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## ANTHROPOLOGY AS THE BASIS FOR ECOLOGY

It was in July 2006 that Catholic moral theologians from all the continents gathered in Padua, Italy to discuss the most important issues facing the contemporary world. Among those most pressing ones ecology, or environmental issues, has been singled out as the one in need of a particular concern. Several sessions were dedicated to the issue and so the problem has been seriously debated pointing to different aspects of the question, particularly to its ethical dimension<sup>1</sup>. Both the presentations and the discussions that followed proved how complex and urgent was the whole ecological question in the context of the contemporary development of the world's economy which often remains unfriendly toward the natural world. The seriousness of the issue clearly needs new studies as well as decisions by those responsible for the way the world development is heading for. One can easily see ever growing serious consequences of the present ecological crisis in all spheres of life. Now and then one can hear about disastrous events brought about by the unrestricted exploitation of the world's resources. However it does not mean that just those holding high positions in politics

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<sup>1</sup> Among those speaking on environmental issues were: D. Clairmont (*Time of Creation, Order of History: Resources for Environmental Ethics in Bonaventure's Moral Theology*), K. Golser (*Il Compendio della dottrina sociale della Chiesa e l'etica dell'ambiente*), P. Kochappilly (*Christian Ethos and Environmental Ethics*), S. P. Lourdusamy (*Environmental Degradation: The Poor as the Most Vulnerable Victims*), A. M. Mealey (*Ego – or Ecological Virtues?*), G. de Virgilio (*Modelli etici nell'ambiente delle Lettere Pastorali: un esempio di dialogo culturale con il mondo ellenistico*). The present study is widely based on the author's presentation delivered during the session *Environmental Ethics* at the Padua conference.

and economy are to face the ecological crisis and endeavour to solve it. One of the leading Anglican theologians has recently stressed the complexity of the problem pointing particularly to its ethical and religious dimensions: "The environment has become one of the major moral issues of our time. [...] it is increasingly obvious that human beings are set on a path of unprecedented environmental destruction and that a profound moral and spiritual change is now needed. Human over-population and over-consumption have resulted in appalling pollution, soil erosion, deforestation and species extinction. More debatably, human beings may also be responsible for ozone depletion and global warming. We desperately need to change. We desperately need a change of spirit. The environmental debate is as much about religion and morality as it is about science"<sup>2</sup> As rational and free, and so responsible, moral agents all men and women are to understand that it is a "serious obligation to care for all of creation" It stems directly from the belief in God who is the Creator of all that exists<sup>3</sup>

What is also important here is not to limit the whole issue to what can be called nature. Doubtless to say it is necessary to admit the irrational and grave destruction of the natural environment as a result of the present ecological crisis. At the same time it cannot be disregarded that there has been a more serious destruction of the "human environment": "Although people are rightly worried about preserving natural habitats, too little effort has been made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology. Such an ecology will place the human person 'at the centre of environmental concerns, while simultaneously promoting an urgent sense of human responsibility for the earth, be it at the level of states, commerce or individuals'"<sup>4</sup> The ecological issue, in all its complexity, has to do with the integral vision of man and his life and vocation.

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<sup>2</sup> R. G i l l. *Changing Worlds*. London–New York 2002 p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> "The commitment of believers to a healthy environment for everyone stems directly from their belief in God the Creator, from their recognition of the effects of original and personal sin, and from the certainty of having been redeemed by Christ. Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God" J o h n P a u l I I. *Message for the World Day for Peace "Peace with God the Creator – Peace with All of Creation"* (1 January 1990). The Vatican 1989 no. 16. A broader study on the anthropological, theological and moral dimensions of the ecological issue cf. S. N o w o s a d. *Antropologiczno-etyczny wymiar ekologii*. In: *Ekologia. Przesłanie moralne Kościoła*. Eds J. Nagórny, J Gocko. Lublin 2002 p.57-85.

<sup>4</sup> C. M i g l i o r e. *Address during a session of the UN Economic and Social Council's Commission on Sustainable Development* (New York, 11 May 2006). Cf. [www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org).

