern latitudes, Finnish Minna Hietemäki and Canadian Bruce Myers, who provide thoughtful alternatives to dismay at winter in ecumenism.⁴ Others—and I agree with them—see a timely advantage in receptive ecumenism that shifts interest toward taking account of what each church has received from others, thereby relieving pressure toward institutional mergers.⁵ Cardinal Walter Kasper in his book *Harvesting the Fruits* discourages the wintry trope altogether in view of substantial advances in four international, bilateral dialogues, and advises patient further inquiry.⁶ Yet his book's title invokes autumn, not spring or summer.

of Jesuit Sources, 2009) 606–7, at 606. Somewhat similarly and more specifically, under the heading “Ecumenical Relations,” the Lutheran World Federation website states that, “To be Lutheran is to be ecumenical. We are committed to the quest for the visible unity of the Church” (<http://www.lutheranworld.org/content/ecumenical-relations>). All URLs cited herein were accessed June 17, 2014. This article expands a paper presented at the July 2013 Congress of Jesuit Ecumenists in Tampa, FL. The article began in conversations in 2012 on Catholic and Jesuit undergraduate education with Robert M. Doran and David G. Schultenover. I am grateful to both and to participants in the 2013 Congress of Jesuit Ecumenists on the theme of ecumenism and Ignatian spirituality, and to unknown referees, for helpful comments. No specific grant funded research for this article.

2. See WCC, Faith and Order Paper No. 153, *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as It Is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, rev. ed., intro. Dame Mary Tanner (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010; originally “God and His Creation” [Geneva: WCC, 1991]) 20–27.
3. Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* 2009, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html. For critical yet constructive analyses of the ecumenical situation see Michael Kinnamon, *The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement: And How It Has Been Impoverished by Its Friends* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2003); and “New Contours of Ecumenism: Challenges to the Next Generation,” *Ecumenical Review* 66 (2014) 16–24.
4. Minna Hietemäki, “Finding Warmth in the Ecumenical Winter: A Nordic Viewpoint,” *Ecumenical Review* 65 (2013) 368–75; and Bruce Myers, “Keeping Warm: Reception in the Ecumenical Winter,” *Ecumenical Review* 65 (2013) 376–87.
5. The book that explains and exemplifies receptive ecumenism is Paul Murray, ed., *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (New York: Oxford University, 2008).
6. Cardinal Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (New York: Continuum, 2009) 8. The documentary summary

Writing in the midst of what may be an ecumenical winter with negative and positive aspects, or in a time of receptivity, or simply in a period demanding patience, I do not wish to propose any structural redefinition or actual change. But cooperation is not to be rejected as only half a loaf. With a modest aim for ecumenical cooperation in reevangelization, I wish to reflect on the secular context of belief in God as Creator and finite reality as creation. Besides presenting a challenge, the secular context also offers a point of access to belief in God as Creator through the “green” experience of physical nature. That experience, understood in light of Bernard Lonergan’s faith/belief distinction and a principle in the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola, can be conceived as “primordial faith” open to belief in God as Creator and the world as creation. That concept provides a platform on which to consider cooperative reevangelizing in an ecological era on the basis of already present Christian unity.

The Secular Context

Ecumenism in the West, both wintry and receptive, takes place in a secular context. The secular context affects awareness of the creature–Creator relationship within which monotheistic religions live, believe, and act. Moreover, the secular context has an interior dimension. It does not simply surround belief as an external historical circumstance but forms an arc in a circumscribing social imaginary within the otherwise culturally variegated common sense of people in the West. So I will use the term “context” to denote an internal as well as external relation between secularity on the one hand, and the churches, faith, and Christian life on the other. A secular context varies somewhat from society to society in the West. In each society the context and faith are copresent in Western Christians in distinctive ways. My focus here will be on how the context makes a difference to common Christian belief in God as Creator within one society, the United States. Turnabout in relations between context and faith is fair play. Max Weber showed in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* that belief affects the internal and external aspects of the secular context in economic life, but that direction of influence is not the topic here.

About the Western context Charles Taylor asks, “Why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?”⁷ In a secular age, belief and unbelief are normal if taxing options facing everybody in all mainline Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Catholic, and Orthodox churches. Believing in God, membership in a church, and identifying with historical, visible Christianity do not coalesce into an obvious, easy, or default commitment for members of Christianity’s divided churches. Religion in the United States has changed from an inheritance to a choice, and not an

draws upon the international Lutheran–Catholic dialogue 1967–2009, the international Reformed–Catholic dialogue 1970–2009, the international Anglican–Catholic dialogue 1970–2009, and the international Methodist–Catholic dialogue 1967–2009.

7. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University, 2007) 25.

easy one.⁸ Taken for granted secularity is the US condition and context in which belief takes place.

At the same time many sociologists, philosophers, and historians have abandoned the old secularization hypothesis predicting that modernization ineluctably marginalizes, privatizes, and eventually extinguishes religion. An interrogation, rethinking, and relativizing of secularism(s) in theory and practice is underway.⁹ Theory has moved toward agreement that religion and the secular are “mutually constituted” categories whose meanings imply each other.¹⁰ Social differentiation is recognized increasingly as the most consequential outcome of historical processes of secularization in the historically distinct Latin West. Social differentiation comes about insofar as the major sectors of human activity—economic, political, scientific, cultural, familial, religious—stand on their own as independent institutional spheres each with a proper purpose, interest, set of norms, and fund of ideas. Privatization and loss of belief do not inevitably accompany that differentiation, although in Western Europe they have.¹¹

But the hypothesis that Western Europe is the avant-garde of a universal, uniform teleology entailing privatization as well as loss of belief and practice around the globe no longer predominates. The empirical fact of religion’s durability—and in some places its resurgence—cannot be overlooked, however it may be interpreted. A relatively high index of religiosity in the United States is more typical of secularization in some Western societies, not to mention societies in other parts of the world.¹²

Nonetheless a secular context cannot but affect common Christian belief in God as Creator. Secularity is pervasive but also ambivalent. It can be what Taylor speaks of as “exclusive humanism,” whose self-sufficiency admits “no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing.”¹³ In religious discourse closed secularity often has the name “secularism.” Secularity, however, can

8. Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, with Shaylyn Romney Garrett, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

9. See Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan Van Antwerpen, eds., *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Oxford University, 2011).

10. José Casanova, “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms,” in *Rethinking Secularism* 54–74, at 54.

11. José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994); and “Public Religions Revisited,” in *Religion: Beyond a Concept*, ed. Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University, 2008) 101–19.

12. See David Martin, *On Secularization: Towards A Revised General Theory* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); José Casanova, “Beyond European and American Exceptionalisms: Towards a Global Perspective,” in *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular, and Alternative Futures*, ed. Grace Davie, Paul Heelas, and Linda Woodhead (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003) 17–29; Casanova, “Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration,” in *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, ed. Timothy J. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Cambridge University, 2006) 65–92.

13. Taylor, *A Secular Age* 18. See also Charles Taylor, “Western Secularity,” in *Rethinking Secularism* 31–53.

also be open to divine transcendence. Open secularity sustains the standpoint of monotheistic belief in the creating God as the comprehensive horizon within which all secular sectors of life and thought operate. A closed secularity obviously is antithetical to belief in God, while an open secularity tolerates, affirms, or enacts belief in God. Crucially, both versions of the secular proceed from the same worldview emergent in the Latin West, according to which secular zones no longer have to struggle to secure their place in a sacred world but have become the whole of the world within which the sacred, religion, and belief have to carve out a place.¹⁴ This latter worldview, whether open or closed, is the secular context/matrix of Western belief in God the Creator and ecumenism.¹⁵

How does the secular context/matrix affect what may be called “a sense of creation”? A sense of creation not only involves belief in the Creator but also embraces creaturehood as the universal, albeit analogous, condition of all finite reality. Belief in Christ and the gospel builds on a sense of creation professed by most Christians in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed and by some in noncreedal adherence to biblical teachings.¹⁶ If in all churches a sense of creation has weakened in Western secular contexts, what might theology contribute to understanding the problematic situation and its potential for change? A few remarks on theological method precede a substantive response in three sections and a conclusion.

Method

Chapter 14 in Bernard Lonergan’s *Method in Theology* undergirds my approach to the above questions. This chapter on the speciality of communications presents a limited set of heuristic principles, not a theological recipe. It offers methodological orientation and encouragement to theology engaging in mutually critical mediation between Christianity and a historically formed cultural context.¹⁷ Orientation includes the concept of systematic theology as incomplete without contextual engagement of its attainments, the need for knowledge of a cultural context in fields other than theology in a spirit of dialogue, concern for renewal of community in churches and society, and readiness for ecumenical cooperation with all seeking the human good in society.

14. See Casanova, “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms,” in *Rethinking Secularism* 54–74, at 55.

15. Taylor, *A Secular Age* 539–93.

16. See WCC, *Confessing the One Faith*, Faith and Order Paper 153, 20–27.

17. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (1971; Toronto: University of Toronto, 2013). For an overview of communications see Frederick E. Crowe, “The Spectrum of ‘Communication’ in Lonergan,” in *Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground for Forging the New Age*, ed. Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (Kansas City, MO: Sheed & Ward, 1993) 67–86. For communications in relation to systematics see Thomas Hughson, “From a Systematics of History to Communications: Transition, Difference, Options,” in *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran, S.J.*, ed. John D. Dadosky (Milwaukee: Marquette University, 2009) 167–89.

