Annotated Bibliography on Human and Natural Ecology

Baldelomar, Cesar. “A Seed Awaiting Cultivation: An Analysis of John Paul II’s ‘Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation,’’” Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa 33/1 (Spring 2009), 65-82.

By closely examining the trends in Catholic Social Traditions, and by drawing from John Paul II’s 1990 World Peace Day Statement, Baldelomar attempts to answer the ecological question and review the strengths and weaknesses of the current Catholic Social Teachings and understanding of ecology. In a Postmodern era, Baldelomar draws from Roger Gottlieb, Mary Evelyn Tucker and many others, in order to reexamine “with ecological lenses” the ways that the Catholic Church can experience an “eco-conversion”. With a great appreciation for John Paul II’s “green” papacy, there is hope that now is the time for those seeds to be cultivated.


A compilation of audiences, addresses, letters and homilies given by Pope Benedict XVI regarding major themes such as the environment, science, technology, hunger, poverty, and ecology. Throughout his pontificate, Benedict worked towards achieving peace through respect towards fellow man and the world we have been gifted with. Through this collection of Benedict’s writings and speeches, it is clear how Benedict earned the title of “green pope.”


This article takes a Scriptural approach to the environment crisis, or rather the creation-in-crisis. Through the lens of creation theology, Butkus examines man’s purpose and role in relation to creation- why do human beings exist, and what is our role? After examining some of the twenty-six explicit references to the steward or stewardship, Butkus makes the transfer from vocational stewardship to universal sustainability through five points: 1) Christian ecological vision must draw upon the organic model of stewardship; 2) The stewardship of creation must recognize that humans are special, being members of earth’s
biotic community who are given the capacity for conscious self-reflection; 3) The Christian vocation of stewardship requires that we value creation in its own right independent of its instrumental value for fulfilling human needs; 4) The stewardship of creation must include developing general norms for ethical behavior; and 5) The stewardship of creation must be defined by a vision of sustainability.


Goals of the document are: to highlight the ethical dimensions of the environmental crisis; to link questions of ecology and poverty, environment and development; to stand with working men and women and poor and disadvantaged persons, whose lives are often impacted by ecological abuse and trade-offs between environment and development; to promote a vision of a just and sustainable world community; to invite the Catholic community and men and women of good will to reflect more deeply on the religious dimensions of this topic; and to begin a broader conversation on the potential contribution of the Church to environmental questions. In the end, this document helped illustrate links between concern for the person and for the earth, between natural ecology and social ecology.


This is a short statement from the 2008 Chinese Bishop's conference. They are communicating their environmental concerns, as well as promoting some simple lifestyle changes for the faithful to adopt so-as to be better caretakers of creation. They "encourage the faithful to begin from oneself, practice moderation, simple, plain, and frugal life" as well as to practice awareness of garbage disposal, littering, water and food consumption, and to consider options such as traveling by public transportation, conservation of resources and food, and reflection on how one is contaminating the environment. In short--they ask that that we have a greater awareness as consumers who leave a mark on their environment. They advocate the 4R's movement: Refuse (bad consumer and pollution habits--linked to the virtue of moderation), Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and they add in the concept of promotion. They see the necessity of promoting a greater connection with nature, a spirit of poverty, and a personal environment spirituality[S1]. This article is perhaps most helpful as part of the timeline of how/in what ways the Church has talked about and addressed environmental concerns. They
source many past works and statements produced by the Church in regards to these issues, and this could be helpful as a stepping-stone to other documents, as well as one-piece in the development of Church language and approach to ecological concerns over the years.


"This understanding [of family and education] is essential to the mission of a Catholic college, as reflected in Saint Mary's College's own mission statement where it pledges: 'to affirm and foster the Christian understanding of the human person which animates the educational mission of the Catholic Church.' There can be no correct understanding of social justice without first understanding the family founded on marriage, the first vital cell of society. … Inclusive excellence actually proceeds from the family founded on marriage as the reflection of the relational unity of the Trinity."

Delio takes a very historical, incarnational and Christo-centric approach to promote human and natural ecologies. Beginning with the patron of ecology, Saint Francis, Delio grounds the ecological discussion in the necessity for the Church to recall and embrace an ecological Christology—“a Christology which includes the natural world and the diversity of humanity in the Body of Christ.” St. Francis’ desire to humble himself as Christ did, was Francis’ inspiration to see the interconnectedness and interlacing of all of God’s creatures and creation. Through a new vision of reality that saw the human family as the model for all relationships, St. Francis was able to encounter the poor, sing of the beauty of all of creation, and experience Trinitarian love. “To live in the ecological Christ is to believe in the centrality of Christ as the web of relationships, the primacy of compassionate love, and the celebration of difference. To profess that Christ is the center is to believe that the “center is everywhere,” first within the human soul, then in every person and creature, and then in every element of the universe; every center is a Christ center. … Living in the ecological Christ means that we must see the world with contemplative vision and find a space within us to embrace the stranger, the widow, the flower, the river, the ocean and wind. Contemplation is a penetrating gaze that gets to the heart of reality.”