## I. TOWARD A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL VISION OF THE WORLD

The present context of a multi-faceted ecological crisis needs a profound and serious analysis that will lead not only to the identification of its technological or practical causes (though they may not be overlooked), but above all of the philosophical, ethical and even theological sources of the problem. It is a fundamental conviction that any endeavour to uncover and describe any reality, in this context ecology, requires taking into account a theological dimension. Thus it will become achievable to see the issue in its deepest aspects and consequently will allow to specify major obligations that people face in their responsibility for the whole creation. The aim is not just to describe or even to explain the issue, but also to stress the basic moral principles which should shape man's activity in relation to God's creation. It is clear that theology will not be able to provide the humanity with "a technical recipe for the resolution of the ecological crisis", but it can help people to see their natural environment "as God sees it, as the space of personal communion in which human beings, created in the image of God, must seek communion with one another and the final perfection of the visible universe"<sup>5</sup>

In his *Commentary on Psalm 41* St Augustine wrote: "I think about the earth and I see that it was created. Its beauty is great but it had a Creator. I look at the vastness of the sea surrounding us, it amazes me and I admire it, but I seek out its Creator. I raise my eyes to heaven, I admire the beauty of the stars and the sun's splendour; I see the moon; they are marvellous all of them: I admire them, I exalt in them, but I thirst for the One who created them"<sup>6</sup> It is above all the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis that occupy a unique place in regard to the Christian understanding of the origin of the world (of all that exists) and its end. In the very first words of the Sacred Scripture: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1, 1), three things are affirmed: that God alone is Creator; that He gives a beginning to all that exists; that the totality of what exists depends on God

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<sup>5</sup> International Theological Commission. *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God* (23 July 2004) no. 78. Cf. [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>6</sup> Quoted after: P. E. B r i s t o w. *The Moral Dignity of Man: An Exposition of Catholic Moral Doctrine with Particular Reference to Family and Medical Ethics in the Light of Contemporary Developments*. Dublin 1997 p. 199.

who gives it being. It can be summarized in the words that “Nothing exists that does not owe its existence to God the Creator”<sup>7</sup>

The world was created for the glory of God – this thought is clear as well. St Bonaventure says that God created all things “not to increase his glory, but to show it forth and to communicate it”, for God has no other reason for creating than his love and goodness. The world was created according to God’s wisdom and proceeded from his free will, and thus not of any necessity. The creation is both ordered and good: it is ordered because it came into being through God’s wisdom, it is good because it came from God’s goodness and so shares in that goodness: “God saw it was good” (Gen 1, 4ff). It has to be stressed that God as Creator always transcends his creation, is always greater (“Deus semper maior!”). According to St Augustine God is “higher than my highest and more inward than my innermost self” God not only gave being to everything but still at every moment upholds and sustains all his creation and brings everything to its final end<sup>8</sup>

All the creation was not made as complete. The Creator destined it to its ultimate perfection yet to be attained and so it can be said the creation is *in statu viae*. God himself guides the world towards its end always caring for all things. Being “in a state of journeying” the world is not yet perfect, it is not free of defects that came onto it through man’s sin to whom the creation had been entrusted. Thus man and woman were called to share in the unfolding of the Creator’s plan of creation. This “established a fixed relationship between mankind and the rest of creation. Made in the image and likeness of God, Adam and Eve were to have exercised their dominion over the earth with wisdom and love”<sup>9</sup> However they chose to sin (*peccatum originale*) going against God’s plan which resulted in destroying the original harmony between them and the rest of creation. The essential relationship between man’s activity and the created world, disturbed by man’s sin, led to a disorder not just in man himself and in his relation to the Creator, but also brought about serious repercussions on the whole visible creation. The broken harmony made the creation alien and hostile to man<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC]. London 1994 no. 338 and 290.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. CCC 293-301.

<sup>9</sup> J o h n P a u l II. *Message for the World Day for Peace* (1 January 1990) no. 3.

<sup>10</sup> “The harmony in which they [man and woman] had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul’s spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth

## II. TOWARD A FULLER UNDERSTANDING OF MAN

The theological analysis opens up the way to perceive the whole ecological issue as essentially founded in the human person who, created by God, rebelled against him which has had essential impact on all that exists. Since the Creator wanted man to be the steward of all that was created, man's sin has mysteriously affected all that was entrusted to him. Thus it is not only the common sense that can come to the conclusion about man's responsibility for the state of the world now, but still more profoundly and seriously the theological understanding of the issue leads to a more comprehensive grasp of the ecological state of affairs. Consequently a fundamental thesis can be set down: the ecological issue is essentially an anthropological one. Hence any serious possibility of finding and implementing effective solutions to the problem first needs an elaboration of major dimensions of what has come to be called the integral Christian anthropology.