Encouragement comes from Lonergan's scuttling of the illusion of self-sufficiency sometimes associated with systematics. Careful seeking to understand the truth in dogmas, doctrines, and elemental meanings is an irrefragable task.¹⁸ Without systematics the church and communications lack the best available, if always incomplete, comprehension of meaning in revealed truth and value. Without communications, however, theology as a whole has not fulfilled its purpose of interpretative contribution to the life and thought of church, individuals, ecumenism, society, culture, and other religions. That purpose is why communications, not systematics, crowns the series of Lonergan's eight functional specialties.

In *Method's* chapter 5 on functional specialties, Lonergan referred to communications as the "external relations" of theology.¹⁹ But in chapter 14 he clarifies that external relations by no means leave received systematic content untouched, as if communications devised strategies to relay already finished theological content to an external culture, other fields of inquiry, groups, and subcultures. Rather, reflecting on the message of Christ in the specialty of communications has heuristic capacity. Christ's message involves many kinds of meaning—incarnate, cognitive, effective, and constitutive; and reception of its systematic, cognitive meaning in communications is not passive but an active, interpretative process of discovery taking account of all kinds and functions of meaning.²⁰

By analogy, communications is to systematics as Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes* (*GS*), the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, is to the council's *Lumen gentium* (*LG*), the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.²¹ In *GS* the Catholic Church does not understand itself to be defined as the antithesis of the secular, as if the secular were only an external negativity and not also positive and internal to faith and church members. *GS* praised the positive secularity of relative human autonomy open to the Creator.²² Among those who exemplify positive secularity are scientists

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18. Lonergan conceived elemental meaning in reference to art, intersubjectivity, and symbols (*Method in Theology* 74). Robert M. Doran has developed this into the category of non-dogmatic, nondoctrinal elemental meanings also constitutive of Christianity ("Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 59 [1998] 569–607, at 578–79; and *What Is Systematic Theology?* [Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005] 22, 25–26, 28–31).
 19. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 132.
 20. Lonergan's building of communications into theology has an affinity with Hans-Georg Gadamer's argument for the indissoluble linkage of appropriation/application (*Anwendung*) to interpretation and understanding. See his *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., rev. trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1999). This English edition is based on *Wahrheit und Methode*, 5th rev. exp. ed., in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 1 (1986; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1960).
 21. *GS* (December 7, 1965), http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. *LG* (November 21, 1964), http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

who reverence God as Creator. They act on the basis that “created things, and societies also, have their own laws and values which are to be gradually discovered, utilized, and ordered by us [humanity] . . . [and this] is in harmony with the will of the Creator.”²² At the same time they do not confuse religiously legitimate methodological abstention from belief as an explanatory principle with adopting theoretical or practical atheism. The council’s positive secularity affirms the just autonomy of earthly realities, reflecting the influence of Thomas Aquinas mediated by renewed 20th-century Thomism.²⁴ In adopting an open secularity alternative to a secularity closed to transcendence, Vatican II moved the church’s self-understanding away from its contingent realization in Christendom. The council’s systematic ecclesiology in *LG* benefits from retrospective contextual understandings in *GS*. The Pastoral Constitution shows how the Dogmatic Constitution does not situate the church at the hub of a renewed Christendom.

The council did not develop a systematics of creation, though the Pastoral Constitution contains important themes on creation in and for Christ. Still, a Catholic and/or Protestant systematics of creation includes reviewing the history of the doctrine and setting forth the state of the question, as Anne Clifford has done.²⁵ It offers a synthesis of meaning in the belief and doctrine, as Jürgen Moltmann expounded in *God in Creation*.²⁶ On the other hand the book on creation and ecumenism by Per Lønning fits communications.²⁷ Lønning addressed contextual forgetfulness of the doctrine of creation and explained how variously the diverse confessional traditions understand that doctrine. I agree with Lønning that a weakened sense of creaturehood poses a problem of ecumenical breadth. I will consider first that problem in reference to a secular context.

22. *GS* nos. 34–36.

23. *GS* no. 36.

24. Massimo Faggioli clarifies tensions over church–world relations between conciliar *periti* in the tradition of Aquinas with a more world-affirming outlook (e.g., Marie-Dominique Chenu, Yves Congar, and Karl Rahner) and participants inclined to a more negative view of the modern world (e.g., Joseph Ratzinger, Henri de Lubac, and Louis Bouyer) (*Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* [New York: Paulist, 2012]). See also Joseph Komonchak, “Augustine, Aquinas or the Gospel *sine glossa?*,” in *Unfinished Journey: The Church 40 Years after Vatican II; Essays for John Wilkes*, ed. Austin Inverleigh (New York: Continuum, 2005) 102–18.

25. Anne M. Clifford, “Creation,” in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, 2nd ed., ed. Francis S. Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011) 201–53.

26. Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985). See also José Morales, *Creation Theology*, trans. Michael Adams and Dudley Cleary (Portland, OR: Four Courts, 2001; originally *El misterio de la creación* [Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1994]).

27. Per Lønning, *Creation—An Ecumenical Challenge? Reflections Issuing from a Study by the Institute for Ecumenical Research, Strasbourg, France* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1989).

The Ecumenical Problem

Substantive theological discussion starts with attention to traditional belief in God as Creator and finite reality as creation, not simply as universe, nature, or world.²⁸ The Hebrew Scriptures imply and affirm YHWH as Creator, a creational content no longer repressed by interpreting creation motifs as secondary derivatives from the primary saving actions of God.²⁹ The New Testament and the early church presuppose YHWH as Creator while refocusing the act of creating on Christ who mediates the divine act of creating and who acts, suffers, and rises from the dead for the redemption of creation (Jn 1:1–14; 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:15; Col 1:15–20; Heb 1:1–4; Rev 3:14).³⁰ Taken together, the two parts of the Bible invite belief that the world, including humanity and angels, is God’s creation. Articles One and Two in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed register belief in God the Father as Creator and in Christ as the one through whom all that has come to be has come to be. Creation not as divine act but as effect is all that has come to be and is coming to be, finite reality.

And yet as philosopher Rudi Te Velde notes, “The word ‘creation’ sounds a little old-fashioned, reminiscent of former, ‘more religious times’ in which we were still able to experience the hidden presence of the divine in nature.”³¹ This is exactly what Lønning and I point to as a problem of ecumenical breadth. Peter Scott comments that “the theme of creatureliness, which might permit an account of humanity placed in the middle of the world as part of nature, is displaced by a view of humanity as superior to nature’s contingencies.”³² It may well be the case that Scott’s critique of exaggerated anthropocentrism has it right in stating that “nature is the problem of modernity.”³³ From Scott’s remark an inference follows. Physical creation is the problem of modern Christianity. The problem is that nature and the cosmos, not to speak of humanity, are no longer experienced or recognized primarily as “creation” dependent on the Creator. Nor, despite the available term “creature,” do many in the West sustain

28. See Clifford, “Creation.”

29. Surveying 20 years of exegesis on creation in the Hebrew Scriptures Stefan Paas explains the obsolescence of the soteriology-first understanding of creation (*Creation and Judgment: Creation Texts in Some Eighth Century Prophets* [Leiden: Brill, 2003] 1–20). Robert Murray, in *The Cosmic Covenant: Biblical Themes of Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1992), argues for a covenantal structure built into earliest understandings of divine creating and then subsumed into subsequent covenants.

30. Larry Hurtado does literary and historical analysis that finds a Jerusalemite, pre-Pauline origin of devotion toward Jesus in association with the God of Israel. This early reverence could not avoid somehow connecting Jesus with divine creating (*Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003]).

31. Rudi Te Velde, “Metaphysics and the Question of Creation: Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and Us,” in *Belief and Metaphysics*, ed. Conor Cunningham and Peter M. Candler (London: SCM, 2007) 73–99, at 73.

32. Peter Scott, *A Political Theology of Nature* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University, 2003) 15.

33. *Ibid.* 16.

its full theological sense. The old biblical and creedal language and meaning remain an irreplaceable, elemental truth in what unites Christians, but the meaning has blurred, and meaningfulness has waned. In later sections I give reasons for thinking that loss of a sense of creaturehood may be reversible.

Perception of an occlusion of creaturehood that is a Christian, and so an ecumenical, problem has been around for at least 25 years. Again, Lønning, in speaking about Christian *Schöpfungsvergessenheit* (forgetfulness of creation), referred not only to the minimal role played in theology by the First Article but also to a mentality in Christians. He quoted Pierre Ganne, who commented, “For a long time attentive observers have remarked that many Christians seem to have lost the sense of creation.”³⁴ A leading line of ecumenical reflection in response to the problem has sought to recoup belief in and doctrine on creation for the sake of responsible ecological praxis. Harmful ecological consequences have resulted from both misguided interpretations of Genesis 1–2 and forgetfulness of nature as God’s creation. Corrective, ecologically literate affirmations and explanations have tended toward norms, conscience, and alliance with other ethical responses to the ecological crisis.