Kureethadam makes a very scientific and analytical approach to the ecological crisis incorporating the physical, moral and spiritual dimensions of the current state of the world. The world faces a moral crisis, which manifests itself in ecological destruction and hits the most vulnerable in society: women, children, indigenous communities, the poor, future generations. At the end Kureethadam gives a somewhat strong response to the creation in crisis: “There is however a silver lining in the dark clouds. The hopeful element with regard to the contemporary ecological crisis is that there is no dearth of resources to respond effectively to the triple cry of the earth, of the poor and of the gods. We have valuable and abundant resources in the little and great wisdom tradition of humanity both in terms of practice and theory. The scriptural texts and the faith traditions of the world’s religions, for example, are a veritable repertoire in this regard. … The resources are there. We only need to look for them.” (371)


Through the writings of Greek Orthodox theologian, Philip Sherrard, Lemna offers a highly theological understanding of Christian charity. Focusing primarily on Christological and Trinitarian participationist metaphysics and theandric anthropology, Sherrard is both prophetic and highly relevant in today’s ecological crisis. “Sherrard compels us to see, as an essential precondition for the recovery of a sure-footed environmental ecology, that we must heal our human ecology by suffusing it once again with the undiminished sacred wisdom of our religious heritage.” Through this reality, the restoration of the sacred is necessary and essential for both social and ecological justice.

Martin reflections profoundly on Paul VI’s Populorum Progressio, which highlights how the social question became a question and propagation for global unity. According to Martin, this encyclical put the Church at the center and emphasized the necessity to act as leaven for the development of people in the world. By stressing Pope Paul VI’s attention to “integral” human development, Martin is able to draw connections to the environment, although they are more prominent in proceeding encyclicals. “The uniqueness of the human person is to be found in the ability to make rational decisions about the use of the world’s resources, in a responsible or irresponsible way. Catholic social teaching underlines the fact that humans must respect the “prior God-given purpose” which belongs to other elements in creation. In its vision of the relationship between people and creation Populorum Progressio always stresses that the whole of creation is ordered in the first place towards its creator and the rationality of humans is directed not to using nature in a thoughtless way but to a recognition of God’s plan and thus to the “prior God-given purpose” of nature.”


In this text, "human ecology" makes its first appearance in the field of sociology. Although the term is expounded on and further developed in later writings by Park, this work emphasizes the evolutions of human culture and society, perhaps initiating the growth and distinction between general ecology and human ecology.


Park is often considered the pioneer of the human ecology field, and although Ellen Richards probably coined the term before him (note: these papers were written earlier and published posthumously), he is greatly responsible for its adoption into the social-sciences. Although "human ecology" is used sparingly in the text, this work is part of the history and development of the terminology, and it is helpful when tracing the different uses and meanings of the term in various fields of study. Herein, Park is concerned with the study of communities and their environments; in relation to human ecology, he concludes: "Control of conditions of community life is not likely to meet with success unless based on an appreciation and understanding of human nature on the one hand, and of the natural or ecological organization of community life on the other." In light of our
current discussion of the term, it is noteworthy that in the beginning of its use, even scientists held that an understanding of "human ecology" first required an understanding of human nature.


Many academics and activists have already placed their predictions and opinions as to what Francis’ upcoming encyclical should say. Knowing of his great passion and agenda for protecting creation, many conservationists are ready to jump on his platform for continuous reform and advocacy on behalf of nature. Many scholars hope for a greater emphasis on the environment and environmental repercussions, such as climate change and economic inequality. Overall, people are optimistic about the encyclical and look forward to the Church being a leader, voice and advocate of respect and equality among all of creation.

Richards, Ellen H. Sanitation in daily life, Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1907.

Richards was a chemist and instructor at MIT, as well as the founder of the home economics movement. She published the 1st English use of "ecology" in the late 19th century and introduced the term "human ecology" in this later text. She states: "The individual is one of a community influencing and influenced by the common environment. Human ecology is the study of the surroundings of human being in the effects they produce on the lives of men. The features of the environment are natural, as climate, and artificial, produced by human activity." She goes on to outline two lines of focus in this study. The first she calls municipal housekeeping: "the co-operation of the citizens in securing clean streets, the suppression of nuisances, abundant water supply, market inspection, etc." The second she refers to is family housekeeping: "the healthful home demands a management of the house which shall promote vigorous life and prevent the physical deterioration so evident under modern conditions." She goes on to discuss the health discrepancies between the city and the farm/country worker and is concerned with the impact that a person's work and living environment (especially due to modern industries and developments) has on their development. She specifically focuses on public sanitation conditions, but her thoughts on human-ecology in relation to home economics and as necessarily addressed through good habits is noteworthy: "To secure and maintain a safe environment there must be inculcated habits of using the material things in daily life in such a way as to promote and not to diminish health. . . It is, however, of the greatest importance that everyone should acquire such habits of belief in the importance of this material environment as shall lead him to insist upon sanitary regulations, and to see that they are carried out."