It is important to stress both components – “integral” and “Christian” as it is the Christian message based on God's revelation, given to the humanity and safeguarded and interpreted by the Church, that can lead to an authentic and full vision of man and his supernatural vocation. The basic conviction of the Christianity is that “only in the Church can one find this wisdom about man, and, at the same time, the gift of divine grace which renders possible a life in accord with this vision”<sup>11</sup> This very important point is clearly made by the II Vatican Council when the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church* emphasises that “it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of man truly becomes clear [...]. [Only Christ] fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling”<sup>12</sup>

It is a well known fact that modern culture often displays its strong inclination to get rid of its religious content and even its appearance. The process of secularization turns out ever more present, at times being inimical or even

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marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject ‘to its bondage to decay’ Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will ‘return to the ground’, for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history” CCC 400.

<sup>11</sup> T. McGovern. *The Christian Anthropology of John Paul II: An Overview*. “Josephinum Journal of Theology” 8:2001 no. 1 p.138.

<sup>12</sup> Vatican Council II. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* [GS]. The Vatican 1965 no. 22.

hostile to everything that comes with religion. It is among many “troubling signs” that bring about “the dimming of hope” and clouding the horizon of European culture. Following John Paul II in his analysis of the contemporary cultural context in Europe<sup>13</sup> it is to be stressed that all this emerges from a certain vision of man considered apart from God. This “anthropology without God” considers man as the absolute centre of the whole reality and makes him live as if God did not exist. Secularism then results in a essential confusion about man where he is seen only as a radically natural being<sup>14</sup>

Under certain conditions secularism could be considered as a legitimate way of understanding the reality but only when it does not exclude transcendence. In fact transcendence is an exigency of secularism and hence is the necessary condition for secularism not to fall into the trap of relativism<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless it can be observed that the recent developments of the European secularism seem to guide it in the opposite direction. N. Biggar, an Anglican theologian, recalls J. Habermas’s interview in “Le Monde” (of 20 December 2002) where the German philosopher calls modern societies “post-secular” He opined that secularisation “had come off the rails, and that what is required to restore it is ‘a respectful approach to religious traditions that have the distinction of a superior capacity for articulating our moral sensibility’”<sup>16</sup>

In the European historic and religious context Christianity has played a particular role, being the major foundation of Europe’s culture. Thus it is the Christian tradition that gives “a superior capacity” rooted in the revealed truth from God which enables man to uncover the vision of his life and vocation. It was Carl Braaten, a Lutheran theologian, who in 1974 wrote that “The ethicists of the future must carry a vision of the *humanum*, of the essential humanity of man, into the forums of planning and decision-making. They may not leave the planning of the future to the technological types.

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<sup>13</sup> J o h n P a u l I I. Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*. The Vatican 2003 no. 7-9.

<sup>14</sup> Secularism, next to individualism and relativism, is correctly considered an obvious fruit of the Enlightenment, still easily noticed among major characteristics of modern culture. Cf. S. N o w o s a d. *Catholic Universities and Contemporary Culture*. “The Living Word” [India] 111:2005 no. 5 p. 288-289.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Bp G. Crepaldi’s lecture at the Bologna-based Veritatis Splendor Institute on 2 February 2006 [cf. [www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)].

<sup>16</sup> N. B i g g a r. ‘God’ in *Public Reason*. “Studies in Christian Ethics” 19:2006 no. 1 p. 10-11.

These may be giants in stature when it comes to technical means, but moral pygmies of issues of human concern. Jacques Ellul is correct when he says of Einstein: 'It is clear that Einstein, extraordinary mathematical genius that he was, was no Pascal; he knew nothing of political or human reality, or, in fact, anything at all outside his mathematical reach. The banality of Einstein's remarks in matters outside his specialty is as astonishing as his genius within it'."<sup>17</sup>