For example, in 1990 the WCC World Convocation on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation challenged some conventional Christian views and ecological indifference, affirming that

God loves the creation. . . . Because creation is of God and the goodness of God permeates all creation, we hold all life as sacred. . . . The world, as God’s handiwork, has its own inherent integrity: that land, waters, air, forests, mountains, and all creatures, including humanity, are “good” in God’s sight.³⁵

The hope was to link this perspective with existing commitments to justice. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in 1991 issued *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching* with a section on “A Sacramental Universe.”³⁶ In 2009 the WCC integrated ecology into its social justice agenda, and reiterated the commitment in 2013.³⁷

34. Lønning, *Creation—An Ecumenical Challenge* 5 n. 11, quoting Pierre Ganne: “Il y a longtemps que des observateurs attentifs ont remarqué que beaucoup de Chrétiens semblent avoir perdu le sens de la création,” *La création* (Paris: Cerf, 1979) 3.

35. WCC, “Affirmation VII” of “Ten Affirmations on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation,” in *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997) 317–24, at 321, 322, 323.

36. USCCB, *Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching*, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/renewing-the-earth.cfm>.

37. WCC, “Statement on Eco-justice and Ecological Debt,” <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/2009/report-on-public-issues/statement-on-eco-justice-and-ecological-debt>; and WCC news release,

Similarly, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* devotes sections 464–65 to the “The Crisis in the Relationship between Man and the Environment.”³⁸ These official statements refer to the cosmos and nature as intrinsically good, as having integrity because, created by God, they derive therefrom a reality, integrity, and value prior to being a resource essential and instrumental to human life and well-being.

The proposal underway here, however, aims rather at reacquiring an idea of “creation” and believing in the Creator in the first place. Despite an ecological awakening, an inaccessible sense of creatureliness saps faith and justice.³⁹ I am not convinced that the invaluable current of ethically oriented reflection has had the effect also of reopening religious and theological doors to deepening awareness of creaturehood. What Lønning called forgetfulness of creation, a lost sense of creation to which Ganne pointed and what I am calling “occlusion of creaturehood,” has not been put behind the ecumenical movement as if successfully engaged and resolved. So it is not beside the point to search for a theological and pastoral approach to a renewed sense of creaturehood.

Creaturehood

Do the external and internal dimensions of the secular context obscure creaturehood? WCC Faith and Order Paper 153 adverts to, without explanation, two ways in which a secular age could be said to abet occlusion of creaturehood if not produce the problem outright.⁴⁰ The first way is a scientific outlook. Presumably the authors of Paper 153 meant that science and confidence in science have penetrated into the realm of common sense, there to be fixed in the social imaginary. Science is taken for granted as the unparalleled knowledge of physical nature. As a result scientific method, its explanatory accomplishments, and its impact on technological directing of physical nature combine to preemptively lessen the impact of Christian belief in the Creator as the source and end of creation.

Scientific method excludes any causal or correlated factor having to do with what is not predefined as empirical, mathematical, or derived from the empirical. God,

“Churches Support Justice Movements in Economy and Ecology,” Oikotree Global Forum, Johannesburg, South Africa, March 12, 2013, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/churches-support-justice-movements-in-economy-and-ecology>.

38. Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace, USCCB, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, trans. Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Washington: USCCB, 2005) 199–201.

39. This theme was broached by Thomas Hughson (“Theology: Also [Green] Religious Experience Seeking Understanding,” in *Encountering Transcendence: Contributions to a Theology of Christian Religious Experience*, ed. Lieven Boeve, Hans Geybels, and Stijn Van den Bossche [Leuven: Peeters, 2005] 93–119). My thanks to Roger Haight in the discussion period after the Tampa paper for recommending clarification that loss of access is not diminished creatureliness.

40. WCC, *Confessing the One Faith* 20.

divine activity, and divine influence are not within the compass of the empirical, notwithstanding their concrete historical dimension central to biblical religion. Scientific accounts of the origin of the cosmos, the origin of life, and evolutionary understanding of life and humanity do not invoke a Creator, and so do not conceive the observable universe including humanity as “creation.”

But then Paper 153 went on to a second, more diffuse contextual influence. The Paper states, “Another challenge to the Christian view of creation comes from the social reality of a secularized society in which religion seems superfluous as a factor of basic importance in the establishment and preservation of the social order.”⁴¹ That statement bears comment because it identifies something about a secularized society that somehow tells against a Christian view of creation. But how? Paper 153 describes a situation in which the organization of society affects the Christian view of creation. To identify religion as having a superfluous role in establishing and preserving social order can mean only that Christendom has ended. Christian faith and churches had established and preserved the social order of Christendom. The demise of Christendom means that divine revelation and Christian faith no longer undergird, influence, unify, and legitimate society’s differentiated institutions (state, economy, science and education, culture, family, and religion).

After Christendom the social order and each of its constitutive spheres have come to be free-standing, self-sufficient, independent of religion and so of a direct reference to God. Everyday life in a post-Christendom society has an anthropocentric premise that extends to seeing nature and human beings as less like creatures and images of a Creator. In the United States, however, the observation of Paper 153 does not hold, not because an anthropocentric premise is missing, but because there has been no Christendom. Political structures and life do not represent religious unity in Christian faith as lived in one church. For 220 years most citizens have been Christian, but the religion clauses of the First Amendment have kept the state from being the officially established political arm of Christian faith. So in the United States there has not been a legally arranged Christendom to collapse.

Still, religion in the United States no less than in Western Europe had formerly suffused the whole of the culture and its relation to the cosmos. The Declaration of Independence had spoken in creational terms of nature and God. And yet religion became more about subjectivity than cosmos. Science and technology, not religion, mediated a relationship with the cosmos. That relationship was not couched in terms of “creation” and “Creator.” The prominence of science may have sidelined attention from another kind of mediation.

Economic mediation of society’s and individuals’ relationships to the cosmos and physical nature at the level of practice and common sense arguably has exercised enormous but less examined influence on religion generally and on a sense of creaturehood in particular. Here I will simply raise a question that pertains to premoral, pretheoretical common sense, and to the social imaginary as an interpretation of the world: Does

41. Paper 153, 20.

economic mediation of a society's relationship to the cosmos and physical nature impact religious convictions about creation and the Creator? Economic mediation no less than science proceeds *etsi Deus non daretur*. But unlike science the economy has direct (if still somewhat limited but softly coercive) power over, for example, natural resources, jobs, wages, salaries, political opinions, and educational opportunities. The economy relies on preexisting realities like physical nature and employees' education, and exerts pressures on the whole social order outside the economic sphere. It has become an encompassing interpretation of social, cultural, and political existence, not least in regard to physical nature. It does not include categories such as God and creation and brooks no descriptive, normative, or interpretive assertions about the economy from religious faith.

The socially differentiated context, excepting the sphere of religion, does not use the concept of creaturehood. That is an observation from a theological perspective that yet concerns a large-scale condition and social situation accessible to empirical study. Does current sociology add something more precise to Paper 153 and theological discussion of how the secular context in the United States may have an impact on belief in the Creator and finite reality as creation? Recent research can be received as refining Paper 153's attention to social context. Interestingly—and as I show below—sociological public opinion research recognizes the interior as well as exterior aspect of a context by inquiring into people's self-understanding.

Sociological Findings

Granting the absence of Christendom, the secular context of the United States might seem to be a steady, unremarkable external circumstance and internal habit of mind in churchgoers. After all, Mark Chaves summed up research on American religion by pointing to “remarkable continuity in American religiosity between 1972 and 2008 . . . in more than two dozen religious practices, experiences, beliefs, and attitudes.”⁴² But as the eye is attracted by motion, so historians and social scientists also notice social changes within continuity. In one religious category, a degree of change has become evident. Change has occurred in the percentage of people who have abandoned organized religion altogether, as distinguished from those who merely switch religions. To me, ceasing involvement in organized religion seems to mean that the outlooks of those who disaffiliate will be more prone to absorbing contextual absence of the Creator/creation concept; they would lose contact with the tradition carrying out the concept. Moreover, those disconnecting from organized religion are among those with whom reevangelization wishes to enter into dialogue and to whom it hopes to find a way to renew the offer of a life-giving gospel.

To begin a consultation with sociology in more detail, the percentage of those identifying with no religion increased minutely after World War II but has accelerated from

42. Mark Chaves, *American Religion: Contemporary Trends* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2011) 5.

the 1990s to the present. Disaffiliation is predominantly a fact in US Christianity simply because the overwhelming majority of the population is Christian. Of interest to theology is a sociological finding: in the 1990s the percentage of the population answering “no religious preference” or “none” to questions about adherence to one of the listed religions jumped from 7 to 14%.⁴³ The percentage continued to rise after the 1990s.⁴⁴ More and more adults between 25 and 74 years of age responded “none” or “no religion” to social-scientific opinion polls on religious adherence.

By 2012 a full 20% of US adults said they have no religious affiliation.⁴⁵ Political polarization between a 20% highly religious minority and a 20% minority of avowed secularists stands out on the US landscape.⁴⁶ The middle 60% had been the territory of mainline Protestantism.⁴⁷ Within that middle, 27% in the United States still affirm that religion is very important in their lives. Nonetheless, in response to the question about religious affiliation, Robert Putnam and David Campbell point out that there are now more adults in the United States who identify themselves as “nones” (17%) than those who consider themselves mainline white Protestants (14%).⁴⁸ Attrition in Catholic churchgoing in the United States since the 1960s has been higher in percentage than in any other religion.⁴⁹ Catholics remain about 25% of the US population only because the number of newly arrived Catholics has made up for those who left the Church.⁵⁰

A significant aspect of shedding organized religion has to do with young adults aged 18–34. Over the last 50 years, about 50% of each younger generation among mainline white Protestants and Catholics have disconnected from their parents’ religion. From 1966 to 2008 the percentage of college freshmen that rejected all religious

43. Michael Hout and Claude S. Fischer, “Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations,” *American Sociological Review* 67 (2002) 165–90, at 165–67.