Taylor begins the article by refuting certain presumptions (by Clive Hamilton) that speculate Pope Francis’ encyclical on ecology. Drawing from John Paul II and Benedict XVI, Taylor defends the long tradition of the Church’s teachings on the ontological understanding of ecology. In addition, Taylor provides insights “that attempt[s] to transcend the liberal/conservative template in order to see more than it allows.” Taken mainly from her writing, “A Deeper Ecology: A Catholic Vision of the Person in Nature,” Taylor outlines three main trajectories, and argues how the Catholic Church transcends the contractual and arbitrary relationships in ecological discussions to include the covenantal, in order to achieve real sustainability and wholeness.


“What is needed… is a ‘catholic ecology… the recognition of a common desire for beauty and meaning, … and the apprehension that the participation of others is necessary for a common good that is deeper than the co-incidence of our private goods or our ideology.” Taylor suggests that Catholics struggle with finding ways to harmonize their love for God and love for his creation while being faced with the ideological antagonisms directed against human life and dignity. Noting both the legitimate concerns and the shortcomings of the main currents of environmental thought, Taylor sketches a new trajectory for a “catholic” ecology, grounded in John Paul II’s teaching that the “covenant between human beings and the environment . . . should mirror the creative love of God.”


Organized by the Pontifical Academy of Science, the Pontifical Academy of Social Science, SDSN and Religions for Peace, the summit aimed at strengthening global consensus on climate change in the context of sustainable development. Turkson focuses on three main points: 1) the earth needs to be protected and humanity needs to be dignified, 2) the solutions are in course corrections (climate change management and sustainable development), and 3) solutions must be more than technical or contractual, they must be moral towards human flourishing and well-being. Because the Church is an
expert on humanity, it is the responsibility of Catholics to be ever-converted towards virtues of stewardship and solidarity.

Turkson, Peter. "Integral ecology and the horizon of hope: concern for the poor and for creation in the ministry of Pope Francis." Lenten Lecture from Trócaire, Maynooth, Ireland, March 5, 2015, 1-12. 

In this lecture to Trócaire (an Irish Catholic agency for oversees development that has a particular interest in ecological issues), Cardinal Turkson discusses Pope Francis's upcoming encyclical highlighting integral human ecology, and he outlines four specific principles for consideration: 1) "the call to be protectors is integral and all-embracing," 2) "care for creation is a virtue in its own right," 3) "we will--we must--care for what we cherish and revere," and 4) "the call to dialogue and a new global solidarity." This lecture is a helpful preview in understanding how individual are called to be stewards of the earth, why the Church must enter into the environmental discussion--why the Christian community can better effect positive ecological change than even laws and policies can, and why the topic of human ecology is given precedence at this time. 
Connections are made between human poverty and ecological concerns, as well as the need for mercy--for the revolution of tenderness that Francis calls for in Evangelii Gaudium--and an awareness that solidarity among men is greatly undermined by environmental destruction.

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/01/opinion/sunday/is-the-environment-a-moral-cause.html?_r=0

This is a very brief but through-provoking read about the language used in pro-environmental messages and movements. According to research this Stanford professor has done, the political gap between "conservatives" and "liberals" in regards to ecological issues may not be caused by such a difference in concern for the environment as much as the vocabulary surrounding the initiatives. He concludes that, whereas American "liberals" respond to the moral language of protecting ecosystems and people from destruction and harm, "conservatives" will respond with just as much conviction to similar environmental concerns if they are framed with the moral language of: "patriotism, respect for authority, sanctity or purity." It is notable that even secular sources are using moral language when discussing these topics, and that researchers are identifying environmental problems/solutions with moral viewpoints.

The article analyzes Pope Benedict XVI’s social encyclical Caritas in Veritate and its original contribution to Catholic social doctrine. The author begins by examining Benedict’s claim that Populorum Progressio deserves to be considered the Rerum Novarum of the present age, and asserts that the substance of this claim is not Paul VI’s specific evaluation of the social question but rather his elevation of “integral human development” as the overarching principle of Catholic social doctrine. The article goes on to explicate Benedict’s understanding of “charity in truth” as the most suitable virtue for engaging in Catholic social ethics, underscoring five ways in which charity and truth complement one another. The essay concludes with a study of the requirements of integral human development.


Zamagni frames his discussion of economics and the environment with the following premise: "It must be recognized that the ecological problem is first of all a problem of public ethos." He argues that ecological concerns need to be addressed from a moral platform, saying: "Economic evaluation requires data . . . but it also requires a conception of the good," and "without a conception of the good we wouldn't know what data we should seek to study." Zamagni first examines: "the way in which economics 'discovers' the environment question," he then discusses "the link between intergenerational fairness and sustainable development," as well as the need for a holistic approach to the ease the polarization of viewpoints that systematically occurs. Lastly, he says "the struggle against poverty and for sustainable development are two sides of the same coin," implying that "intervention based on the separation between poverty and environmental quality are doomed to fail." Ultimately, Zamagni proposes a global-level regulatory system--a World Organization for the Environment--that would help enforce international treaties and put them into practice.