A close analysis of Christian anthropology shows that it includes two fundamental points of reference, where both refer to the most important events of the history of salvation. The Christian vision of man refers to God as Creator and to Christ as Redeemer. Thus it first goes to the mystery of creation in which man is made "to the image of God" The other aspect is the mystery of Christ who "reveals man fully to himself" It can then be properly stated that it is the anthropology of the Creation, the Incarnation and the Redemption. In this way the Christian understanding of man starts from God and arrives to God, in God it has a point of departure and a point of arrival. It is also to be stressed that between these two points the mystery of sin intervenes with its consequences for man's own interior life, for his relation to God, to others and to the rest of creation. According to traditional theology God's image in man reveals itself in the faculties of intellect and will. In his thorough analysis of the creation accounts Pope John Paul II additionally emphasizes man's capacity for relationship with God. He describes it as a man's capacity to enter into a covenant with God<sup>18</sup> "God's invitation to a shared life is a gratuitous, unmerited gift to man who from the beginning was made *capax Dei*"<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> C. E. B r a t e n. *Eschatology and Ethics: Essays on the Theology and Ethics of the Kingdom of God*. Minneapolis 1974 p. 181.

<sup>18</sup> "[...] at the same time that same man in his own humanity receives as a gift a special 'image and likeness' to God. This means not only rationality and freedom as constitutive properties of human nature, but also, from the very beginning, the capacity of having a personal relationship with God, as 'I' and 'you', and therefore the capacity of having a covenant, which will take place in God's salvific communication with man. Against the background of the 'image and likeness' of God, 'the gift of the Spirit' ultimately means a call to friendship, in which the transcendent 'depths of God' become in some way opened to participation on the part of man" J o h n P a u l I I. Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem*. The Vatican 1986 no. 34.

<sup>19</sup> M c G o v e r n. *The Christian Anthropology of John Paul II* p. 137; cf. S. N o w o s a d. *Oreǳcie moralne Jana Pawła II jako pamięć i tożsamość Kościoła*. In: *Kościół w czasach Jana Pawła II*. Eds M. Rusecki, K. Kaucha, J. Mastej. Lublin 2005 p. 135-137

*Communion and Stewardship* is a new and important study of the theme of *imago Dei* that has been recently carried out by the International Theological Commission. It will be useful to refer to it here in order to identify major aspects of the Christian anthropology in its significance in the field of the proper understanding of the ecological issue. It rightly underlines the fundamental meaning of the entire creation with the creation of man in its heart. According to the creation accounts from the Sacred Scripture the whole of man is created in the image of God and he is in no way an isolated being. Created in the *imago Dei* human persons are enabled and called to enjoy personal communion with the Triune God and with one another, while at the same time to be responsible stewards of the created world. This makes it possible to distinguish two basic theological aspects of the *imago Dei* – communion and stewardship.

The concept of *imago Dei* has always been present in Catholic theology and in the teaching of the Magisterium, including the teaching of the II Vatican Council. The image of God in man is basically seen in man's orientation to God and thus man can know God and love Him. A clear emphasis should be put on man's innate dignity and flowing from it his inalienable rights. The Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* turns attention to the Christological dimension of the *imago Dei* when it quotes St Paul's words of Christ as the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1, 15). It is Christ who reveals man's full dignity: "only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear"<sup>20</sup> This fundamental understanding of the *imago Dei* can be then supplemented by its other aspects<sup>21</sup> However, the above mentioned two basic themes of the *imago Dei* need more elaboration.

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<sup>20</sup> GS 22.

<sup>21</sup> "The Council also underscores the trinitarian structure of the image: by conformity to Christ (Rom 8, 29) and through the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8, 23), a new man is created, capable of fulfilling the new commandment (GS 22). It is the saints who are fully transformed in the image of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 3, 18); in them, God manifests his presence and grace as a sign of his kingdom (GS 24). On the basis of the doctrine of the image of God, the Council teaches that human activity reflects the divine creativity which is its model (GS 34) and must be directed to justice and human fellowship in order to foster the establishment of one family in which all are brothers and sisters (GS 24)" *Communion and Stewardship* no. 23.

### *Communion*

God himself is the perfect communion of the three Persons. Man, made in the image of the triune God, is in his very being destined and oriented towards communion with God and with God's other rational creatures. Created in the divine image all men and women by nature bodily and spiritually are made for one another. It is this essential likeness to the divine communion of the Father, the Son and the Spirit that makes them capable and called to share Trinitarian life as well as the communion of all creaturely beings.