44. Putnam and Campbell designed and carried out the 2006 Faith Matters Survey, whose data they use along with other sources. The data from the 2006 survey, they report, shows that this increase did not stop in 2000 (*American Grace*) 16–17, 122–27. Hout and Fischer report data on persons born from 1900 to 1974, from General Social Surveys 1973–2000, pinpointing the start of the spike in “nones” in 1991 (“Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference” 166–67, figure 1).

45. Michael Hout and Claude S. Fischer, “More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Key Finding from the 2012 General Social Survey,” <http://christianityinview.com/faith-survey/download/gss2012.pdf>, website of the Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, University of California, Berkeley, March 7, 2013.

46. Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace* 1–15.

47. *Ibid.* 9.

48. *Ibid.* 17. Their data diverge slightly from those given in the Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, “Report One: Religious Affiliation”: “nones” at 16.1%, and mainline Protestants 18.1% (<http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>).

49. Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace* 96, 583 n. 11.

50. According to the Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, “Report One,” the percentage of Catholics who disaffiliated is 23.9%. Moreover, approximately 10% of the US population is formerly Catholic.

identity rose from 6 to about 22%. Between 20 and 30% of those coming of age in the 1990s and 2000s say they have no religion.⁵¹ The Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project reports that 30% of 18-to-30 year olds have no religious affiliation.⁵²

Leaving parental religion has accelerated. By 2006 among non-Hispanic, white Catholics whose parents were Catholic, 37% had switched to another denomination, and another 24% do not attend church, for a total of 61% not active in the faith of their parents.⁵³ Something similar holds for mainline white Protestants but not Evangelicals and Black Protestants. Very recent data show that Hispanic Catholic young adults aged 18 to 29 are dropping out of religion entirely, as distinguished from Hispanic Catholics who moved to Evangelical and Pentecostal churches.⁵⁴ The number of young adults saying “none” in response to “what is your religious preference” has been climbing among Hispanics too.⁵⁵

Is growing disenchantment with organized religion in the United States due to centuries-long processes of secularization? Understanding secularization as loss of belief would lead one to expect the spike in numbers of those leaving religion in the 1990s to increase the number of those who have no religious beliefs. Is that the case? Starting in 1990, was loss of faith the reason why so many left religions? After establishing the survey data on departures, sociologists Michael Hout and Claude Fischer inquire into three plausible causes for the increasing number of disaffiliations.⁵⁶ Were they disaffiliations due to people detaching from their family religion only to resume it when starting their own families (demographic explanation)? Or were they due to secularization (secularization explanation)? Or were people leaving behind a 1990s blending of the Religious Right and Republican politics (political explanation)?

Hout and Fischer conclude with the political explanation and exclude secularization. In 2013 they confirm this conclusion, explaining that the 1990s alliance between “the leadership of conservative denominations and politicians promoting a conservative social agenda was pushing political liberals from conservative denominations away from organized religion.”⁵⁷ Liberal-leaning members of conservative churches began voting with their feet in an exit without argument.

Putnam and Campbell accept Hout and Fischer’s 2002 explanation, but then explain it as a two-generation process. Many baby-boomers averse to the libertine excesses of the 1960s adopted a rigorist stance in religion, often but not only Evangelical. They

51. Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace* 123.

52. Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, “Event Transcript: Religion Trends in the U.S.,” August 19, 2013, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/08/19/event-transcript-religion-trends-in-the-u-s>.

53. *American Grace*, figure 5.1, 138.

54. Pew Research, Religion and Public Life Project, “The Shifting Identity of Latino Catholics in the United States,” May 7, 2014, <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/05/07/the-shifting-religious-identity-of-latinos-in-the-united-states>.

55. Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, figures 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, 122–27.

56. Hout and Fischer, “Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference” 172–75.

57. Hout and Fischer, “Key Finding from the 2012 General Social Survey” 3.

also took up a brand of patriotism, blending Republican politics with church-going. Their children have been leaving what they see as narrow-minded parental religion. Putnam and Campbell sum up the attitude of the younger generation thus: "If religion equals Republican, then they have decided that religion is not for them."⁵⁸ The rate of young adults departing from churches, from organized religion, keeps rising. Does that equal loss of belief in God, and therefore in the Creator?

Hout and Fischer examine loss of belief in those distancing themselves from churches. Unexpectedly, loss of belief does not correlate to a great extent with leaving a religion. Quite to the contrary, survey data from 1988 to 2000 show that some of the 20% with no religion continue to profess religious belief. In fact from 1988 to 2000 those who selected "I know God really exists, and have no doubt about it" rose from 18.8 to 29.2% of those disconnected from any religion. The percentage who held "while I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God" increased from 12.9 to 20.4. Those who said "I don't believe in God" rose only from 12.9 to 14.2%. Less than 15% of the disaffiliated declared themselves atheists and just shy of 50% believe in God. Between 1974 and 1998 "belief in life after death actually increased among adults with no religion."⁵⁹

In 2000 another 18.6% of the nonreligious believed in a Higher Power, and 93% reported praying sometimes, with 20% saying they prayed daily.⁶⁰ Hout and Fischer conclude that most of the "nones" are "unchurched believers," not unbelievers.⁶¹ Their analysis concludes that leaving a religion has not been due to or accompanied by loss of belief. Instead it is a reaction against the definite, historical situation in the 1990s when the Religious Right and church-going were joined at the hip with Republican politics. Consequently leaving churches did not correlate extensively with loss of belief in God. Among those who left, "unchurched believers still far outnumbered completely secular people in 2012."⁶² So Hout and Fischer discount secularization as the cause for the growing minority of "nones."

Consulting sociological research shows that adopting a position of "no religion" does not necessarily involve loss of belief in God. I cautiously presume, on the basis of close association of God with Creator, that likewise there has been no automatic loss of belief in God as Creator. Research shows that leaving religion was due primarily to reaction against the Religious Right in the 1990s amid declining confidence in churches and church leaders.⁶³ The sociological explanation would seem to rule out a strong negative influence from the secular context on a sense of creaturehood. Secularization as loss of belief does not explain, for instance, the increasing number of

58. Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace* 3.

59. Hout and Fischer, "Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference" 174.

60. *Ibid.* 175–76.

61. *Ibid.* 178. They found that the 2012 data confirmed their earlier explanation ("Key Finding from the 2012 General Social Survey").

62. Hout and Fischer, "Key Finding from the 2012 General Social Survey" 5.

63. Chaves, *American Religion* chap. 6, "Leaders."

young adults who have declared themselves to have no religion. Surprising numbers still hold religious beliefs.

The picture changes, however, if privatization of religion rather than loss of belief is a sign of secularization. Hout and Fischer and Putnam and Campbell limit secularization's impact to the incidence of loss of belief. They do not deal with other putative effects such as the privatization and marginalization of religion. The latter two are aggregate effects residing in the organization of a society. But privatization is also a matter of individual decision. It seems obvious that those who decide to leave a religion and adopt a no-religion outlook that yet retains a limited core of belief are privatizing their religion. They are solo believers apart from a religious community. Their social condition, though not the collapsed Christendom conveyed by Paper 153, nonetheless bears on the sense of creaturehood.

In theological perspective asocial religiosity attenuates a sense of creaturehood for the following reason having to do with public liturgical worship: solidarity in the truth of creaturely dependence has social expression in organized worship. And that means a designated time and place for gatherings, that is, organized religion. It does not have to be emphasized here that embracing the unique dependence on God as Creator fulfills rather than derails personal self-direction. This is to say that the sense of creation cannot be limited to being a preunderstanding operative in a multitude of private spiritualities because each person's awareness of creation extends to all finite reality. The comprehensive horizon in the idea of creation includes all human beings created by and oriented toward God. Creaturehood is the universal condition of finite reality that human beings have in common with all creatures. In organized Christian religion, such solidarity involves periodically giving expression to standing with all creation and all humanity as fellow creatures returning thanks in dependence on God. Liturgy is an action replete with direct and indirect reference to the Creator. Absence of liturgy from people's lives removes an occasion for remembering creaturehood.

Certainly, personal worship in heart, mind, and conscience does not begin or end at the church door. But exterior, public expression of worship in communal, sacramental word and ritual deed has been essential in Christianity since the pre- and post-resurrection ministry of Christ witnessed to by the New Testament. Leaving churches behind in that respect involves a diminished sense of creaturehood on the horizontal level of relations among fellow creatures. Whether a weakened sense of creaturehood is cause of or effect from a nonliturgical life, I do not know. In either case, though, nonparticipation in liturgical worship signals the dwindling of a strong appreciation for the First Article of the Creed and a weakening sense of creaturehood as a universal and personal condition. Belief in God as Creator without participation in public worship epitomizes a weakly enacted preunderstanding of creaturehood.