In order to describe this concept of communion one needs to affirm several aspects of the subject which eventually create its integral understanding<sup>22</sup> First an essential union of body and soul in man has to be stressed which allows to exclude any dualism. In the view of the Sacred Scripture the human person is one being where both the bodily and the spiritual dimensions are equally essential to his personal identity. The entire person is created in the image of God, both body and soul. This body-soul union finds its particular expression in the creation of man and woman. Made in the image of God, all men and women are called to love and communion which find their distinctive realization in the procreative union of husband and wife. It follows that the difference and plurality of the sexes belong to the very constitution and identity of human beings existing only as masculine and feminine. Though impaired by sin, the harmonious communion between man and woman has been restored by Christ. God's rational creatures are out of their very nature social beings. Thus every person is a relational creature and all persons are capable of love that will bring about their true and lasting community. Both every individual and the entire human family share in the *imago Dei*.

The above mentioned three aspects of the theme of communion as a result of the *imago Dei* need further clarifications due to man's failure to accept God's invitation to communion. The Bible clearly shows that when man turned away from his Creator, it led to divisions not only between the Creator and the creature, not only between body and soul within himself, but also in his relations with others and with the rest of the world. Thus the *imago Dei* has been disfigured by sin though not entirely destroyed. The *post lapsum* man finds himself in need of salvation which entails the restoration of the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem no. 26-55.

image of God by his Son who is the perfect image of the Father. In consequence, as St Paul says, it is the will of God the Father that all his children "be conformed to the image of his Son, who is the firstborn of many brothers" (Rom 8, 29). Together with man all things have been reconciled to God (cf. Col 1, 20). The *imago Dei*, impaired in man by sin, has been restored to the *imago Christi* by Christ, through his incarnation, death and resurrection. Seen in a dynamic way, the image of Christ, through collaboration with the Holy Spirit, is to be constantly growing and thus perfecting man's being and the whole life until his final eschatological communion with the triune God.

### *Stewardship*

It was the Creator's will that man exercise sovereignty over all visible creation. However man must always keep it in mind that it is a gift and a privilege from God, hence he is to imitate the divine rule, to share in the divine dominion and not to displace it in any way: "The steward must render an account of his stewardship, and the divine Master will judge his actions [...]. Human stewardship of the created world is precisely a stewardship exercised by way of participation in the divine rule and is always subject to it"<sup>23</sup> According to the *Communion and Stewardship* three following aspects of this theme should be discerned<sup>24</sup>

Throughout all his history man, being a rational creature, has always tried to understand his own being and life as well as the world around. It is the Creator who conferred this will and longing for truth in man's heart and thus human beings exercise the stewardship over the created world. It is to be stressed here that behind all this lies a deeply personalist understanding both of God the Creator and of human nature. In this men and women are to acknowledge God as the Maker of all and the source of the order of the universe. Therefore this stewardship of knowledge is an essential element of the integral stewardship over the visible creation. Understood from a Christian perspective this scientific endeavour to understand the universe should be put within the context of the theology of creation.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibidem no. 61. "Man was created in God's image and was commanded to conquer the earth and to rule the world in justice and holiness: he was to acknowledge God as maker of all things and relate himself and the totality of creation to him, so that through the dominion of all things by man the name of God would be majestic in all the earth" GS 34.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Communion and Stewardship* no. 62-94.

As human, i.e. rational and free, stewards of the creation, men and women possess specifically human moral responsibility for the world entrusted to them. Having discovered biological laws that govern the visible world, man must remember he is above all subject to the moral order that springs from God's eternal wisdom and love. "As one called to till and look after the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15), man has a specific responsibility towards the environment in which he lives, towards the creation which God has put at the service of his personal dignity"<sup>25</sup> Thus the ethical dimension of men's responsibility for the world is rooted in the Christian theological understanding of the creation and of God's human creatures sharing in the divine rule over it.

One more particular aspect of man's stewardship cannot be missed when taking into account the contemporary context of the advanced scientific and technological progress. The new techniques give rise to both hopes (especially when providing new diagnostic and therapeutic tools) and fears. It is becoming more and more possible to so deeply interfere in man's nature so that it can be seriously affected or even altered, particularly in its biological integrity. As being created in the image of the Creator himself, man must see in himself a unique good, hence in the area of bioethics he is to observe fundamental ethical principles that safeguard human dignity, including the body as an intrinsic part of the human person. Man's competence, also where medicine and its new technologies apply, is clearly limited and needs a basic acknowledgement of fundamental values and undeniable moral norms<sup>26</sup>

### III. MORAL-THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The above outlined theological understanding first of the world as created and then of man as the only creature made in the image of the Creator, now allows to specify major moral-theological implications within the sphere of the ecological issue. It is a basic conviction that the Christian ethics has to

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<sup>25</sup> J o h n P a u l I I. Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* [EV]. The Vatican 1995 no. 42.

<sup>26</sup> "Our ontological status as creatures made in the image of God imposes certain limits on our ability to dispose of ourselves. The sovereignty we enjoy is not an unlimited one: we exercise a certain participated sovereignty over the created world and, in the end, we must render an account of our stewardship to the Lord of the Universe. Man is created in the image of God, but he is not God himself" *Communion and Stewardship* no. 94.

remain theological in order to remain Christian. Any endeavours to better understand the problems the world faces, including the ecological one, and to find appropriate solutions, need to stay theologically-oriented. This is the way one – in the light of the faith – can and should grasp an issue (any issue) not just in its natural but also supernatural dimensions. It was symptomatic that one of his major statements concerning the ecological problem – the Message for the Word Day for Peace of 1990 Pope John Paul II entitled “Peace with God the Creator – Peace with All the Creation” Following this, one can understand that the key to the whole ecological issue lies not so much in technical answers, in a transformation of world economies, of local and global environmental policies (though they are not to be disregarded!), but rather in man’s heart. The problem is anthropological and theological at its basis – it is about man as a creature and his relation to God as the Creator. It is about who man is and what is in man. Hence it is right to say that the major source of the problem is the so-called anthropological error. It is in fact all about man, the way he perceives himself and his life, his vocation and the sense of his many activities. Consequently, if “it is only in the light of the incarnate Word that the truth of man becomes clear”, then it also applies to this particular ecological dimension of human life. Hence, only Christology makes anthropology possible. The whole truth about man can be seen above all in his relation to God. As a result the truth of man’s relations to others, or in this case to all creation, is to be seen in the light of his fundamental relation to the Father which was revealed and restored by Christ.

During his 1999 visit to Poland John Paul II said in Zamość: “Over the consecutive days of creation God was looking at his work and saw that it was good [...]. At last God created man. He put all the wonders of the world into man’s hands, so that – while being pleased with it and making good use of its goods – he [man] creatively cooperate in the perfection of God’s work in a free and rational way [...]. However, after man’s original fall the world, being his particular property, so to speak shared in man’s fate. [...] The shadow of death was cast not only on humankind but on all what was to live so to speak for man<sup>27</sup>” The Christian perception of the creation points to an essential relationship not only between the Creator and the created world but also to a unique interdependence between man and the rest of creation.

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<sup>27</sup> J o h n P a u l I I. Hom. *Piękno tej ziemi woła o zachowanie jej dla przyszłych pokoleń* (Zamość [Poland], 12 czerwca 1999) no. 3. “L’Osservatore Romano” (Pol.) 20:1999 no. 8 p. 71.

Since it was man to whom the world was entrusted so that he continue God's creative work, man's choices and activity affect what God himself made.

There was a particular plan of the Creator for the creation that was "good" and the rational creature whose creation allowed God to call it "very good" God gave man dominion over the material creation but not over human life. Adam and Eve "were to share in God's plan by subduing their environment and developing it. Hence, we can say that the material world is for man but man is for God. There is a harmony and order in the universe; but man destroyed this harmony to some extent, by deliberately going against God's plan through sin. Apart from the death, suffering and fratricide this brought upon him, it also resulted in the earth's 'rebellion' against him and in the disharmony of nature"<sup>28</sup> Thus when man lost his peace with God, he lost it all, including his relation with the earth. The earth itself was also deprived of peace<sup>29</sup> Rejecting God's plan on the part of man inevitably provokes negative consequences on all the creation. Hence the proposition is that ecology starts with anthropology. Failing to understand the integral – both natural and supernatural – meaning and sense of his being, activity and vocation man gives rise to a disorder known as an ecological issue. The experience and plenty of scientific data prove that the so called ecological threat in today's world "results from the behaviour of people who show a callous disregard for the hidden, yet perceivable requirements of the order and harmony which govern nature itself"<sup>30</sup> At the bottom of the ecological issue lies a profound anthropological and moral crisis<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> P. E. B r i s t o w. *The Moral Dignity of Man: An Exposition of Catholic Moral Doctrine with Particular Reference to Family and Medical Ethics in the Light of Contemporary Developments*. Dublin 1997 p. 195. As regards this harmony one can refer to Ecclesiastes who says: "Into the sea all rivers flow, and yet the sea is never filled, and still to their goal the rivers go" (1, 7).