But belief without liturgy by no means explains the total, more pervasive problem of an increasing number of unchurched believers besetting churches and the ecumenical movement in the United States. The best explanation for that problem so far is Hout and Fischer's account of a particular combination of religion and politics in the 1990s. In sum, the secular context as scientific and no longer legitimated by religion

(WCC Paper 153) does not cause loss of belief in God (Hout and Fischer). I infer that those possible causes also do not by themselves bring about loss of a sense of creaturehood. As I have suggested, however, privatized religion, another aspect of secularization, further reduces an already enfeebled sense of creation.

The foregoing brief outline of the situation of the “nones” as unchurched believers rather than die-hard atheists has instructive significance for churches concerned to remain faithful to the best interests of the disaffiliated in a new, respectful kind of evangelization. In particular, if many—and I have anecdotal, not social-scientific, evidence for this—have a background in a green experience of nature, nurturing strong convictions on meeting the ecological crisis, then grappling with primordial faith gains the standing of a pastoral, as well as theological, agenda.

Moving away from a negative perspective on the secular context and toward a positive aspect, the following sections address one way in which what Taylor calls “the immanent frame” facilitates emergence of a sense of creation. My approach accepts Lonergan’s distinction between belief and faith, applying it to “green” experience of physical nature interpreted as somehow sacred and evocative of a “primordial faith.” Biblical teachings and Christian faith have interpreted nature in that light as “creation” due to a “Creator.” Can belief in God as Creator emerge from green experience of nature?

Belief without Faith?

Friedrich Schleiermacher, in his classic text, *On Religion: Speeches to the Cultured Despisers of Religion* (1799), described and argued for experiential access to creaturehood.⁶⁴ He grounded religion in subjective experience of creaturehood, opening a parched subjectivity to the waters of an independently grounded, experiential religion. He set this off from dogmatic, ethical, philosophical, and scientific approaches to God’s existence. Religion, Schleiermacher argued, had its own, distinct, unique basis in an apprehension of absolute dependence with an affective dimension, the theologically famous, *das schlechthinige Abhängigkeitsgefühl*, a sense of absolute dependence.⁶⁵ Since then the sciences have altered the worldviews available in the West and elsewhere.

Moreover, there are well-known critical issues in regard to religious experience, especially whether or not and to what extent it can be thought of as independent from interpretation. I will postulate rather than argue some principles on this topic.⁶⁶ I do not agree with the postliberal position that assigns the determinative role in religious

64. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, trans. John Oman, intro. Rudolf Otto (1799; New York: Harper & Row, 1958).

65. My thanks for a post-Tampa conversation with David Schultenover who underlined that Schleiermacher’s *Gefühl* is a comprehensive apprehension with an affective cast and is more than what ordinary language means by “feeling” and “emotion.”

66. For a more detailed account see Thomas Hughson, “Theology: Also (Green) Experience Seeking Understanding.”

experience to antecedent language and doctrine.⁶⁷ I do agree that language and a shared social reality are involved.⁶⁸ The mitigated postliberal view that all experience is theory-laden is an over-determination that rules out new experience not prefigured in previous theory and thought. At the same time interpretation belongs to rather than follows experience. Taking interpretation to mean conceptual categories gives too little place to an interpretative capacity in preconceptual meanings not so much deposited in language as latent in, transmitted by, and absorbed from everyday participation in social practices and interactions. Lonergan's analysis of culturally relative common sense and Taylor's concept of the social imaginary account for a realm of pretheoretical, sometimes preconceptual meanings that envelop and help interpret but do not generate or determine all experiences.⁶⁹ The distinction and link between experience and interpretation bear on subsequent discussion of experiential and interpretative components in a "green" experience of physical nature.⁷⁰

Lonergan's distinction between belief and faith has nothing to do with a shop-worn contrast between Catholic belief in true doctrines and Lutheran faith as trust in God.⁷¹ Those are variations in belief, not in faith. Lonergan places faith and belief in a universal perspective that illuminates all religions but does not deny the unique act and content of Christian belief out of which his theology springs. Chapter 14 in *Method in Theology*, for example, guides theological reflection on the distinctive Christian universality in belief, mission, and message that subsumes and infinitely exceeds the universality of faith out of which all religions spring. Faith according to Lonergan is "the knowledge born of religious love."⁷² The universal condition of being loved by God evokes a universal response of religious love, however obscure the object of that love may be, and however distorted that ultimate concern may be as refracted through visible creatures frequently confused with divinity. Religious love is unrestricted, unconditional, self-transcending being-in-love. Religious love is religious experience or, as Lonergan points out, the experience of the holy described by Rudolf Otto.⁷³ It is

67. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

68. See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1981) part II, "The New Testament Theology of the Experience of Grace."

69. See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, 5th ed., rev. and aug., ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (1957; Toronto: University of Toronto, 2008) chaps. 6 and 7 on common sense; Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 4th ed. (2004; Durham, NC: Duke University, 2007); and Taylor, *A Secular Age* 46, 171–96.

70. At the Tampa meeting Thomas Rausch urged me to explain further my approach to a Barthian. His prompting is well taken, but that would exceed the scope of this article.

71. For the faith/belief distinction see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 115–19.

72. *Ibid.* 115.

73. *Ibid.* 106. Footnote 2 refers to the 1923 Oxford edition of Otto's book. See also Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, 2nd ed., trans. John W. Harvey (1950; New York: Oxford University, 1970).

Paul Tillich's ultimate concern and Karl Rahner's view of what Ignatius of Loyola called "consolation without a cause."⁷⁴

What Lonergan calls faith emerges from religious love and belongs to religious experience. Some manner of this faith—and I will call it "primordial faith"—acknowledges a divine source, no matter how varied and inadequate incipient ideas of the divine may be. Some version of that primordial faith is a component in all religious experience. Religious love and primordial faith together are the religious experience at the root of any specific, concrete, historical religion. Primordial faith expresses itself in religious meanings and religious values shared in a community. Expressions of religious meanings and values are what Lonergan designates the "word" of religion.⁷⁵ Besides language, the word of a religion may occur through intersubjective relationships in art, symbol, exemplary people, and communal achievements.⁷⁶

Religions begin in religious love and the responding primordial faith. There follow the word expressed by religion and the belief accepting that word. Belief receives a religion's communal word. Beliefs are judgments on what is true and factual and are judgments of value on what is good and worthwhile. Christian beliefs comprise the content of Scripture and tradition summed up in the three articles of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, articulated in doctrines, and expounded in theologies. Enveloping these articulated words, argues Doran (and I agree with him), Scripture also contains elemental meanings that have never been articulated as precise propositions or taught as doctrine.⁷⁷ They may never be formally defined, yet along with the doctrinal word are meanings constitutive of the church. To Doran's analysis I would add sacraments and liturgy in church tradition as also containing elemental meanings not formulated in dogma and doctrine.

Although not articulated as such in *Method in Theology*, it is fair to say that Lonergan's analysis has the following causal sequence:

- (1) God freely bestows divine love on all by the Holy Spirit in a universal divine outpouring;
- (2) human religious love responds in an inchoate, universal human passion that
 - (a) involves primordial faith, some awareness of a divine source,
 - (b) expresses in a particular religion's word about the divine source,
 - (c) and is held in communal and individual belief in a religion's word.

It is likewise fair to say that nothing prevents nonreductive Christian appropriation and application of Lonergan's analysis to Christianity itself.

74. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 106. Footnote 3 refers to D. M. Brown, *Ultimate Concern: Paul Tillich in Dialogue* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). Footnote 4 refers to Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (Montreal: Palm, 1964) esp. 131–64.

75. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 112.

76. *Ibid.* 118.

77. See n. 18 above.

Christianity subsumes, contains, and transforms all five moments. They are copresent and operate simultaneously in all divided, yet partially united, churches. Prior elements are not left behind by the next, as if a booster rocket had fallen away. My focus will be on (a) primordial faith, (b) Christianity's word about creation, and (c) belief in that word. In Christianity too primordial faith underlies and gives impetus to the religious word. Creedal Articles One and Two on creating by the Father through the agency of the Son sum up the word of Christianity on the divine source. Belief in that word and its scattered biblical basis belong to the undivided heritage of the divided churches. Belief in God as Creator and affirmation of human and natural creaturehood have not been at issue in the historical divisions to whose reconciling ecumenism devotes itself.

A lessened sense of creaturehood is lost access to (a), faith that involves some awareness of a divine source. Loss enfeebles Christian belief in the religious word about God as Creator (b). Without a strong primordial faith Christian belief (c) in the whole gospel has unstable roots. What characterizes the situation of contemporary Christianity is a decline in (a), faith as awareness of a divine source of the totality of the cosmos, with an undermining of (b), the word of Christianity on the Creator, and of (c) belief that the cosmos and nature are creation. The outcome is inaccessible creaturehood. And yet the origin of Christianity did not involve withdrawal from, negation of, or cessation in praxis of primordial faith already preexistent in Israel, even as that faith was transformed and subsumed into Christian belief. Something similar had happened with Israel's transforming of ancient Near Eastern primordial faith into biblical creation motifs.⁷⁸ The contemporary condition facing ecumenism is as if Christianity has forgotten that the common basis for religions identified by Vatican II's *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* exists in a unique way within Christianity too.⁷⁹ Christians too answer the question put to them by their human existence, What is that final unutterable mystery which takes in our lives and toward which we tend? Belief in Christ does not terminate either the question or seeking the meaning of its traditional Christian answers, not least in reference to God as Creator.