<sup>29</sup> "Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as you eat of the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat" (Gen 3, 17-19). Bristow stresses that this is the background to St Paul's *Letter to the Romans'* teaching: "For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that all creation is groaning in labour pains even until now" (8, 19-22).

<sup>30</sup> J o h n P a u l I I. *Message for the World Day for Peace* (1 January 1990) no. 5.

<sup>31</sup> A very recent report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change unequivocally states that "most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas

Since it is God who gives life and is the only source of life, life is always a good. The Divine Revelation shows clearly that there is an essential difference between the life man was given by the Creator and the one of all other living creatures because he, being made in the image of God, is to become his manifestation, the sign of his presence and his glory: "Man has been given a sublime dignity, based on the intimate bond which unites him to his Creator: in man there shines forth a reflection of God himself"<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless all life, being God-given, is a good and therefore deserves respect. According to John Paul II it is the lack of respect for life that underlies the ecological problem<sup>33</sup>

Another essential cause of the problem becomes clear when one realizes how often and how seriously human activity disturbs the balance of nature for instance by the uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life or by a reckless exploitation of natural resources, as the Pope's Peace Message of 1990 states it. Hence a lack of respect for the laws of nature is evidently another fundamental reason of the ecological threat. These two aspects of man's moral attitude form the basic moral grounds for the serious environmental issue that the world now faces. It seems then that the whole question needs to be placed and considered within the context of the Church's fundamental positions which could be called the "pillars of the theology of the environment": the priority of ethics over technology, the primacy of the person over things, and the superiority of spirit over matter<sup>34</sup>

From the theological perspective then an appropriate and in-depth analysis and solution of the ecological crisis requires a new emphasis on the fundamental questions like the concept of man and his moral life, the vision of the world as created and God-given and an acknowledgement of the basic ethical principles. Doubtless to say the political and economic policies have to be modified as well as numerous practical decisions are to be taken.

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concentrations" Quoted from "The Daily Telegraph" of 2 February 2007. The report can be found at <http://www.ipcc.ch/>.

<sup>32</sup> EV 34.

<sup>33</sup> "[...] it is evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution. Often, the interests of production prevail over concern for the dignity of workers, while economic interests take priority over the good of individuals and even entire peoples. In these cases, pollution or environmental destruction is the result of an unnatural and reductionist vision which at times leads to a genuine contempt for man" *Message for the World Day for Peace* (1 January 1990) no. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. J o h n P a u l II. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis*. The Vatican 1979 no. 16.

However, the real and decisive character of the issue is anthropological and moral. Hence, man is to return to the authentic truth about his nature and his vocation known as the integral anthropology. Having renewed and reconciled himself with his Creator, man consequently will be able to understand and to properly look after all creation by subduing it and treating it responsibly with wisdom and love. It is God the Creator's plan for all He created which makes man perceive how to serve creation. "Only through man's reconciliation with God can harmony be restored to the universe. When final union with God is achieved, the integrity of man's being and the balance of nature will return to the order they enjoyed at the time of creation. Thus, the ecological problem is intimately connected with man and his transcendent vocation and, therefore, moral life"<sup>35</sup>

Next, it is evident here that the Christian (moral theological) understanding of the ecological issue has to be Christocentric. It is in Christ that both man and the world have become reconciled to God and thus have become good again – as the Creator called His creation in the beginning. Accordingly, if it was man's sin and rejection of God's will that lied at the root of the breach of the harmony and order of all creation, theologically speaking it is now man's conversion that is his primary task. Here St Paul stresses that it is only through Christ that "a single new man" is created and peace with God and the world is being restored<sup>36</sup> The environment seen in an integral way will only regain its value and purpose when man becomes reconciled to God. Eventually this will lead to a transformation of the mentality and attitudes of the contemporary society, also in respect of the ecological issue.