An Ignatian Contribution

The primary aspect of mission in the West, I suggest, is not how divided churches with parallel commitments to reevangelize lapsed and unchurched believers go about preaching and reteaching the core of Christian belief. Rather the problem most needing

78. Robert Murray examines belief in a "divinely willed order harmoniously linking heaven and earth" that Israel shared with neighboring cultures. Israel's creation accounts, of which Genesis is far from the oldest, have God binding, ordering, and ruling cosmic elements in acts of creation that had the structure of a cosmic covenant (*Cosmic Covenant* xx-xxv, 1-12).

79. Vatican II, *Nostra aetate*, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (October 28, 1965), http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

solution is how to respond with ecumenical cooperation to the problem of diminishing primordial faith and Christianity's enervated word of a creature–Creator relationship that no longer adequately conveys Israel's belief in the Creator refocused on Christ. Yet an etiolated sense of creaturehood is not extinction of what Lonergan identified as religious love for the divine. Popular slogans to the effect of “spirituality, yes; religion, no,” still bespeak religious love in its native obscurity and enigmatic desire for the divine, for the absolute. That is reason enough not to indulge in captious polemics against spirituality without religion. At the same time absence from social expression of worship in churches presents not primarily a moral but an ontological issue.

The universal root of religion in responsive religious love and primordial faith lives within all historical religions, not least biblical Israel and Christianity. The root is not inert, and evidently is affected by its historical, ebbing-and-flowing actualizations from culture to culture, era to era. Occlusion of creaturehood is the ebbing of its human actualization in the particular cultural context of the modern and postmodern West. The constant divine source of religion begins in universal divine love, and differentially influences each successive element. Divine revelation in Christ coupled with the inspiration of the New Testament introduced new content into the Christian word of religion but did not extinguish primordial faith anymore than the First Commandment against idolatry had suppressed Israel's primordial faith.

Ecclesial responses to declining church membership and lessening Christian credibility understandably start by energetically promoting specifically Christian beliefs. However, the receding tide of primordial faith ebbs beneath our ecumenical feet. Christianity does not pay enough attention to its own participation, however transformed, in religious love, primordial faith, and the word of a Creator–creature relationship. Those are not specifically Christian matters. Yet, as Schillebeeckx somewhere commented, Christians lose an influence from grace when they limit their concern to specifically Christian experiences of grace. Christians too carry within themselves the seeds of pre-Christian grace (always threatened by human distortion) in the form of religious love and primordial faith.

It seems to me that, however incomplete and subject to destructive political distortions we may think it to be, Islam as a whole has not lost touch with that religious love, that primordial faith, and that word of religion about the Creator and creatures. Christianity too carries religious love and primordial faith but does not seem to cultivate them. Yet how can belief in Christ flourish without a nourishing primordial faith? As a universal wellspring of religious experience and not just historical lineage, primordial faith links Christians not only to Abrahamic religions but also to pre-Abrahamic religions whose covenant with the Creator was a sacred participation in the cosmos itself.

The cosmos and nature call us into a postmodern re-perceiving of our situation as cosmic creatures, “ennatured” subjects. Te Velde reflects positively about recovery of a creational vocabulary:

Talk of “creation” may, in fact, be seen as expressive of the fundamental experience that in all of our practical and theoretical dealings with the world, in all our self-responsible

concerns for the ethical and political orderings of our freedom, the very being of reality takes the initiative.⁸⁰

The very being of physical nature rings our bell, calling us to be ourselves and to accept our earthly being. Ignatian spirituality adds an Augustinian emphasis on the always-prior grace of God, conversion, and activity by the Holy Spirit within human beings that enable them to hear that call from the physical cosmos. Ignatian spirituality has the potential to guide contemporary appropriations of primordial faith.

Might Christians in divided churches be able to reopen and reclaim experience of primordial faith with its awareness of the divine source? If ecological concern in Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches is to have a proper place in Christian discipleship, it needs roots in belief formed and energized by primordial faith. Without primordial faith Christian belief in the core tenets of revelation is like a free-floating island of matted vegetation blown across the ocean by winds from all directions.

An Ignatian Perspective

At stake is a monotheistic and Christian sense of the cosmos as creation and of human persons as creatures. The cosmos and our own mindful bodiliness are physical “nature.” As already noted, speaking of humanity, nature, and the cosmos as “creation” has fallen into the realm of the quaint. How then are we to repeat and transmit the Christian word and belief in God as “creator,” the world as “creation,” and our relation to God as “creatures”? How do we receive and respect, wonders David Burrell, “a sui generis relation” not at all like a “reciprocal relation between two items in the world”?⁸¹ Though philosophical, scientific, and other theoretical starting points are feasible, I venture to propose that the green experience of nature can be one practical entrance onto our native ground of creaturehood. A postmodern, green, ecological experience of nature can be a pretheoretical, fragmentary, nonsystematic remembering of primordial faith that biblical and traditional teachings have interpreted as creatureliness.

The green experience of nature is a postmodern mode of human consciousness of nonhuman nature that intends, feels, judges, appreciates, and relates to nonhuman nature as worthy of respect close to reverence. An affective, practical sensibility, such appreciative respect verging on reverence for nature can be found to combine knowledge of natural science, direct observation of concrete details in animals, plants, and terrain, immediate presence to nature in wilderness or in pocket parks within urban areas, poetry, and art.⁸² Nourished by scientific knowledge, green experience does not

80. Te Velde, “Metaphysics and the Question of Creation” 75.

81. David Burrell, C.S.C., “Metaphysics of Creation,” in *Belief and Metaphysics* 66–72, at 71.

82. Sallie McFague emphasizes the priority of green space in urban areas because that is where many people, especially the poor, are able to experience nature (*Super Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997]).

derive from knowledge of science. Green experience of nonhuman nature tends to alter the human relationship to nature from utility to an effective respect from within membership in what followers of naturalist Aldo Leopold refer to as an ecological community.⁸³ Often, this respect is remarked in a phrase such as the “intrinsic significance” of nature. The WCC spoke about the “integrity” of creation.

An ecological community embraces humanity and nonhuman nature. Green experience of nature involves a sense of commonality with nature. This is a being-with-nature that accompanies respect for the in-itself-ness of every nonhuman natural being. Green experience involves recognition—often in a sensibility rather than a thematic idea—that prior to being an instrument to human ends, nonhuman nature exists for its own ends. Moreover, the ecological community is asymmetrical. Humans depend on nonhuman nature in ways that are not reciprocal.⁸⁴ Fish do not need fisher-folk. Wheat can flourish without farmers. Mountains do not need hikers. Minerals do not need miners. Most of nonhuman nature (certain viruses, bacteria, and parasites excluded) flourishes without depending on human existence, would continue without it, and may be harmed by it. Similarly, discovery of the unimaginably large cosmos with billions of galaxies each containing billions of stars has a humbling, decentering effect on humanity.

To call the green experience of nature a postmodern mode of consciousness needs clarification. Postmodern thought and consciousness, according to contemporary philosopher Gianni Vattimo, do not surpass modernity by advancing into a new stage of history. The idea of a complete break from the past received as tradition and then a starting-over due to a new, superior, and final stage in understanding defines modernity, not postmodernity.⁸⁵ Postmodernity does not succeed to and replace the modern period. Rather, postmodern insights into limits, contradictions, and misguided adventures complicate modernity. Postmodern skepticism does not deny, but does sit more humbly with, modernity’s achievements. Layers of liberating irony result, lighting up unexamined, constraining channels operative in modernity.

So to identify green experience as postmodern does not invoke neo-Romanticism because a green experience of nature does not leave behind modern science, especially evolution and genetics. A green grasp of the intrinsic reality of nature, however, does underscore the irony in the 19th-century concept of a march in triumphal progress toward limitless conquest and subjection of physical nature.⁸⁶ Green irony grasps the

83. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (New York: Oxford University, 1972).

84. Sallie McFague provides instructive access to discussion of sustainability (*Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001]).

85. Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, trans. and intro. Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1991; Italian original, *La fine della modernità* [Milan: Garzanti, 1985]).

86. Stuart Sim remarks that the “Green Movement can be regarded as *postmodern* in its generally skeptical attitude toward progress” (“Greens [Green Movement],” in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Stuart Sim [New York: Routledge, 2001] 264–65, at 265, emphasis original).

conflict between modern self-assurance toward nature and the distressing spoliation of nature harmful for the human species too. It is well known that the ecological crisis flows from modern self-understandings that have buoyed the reality and worth of (Western) human beings by reducing other parts of nature and other colonized parts of the world to instruments of human (modern, Western) purposes.

Now, what about green experience of nature and Ignatian spirituality? We know about Ignatius's love for stargazing, sense of human situatedness in the whole cosmos, and his sense of divine immanence in creation, preeminently and incommensurably in the incarnation. Does Ignatian spirituality, then, offer any hermeneutical assistance for interpreting our own and others' being-moved in responses to the cosmos as "primal revelation," to borrow a phrase from Thomas Berry?⁸⁷ Surely this must be a misguided question. After all, Ignatius's First Principle and Foundation looms up as an unshaken pillar of anthropocentrism. It centers all of creation on individual humans and their attaining freedom to reach the end for which God has created them, namely, God.