The Church emphasizes that man, reconciled to God, must respect the God-given order of the creation, that is the integrity of the created universe, its own internal balance it has from the Creator. All men and women must see the created world as a common heritage because God destined the earth and all it contains for the use of every individual and all peoples, as the II Vatican Council stressed<sup>37</sup> It is also necessary to remember that all this refers both to individual persons as well as to the states and to the entire international community. Contemporary societies are in need of a profound

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<sup>35</sup> B r i s t o w. *The Moral Dignity of Man* p. 199.

<sup>36</sup> "His purpose in this was, by restoring peace, to create a single New Man out of the two of them, and through the cross, to reconcile them both to God in one Body; in his own person he killed the hostility" (Eph 2, 15-16).

<sup>37</sup>GS 69.

transformation of a consumerist life style so common among them where there is ever less respect for man: "If an appreciation of the value of the human person and of human life is lacking, we will also lose interest in others and in the earth itself. Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life" What is particularly urgent is "education in ecological responsibility", responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the earth. "Thus true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behaviour" The aesthetic value of creation is not to be omitted: "Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity" However the ultimate guiding norm for any sound economic, industrial or scientific progress should be "respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person"<sup>38</sup>

This fundamental theological and moral teaching of the Church needs to be converted into a more pastoral approach. An interesting example of this can be found in the New Mexico Bishops' Pastoral Letter "Reclaiming the Vocation to Care for the Earth" (1998). In it the Bishops recognize the moral nature of the ecological issue, affirm a sacramental dimension to the created universe and finally call for more authentic activity in this area in the name of Catholic social justice teaching. Such activity would include: examining our behaviour, practices and policies as individuals, families, parishes etc.; teaching (especially) children how to love and respect the earth and to take delight in nature; inviting celebrants and liturgists to incorporate in their prayers these issues; inviting public policy-makers to work for an environmental-friendly economy<sup>39</sup> This shows that the Church not only teaches about fundamental theological and moral aspects of the ecological issue but can also be more practical when creating pastoral programmes.

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Evidently the ecological issue has recently become one of the most urgent and threatening problems of the contemporary world. As such it needs a se-

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<sup>38</sup> All quotations in this paragraph come from: J o h n P a u l I I. *Message for the World Day for Peace* (1 January 1990) no. 7, 8, 9, 13, 14.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. J. E. C a r r o l l. *Catholicism and Deep Ecology*. In: *Deep Ecology and World Religions. New Essays on Sacred Grounds*. Eds D. L. Barnhill, R. S. Gottlieb. Albany 2001 p. 177-180.

rious and in-depth analysis as well as appropriate solutions. The Christian theological perception of this question points to its most basic aspects which stress the importance of a proper understanding of man his life and of the rest of the world seen as created by God and entrusted to man. Thus it is in man's turning away from the Creator that the ecological threat has its root causes which becomes evident especially in a lack of respect for life and for the laws of nature on the part of man. Consequently, what is needed is man's true conversion to God, is to restore peace with him and then to restore peace and harmony within all creation. Essentially then the ecological issue is a moral one and has its basis in an integral anthropology.

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## ANTROPOLOGIA U FUNDAMENTU EKOLOGII

## S t r e s z c z e n i e

Powaga i złożoność współczesnego kryzysu ekologicznego domaga się nowych interdyscyplinarnych studiów dla zrozumienia zarówno jego przyczyn, jak i znalezienia właściwych rozwiązań. Z perspektywy chrześcijańskiej podkreśla się konieczność dostrzeżenia fundamentu antropologicznego i moralnego, z odwołaniem do perspektywy teologicznej. Potrzeba uznania właściwej wizji całego świata jako stworzonego oraz przyjęcia integralnej prawdy o człowieku jako stworzonym przez Boga i na obraz Boży. Człowiek poprzez swój grzech naruszył nie tylko komunie z Stwórcą, ale również harmonię i wewnętrzny ład całego powierzonego mu stworzenia. Brak szacunku dla życia i dla tego ładu to główne widoczne przyczyny kwestii ekologicznej, która w ten sposób jawi się jako zasadniczo antropologiczna i moralna. W konsekwencji jedynie nawrócenie do Boga i odzyskanie pokoju ze Stwórcą pozwoli na przywrócenie pierwotnego ładu i pokoju z całym stworzeniem.

*Streścił ks. Sławomir Nowosad*

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**Słowa kluczowe:** *imago Dei*, antropologia, ekologia.