Nothing, then, seems less likely to be able to interpret the green experience of nature than a spirituality guided by the Spiritual Exercises. By itself the First Principle would seem to enshrine a utilitarian approach to creation. According to it, apparently everything else except the person praying, every created reality, including other human beings, has an instrumental role testing the Christian disciple's fidelity to the absolute primacy of the Creator. Ignatius seems to play out in a spiritual key that very utilitarian approach to creation embedded in modern commercial, technological, colonial, and capitalist harnessing of all nature to human preferences and purposes. However, and to the contrary, many created realities about which the Spiritual Exercises inculcate freedom are not so much entities as they are human situations like wealth and poverty, sickness and health, a long life or a short life.

Moreover, much of the originality of the Exercises lies in the role of imagination and affect open to experience, Scripture, tradition, and the church. Accordingly the history of Ignatian praxis says something about the creative ways according to which Ignatian principles have guided people's appropriation of faith, Scripture, and individual divine guidance. The whole of the Exercises does anything but underwrite modernity's acquisitive capitalist greed, exploitative colonialism, and heedless equation of technological success with human development. Furthermore, some lives formed by Ignatian spirituality have demonstrated in praxis an affinity with the green experience of nature and with engaged ecology.

For example, in 2013 the Secretariat for Social Justice and Ecology of the Society of Jesus published an issue of *Promotio Justitiae* entitled, *A Spirituality That Reconciles Us with Creation*.⁸⁸ José Alejandro Aguilar looked to the contemplation to attain love in Ignatius's Spiritual Exercises as a movement out of our preoccupations and into

87. For a helpful overview of the work of Thomas Berry and the new cosmological horizon, see Dorothy C. McDougall, *The Cosmos as the Primary Sacrament: The Horizon for an Ecological Sacramental Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003).

88. Álvarez Paxti, ed., *A Spirituality That Reconciles Us with Creation* (Rome: General Curia, 2013), *Promotio Justitiae* No. 111, www.sjweb.info/sjs/pj.

respect for nature.⁸⁹ José García de Castro explored consolation without cause and n. 316 in the Exercises as the “most important clue for understanding and justifying our option of caring for the natural world.”⁹⁰ James Profit wrote about the four “weeks” of the Exercises grounding reconciliation with creation.⁹¹ The First Principle does not figure in these reflections. Nonetheless it is an inescapable, signal moment in an Ignatian approach to the cosmos as creation.

Unexpectedly, moreover, the First Principle also has ecumenical significance. Evangelical pastor and theologian Brian Rice, on “The Ignatian Way” website, writes:

It is difficult to emphasize how significant this First Principle and Foundation are [*sic*] for Ignatius’ theology and spirituality. . . . I am struck by the similarity of this First Principle and the language used by the Reformers in their catechisms. And one in particular, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which asks:

Q: What is the chief end of man?

A: The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Rice goes on to comment,

Ignatius is of the same spirit as were the Protestant Reformers in their desire to glorify God above all else. . . . Ignatius front loads the Exercises with this Creational theme. The First Principle and Foundation are exactly that for what follows. And “Creation” will appear at various points throughout the Exercises.⁹²

The Spiritual Exercises do not distance the Creator from someone’s interior experience of creaturely being-moved. The Creator is immanent as well as transcendent. Introductory Observation no. 15 in the Exercises says, “The director of the Exercises . . . should permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his or her Creator and Lord.” In Ignatian spirituality the person always is the creature loved and acted in by the Creator. The beauty of the First Principle is the big, normative picture of the creature–Creator relation. The First Principle presages the person’s prayerful discovery of the Creator’s individual guidance. The God who acts in and elicits consoling self-transcendence in the person, according to Ignatian spirituality, is the God with unsurpassable loving and creating knowledge of the person, of all persons, and of all of creation. The Creator’s knowledge of creation is not an infinite

89. José Alejandro Aquilar, “Contemplation to Attain Love and Ecology,” trans. James Stapleton, in *A Spirituality That Reconciles* 10–14.

90. José García de Castro, “Ecology and Consolation: The Ignatian Mystical Foundation for Our Option of Ecology,” trans. Joseph Owen, in *A Spirituality That Reconciles* 22–26, at 22. N. 316 in the Exercises concerns consolation within the process of discernment.

91. James Profit, S.J., “The Four Week Dynamic: The Spiritual Basis for Reconciliation with Creation,” in *A Spirituality That Reconciles* 27–31.

92. Bryan K. Rice, “Evangelicals on the Ignatian Way,” <http://lci.typepad.com/evangelical-ignatianway/2010/01/the-first-principle-and-foundation.html>.

version of human knowledge, because divine knowledge creates, causes what it knows. Knowing and creating are the same in the Creator and are an act of infinite love.

I suggest that today, at least in the West, the creature–Creator relationship is being led by the Spirit into a new kind of human solidarity with nonhuman creation.⁹³ The leading comes, that is, not from human reasoning alone but also from interior attractions to ecological interests and attention to the intrinsic reality of nature due to Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Creator and guide of the whole cosmos and author of evolving nature is the same Creator of whom Ignatius spoke in the Exercises. The same God who labors in individual retreatants' liberating enlightenment simultaneously creates and supervises the cosmos.

Ignatian spirituality in a green, postmodern religious situation unites the cosmic and intimately personal modes of the Creator's presence. The two modes need not be experienced or conceived as opposites, though they are distinct. The God with whom we relate in Ignatian spirituality is the same God who creates and superintends the randomness in a cosmos more than 90 billion light years across with at least 125 billion galaxies, each containing billions of stars.⁹⁴ Do some planets other than Earth have intelligent life?⁹⁵ Theological reflection in a speculative mode has to take up the New Testament theology of creation by and through Christ, whom Ignatius acclaimed as Lord and the divine Word incarnate.

The Exercises, then, provide an interpretative perspective on primordial faith within the life of a Christian. That perspective is all the more needed because diverse religious words interpret primordial faith within a green, sacral experience of nature. Interpretations give primordial faith's obscure intimation definite content, and differences in content matter greatly. That is, a green experience of nonhuman nature does not produce its own, complete, universally acceptable interpretation of divine creation. The chair of a scientific association, an atheist, conversed about experiencing nature as sacral, yet not related to anything beyond itself. For some today religious love in conjunction with primordial faith has disconnected from religious words in Scripture and tradition that refer to a divine cosmic source. This may be a primordial faith still in gestation, or it may be religious experience whose development some past inadequate religious words have arrested.

Biblical interpretation of primordial faith proceeds not as a purely human element due to careful reasoning alone but from a transcendent source without which religious experience could be interpreted with no reference to God as the benevolent Creator. In Scripture, religious words attest to Israel's and Christianity's diachronic experience,

93. In Tampa John R. (Randy) Sachs astutely pointed out that many Psalms keep deeply personal experiences of struggling prayer in close conjunction with God's action in physical nature. The Psalmist's deeply personal prayer is in solidarity with the cosmos insofar as earth, sky, thunder, stars, seas, etc. figure in strenuous dialogue with the Creator of all.

94. To consider randomness, order, and intelligibility, see Bernard Lonergan on emergent probability (*Insight* 144–57).

95. On theology engaging the question of extraterrestrial life, see Thomas F. O'Meara, O.P., *Vast Universe: Extraterrestrials and Christian Revelation* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2012).

understanding, and judgments. Inspiration given by God to biblical authors illuminates and supplements communal experiences. Revelation as interpretation of primordial faith comes, in Ignatian terms, simultaneously “from above” (divine illumination of experience and occasional addition to its content) and “from below” (Israel’s experiences, understandings, judgments, and decisions).

Both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures interpret the world in one fundamental way. Nature and the cosmos, including humanity, are something that has been created by the only one real God, not many gods. The cumulative religious word in the Bible about one God, creator of all, affirms the cosmos as “creation,” clarifying and completing an already experienced sacrality of nature as somehow springing from the divine. That biblical word brings, lifts, guides, and enlightens primordial faith so that it becomes belief in God as Creator and recognition of all reality other than God as creation. The origin of everything was not simply a powerful, superhuman organization of preexisting, possibly eternal, but nonetheless chaotic, matter. Israel’s belief in a divine Creator emerged amid many competing ancient Near Eastern creation myths and narratives. Affirmation of monotheism and of divine creating has not been self-evident from, or necessarily contained in, the green experience of nonhuman nature that typically unfolds in respect for the methodological limits of science going about its explanatory business *etsi Deus non daretur*. Belief in the Creator and affirmation of nature and cosmos as creation are a point of arrival from, but not necessarily ingredients in, green experience of nature.

The Ignatian First Principle and Foundation enshrines biblical belief in the Creator and in an orientation of all creation to the Creator that carries decisive normative meaning for human beings. The normative focus in the First Principle makes it an apt interpretative guide for experiences of primordial faith. It serves as a buoy marking the deepest channel out of primordial faith into belief in the Creator and, not least, a sense of being a creature among creatures. The following bald statement of the First Principle and Foundation applies existential implications of the First Commandment in the patriarchal idiom and with the imprint of early modern European culture:

Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul.

The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created.

Hence, man is to make use of them in as far as they help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him.

Therefore, we must make ourselves indifferent to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short life. The same holds for all other things.

Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we are created.⁹⁶

The spiritual upshot is to put before a retreatant a costly God-centeredness willing to stand up to interior blockages to God's individual guidance. In the broader cultural context of green experience and ecology the First Principle serves to warn away from unexamined polytheism, pantheism, animism, and panentheism without divine otherness. It leaves open the deepest channel that can be described as Ignatian panentheism, an outlook summed up in a traditional phrase in Ignatian spirituality: "finding God in all things." The First Principle against the background of Israel's and Christianity's religious word on creation assists the green experience of nature in becoming a pathway to creaturehood in a pantheistic cosmos.

Panentheism affirms divine presence to and in everything. Valid as that is, panentheism can be conceived in a way that compresses Creator-creature otherness to theoretical and practical extinction. It can then be understood to mean that the divine is the one constitutive inner form of all in the universe. The cosmos becomes, in Sallie McFague's famous, evocative image, God's body.⁹⁷ I hesitate to criticize this pedagogically effective image, so much has McFague contributed to ecotheology and to my understanding of it. Nevertheless by itself the metaphor does not sufficiently clarify the Creator-creature difference. God becomes the cosmic soul. The divine cosmic soul entails a unity between Creator and cosmos that obscures divine transcendence and implies that the physical cosmos somehow shares divinity with its divine soul.

To the contrary, however, it is Christ's individual human body that is uniquely God's body in the full sense. But the cosmos as a whole is not hypostatically united to the creating Word. The eschatological future may be rightly said to diffuse new being from Christ's risen bodiliness to the whole transfigured cosmos. But even when God will be all in all, Christ's risen bodiliness remains God's body in a decisive, unique, causal way through the hypostatic union. The insight of McFague and others into divine immanence, however, remains valid, misleading imagery notwithstanding.

Ignatian spirituality and panentheism affirm divine immanence. José Alejandro Aguilar refers to Ignatius in no. 235 of the Exercises, urging the retreatant to "look at

96. St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph*, trans. Louis J. Puhl, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola University, 1951) 12. Other less literal, more adapted versions of the *Spiritual Exercises* and First Principle are also available. See, e.g., David L. Fleming, "The First Principle and Foundation (St. Ignatius of Loyola, as Paraphrased by David L. Fleming)," http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/prs/stign/prayers.html; and John Reilly, "Principle and Foundation: A Contemporary Version," http://jesuits.ca/orientations/pandf_reilly.html.

97. Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

how God dwells in creatures, in the elements, giving them being.”⁹⁸ This is part of what makes finding God in all things possible. The other part is graced interiority. Still, finding God in all things is not an epistemological or hermeneutic subject–object relationship. Instead, finding God in all things means that the seeker is being found by God already present to all things. God is omnipresent to everything, including ourselves, as divine cause, provident guide, and final fulfillment. We can find God in all things, including physical nature, because God already is their immanent source and end. Yet divine immanence is inseparably an aspect of divine transcendence. Ignatian pantheism affirms divine immanence but with more clarity about divine transcendence than in some ecotheologies. Ignatian pantheism with its clarity on the Creator–creature otherness interprets and preserves the green experience of nature. The Ignatian perspective connects green experience to the biblical word on creation and Creator, opens the experience to Christian tradition on creation theology, and thereby assists those with green experience in coming to belief in God as Creator of the cosmos.

Conclusion: Reevangelization

Reevangelization reoffers the gospel both to decided ex-Christians and to those of lapsed or inactive faith in lands and families that had been Christian. Simply preaching the contents of Christian beliefs will not offer an opportunity for people to be reawakened to their primordial faith, to enter experientially into belief in the Creator and the world as creation. Reevangelization might be able to reawaken primordial faith today if resources for mission respect the dimension of spirituality. As Daniel Berrigan famously said, “Don’t just do something, stand there!” Berrigan’s counsel pertains to attentive listening to peoples’ experiences of nature and discerning the meaning in the green outlook.

Many people of all religious persuasions and none are convinced about the importance of addressing the ecological crisis. Somewhere latent in those convictions is a green experience and interpretation of nature. I suspect that this is especially the case among unchurched believers who deserve more respect than some pastors and theologians accord them. These people are part of the reason for naming witness “reevangelization.” Reevangelization that listens to a green, ecological outlook may be able to decipher primordial faith open to Christian belief in ways that invite dialogue. Without that listening and a shared affinity with nature, a standard approach all too readily gathers up and puts in place evangelizing goals and methods from previous periods, missing out on how God is acting in people today.

Being affected by nature evokes respect close to reverence. Many persons echo the familiar sentiment, “the forest is my cathedral.” Awareness of beauty, power, consistency, and unpredictability in nonhuman nature coupled with acknowledging nature’s intrinsic

98. José Alejandro Aguilar, “Contemplation to Attain Love and Ecology” 13. After the *Suscipe* prayer in the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius’s no. 235 goes on to speak about God’s presence “in the plants giving them life, in the animals conferring upon them sensation, in man bestowing understanding” (*Spiritual Exercises* 102).

worth and integrity evokes a sense that the cosmos is already somehow sacred as if blessed by the Creator prior to humanity. And of course this is just what Genesis 1–2 presents. The green experience belongs to, or is close to, religious experience. Feelings of respect for nature indicate a being-moved in a way that is close enough to reverence to qualify as something akin to experience of the sacred. This being-moved with some awareness of a divine source is religious love and primordial faith. Green experience of nature is “green spirituality.”⁹⁹ Scientifically disenchanting nature in a secular age still has the uncanny presence that lets it be a new point of contact with the realm of the nontriumphalist sacred that seeks no social hegemony. A revised relation to physical nature and the cosmos has become a new element in the religious situation of divided Christianity, a new element that crosses the borders of, rather than divides, churches and ecclesial bodies.

The Spiritual Exercises, particularly the First Principle and Foundation, along with Ignatian spirituality as a whole make discernment of nature experiences feasible. In a secular context, the experiences and their interpretation are on an experiential frontier. Ignatian spirituality offers the churches a respectful way of educating reawakened primordial faith to the possibility of creation and the Creator. Otherwise, in spirituality and lived religion, varieties of pantheism and panentheism easily and with good will blur the Creator–creature difference. The religious word of biblical interpretation of primordial faith comes to expression in Ignatian panentheism. This concept, not unlike but not identical with the perspectives of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, accords with the Christian word on the God of Israel as Creator through the agency of the divine Word (Jn 1:1–14). This kind of panentheism has been lived and learned in the realm of spirituality. The range of meanings from which it draws and to which it is a heuristic guide would be even more widely beneficial and understood if alongside pastoral praxis the meanings were theorized in theology and philosophy.

Finally, I suggest that green experience of nature allied with concern for the ecological crisis is a *kairos* in the modern/postmodern West. But the emergence of primordial faith led by grace into Christian belief in the Creator and in Christ through whom all that has come to be is new wine needing new wineskins. The ecological crisis and consciousness have the potential to be a graced time of new attraction to the cosmic dimension of humanity and, simultaneously through that, to the gospel. The key is starting where people in fact are and live. Not every congregation could be a new spiritual home for people who have moved from former religious allegiances through a nonreligious way into Christian appreciation for the cosmos as creation. It is doubtful especially among unchurched believers that rehearing the word of God interpreting the green experience of nature will stir a desire to return to any and all divided congregations. Nor is the key finding the right kind of advertising and events to draw people onto church properties.

The wilderness setting of John the Baptist’s mission of prophecy often passes unnoticed as physical nature because the focus falls on John’s ascetical practices. The Spirit

99. See Michael C. Kalton, “Green Spirituality: Horizontal Transcendence,” in *The Psychology of Mature Spirituality: Integrity, Wisdom, Transcendence*, ed. Polly Young-Eisendrath and Melvin E. Miller (London: Routledge, 2000) 187–200.

led Jesus too into the wilderness, out of which he emerged with clarity about his calling before his river baptism by John. It is interesting that Jesus did not confine his words and deeds to synagogues and the Temple but taught in towns and, more to the point, on hillsides, on the sea, and walking through the countryside. Open, outdoor spaces appealed to Jesus as places for his solitary prayer. Why may not at least some reevangelizing imitate the New Testament precedents? Also, if and when renewed primordial faith accepts the biblical word on creation, then Christians at once have come into heretofore underappreciated biblical meanings and have entered onto what could be new common ground with Jewish and Islamic believers who likewise are challenged and invited by nature-as-creation to appropriate their own creation beliefs.

A final question bears on ecumenical cooperation in light of the famous Lund principle derived from the question put to then-ecumenically oriented churches in 1952. Does not real partial unity mean that churches “should . . . act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?”¹⁰⁰ The question intended local and congregational, not worldwide, acting together. Deep differences in conviction on nature as creation, granting an always-to-be-expected theological pluralism in what that means, do not divide churches. The Lund principle has the effect of changing the question about cooperative reevangelizing to evoke creation belief in a secular context from Why? to Why not? Or do mixed reactions to controversial themes in the 1990 WCC World Convocation on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation in Seoul, Korea, stand as a permanent obstacle preventing common witness to the Creator and belief in creation by God? Is there not potential for some local ecumenical collaboration, a pilot project perhaps, in reevangelizing that hearkens to people’s green experience of nature and ecological convictions made possible by a secular context, that enters dialogue with them and respectfully offers them an interpretative religious word of Christian belief in God the Creator?

Author biography

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100. Morris West, “Lund Principle,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC, 2002) 714–15.