

The Second Master Hsüan Hua Memorial Lecture

Worldly Wonder

Religions Enter
Their Ecological Phase

Mary Evelyn Tucker
With a Commentary by Judith A. Berling

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THE SECOND HSÜAN HUA MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Institute for World Religions, in partnership with the Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union, sponsored the second annual Venerable Hsüan Hua Memorial Lecture in March 2002, in the Memorial Chapel of the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California. The lecture series focuses on bringing the ancient wisdom of Asian religions and philosophy to bear on the pressing issues of the modern world, especially in the area of ethics and spiritual values.

The second Hsüan Hua Memorial Lecture was given by Mary Evelyn Tucker, professor of religion at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Dr. Tucker teaches courses in world religions, Asian religions, and religion and ecology. She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University in the history of religions, specializing in Confucianism in Japan. She is the author of *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism* (1989), and has co-edited a series of works on ecology and religion, including

Worldviews and Ecology (1994), with John Grim; *Buddhism and Ecology* (1998), with Duncan Williams; *Confucianism and Ecology: The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans* (1998), with John Berthrong; and *Hinduism and Ecology* (2000), with Christopher Key Chapple. She and John Grim directed a series of twelve conferences, “Religions of the World and Ecology,” at Harvard’s Center for the Study of World Religions. During the 2001–2002 academic year she was visiting professor at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.

A lively response and discussion followed Professor Tucker’s lecture. The discussion was preceded by a formal response given by Judith A. Berling, who is Professor of Chinese and Comparative Religion, a core doctoral faculty member, and a former dean and vice president for academic affairs at the Graduate Theological Union. Professor Berling earned her doctoral degree from Columbia University. Among her research interests are world religions and theological education, globalization, and Chinese spirituality. Her recent publications include “Taoism in Ming Culture” in *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 8 (1998) and *A Pilgrim in Chinese Culture: Negotiating Religious Diversity* (1997). Dr. Berling’s response, together with a transcript of questions from the audience and Dr. Tucker’s replies, follow the text of Dr. Tucker’s lecture in the present volume.

A BRIEF PORTRAIT OF THE VENERABLE MASTER HSÜAN HUA

“I have had many names,” he once said, “and all of them are false.” In his youth in Manchuria, he was known as “the Filial Son Bai”; as a young monk he was An Tzu (“Peace and Kindness”); later, in Hong Kong, he was Tu Lun (“Wheel of Rescue”); finally, in America, he was Hsüan Hua, which might be translated as “one who proclaims the principles of transformation.” To his thousands of disciples across the world, he was always also “Shifu” —“Teacher.”

Born in 1918 into a peasant family in a small village on the Manchurian plain, Master Hua was the youngest of ten children. He attended school for only two years, during which he studied the Chinese classics and committed many of them to memory. As a young teenager, he opened a free school for both children and adults. He also began then one of his lifelong spiritual practices: reverential bowing. Outdoors, in all weather, he would make over 800 prostrations daily, as a profound gesture of his respect for all that is good and sacred in the universe.

He was nineteen when his mother died, and for three years he honored her memory by sitting in meditation in a hut beside her grave. It was during this time that he made a resolve to go to America to teach the principles of wisdom. As a first step, at the end of the period of mourning, he entered San Yuan Monastery, took as his teacher Master Chang Chih, and subsequently received the full ordination of a Buddhist monk at Pu To Mountain. For ten years he devoted himself to study of the Buddhist scriptural tradition and to mastery of both the Esoteric and the Ch'an Schools of Chinese Buddhism. He had also read and contemplated the scriptures of Christianity, Daoism, and Islam. Thus, by the age of thirty, he had already established through his own experience the four major imperatives of his later ministry in America: the primacy of the monastic tradition; the duty to educate; the need for Buddhists to ground themselves in traditional spiritual practice and authentic scripture; and, just as essential, the importance and the power of ecumenical respect and understanding.

In 1948, Master Hua traveled south to meet the Venerable Hsu Yun, who was then already 108 years old and China's most distinguished spiritual teacher. From him Master Hua received the patriarchal transmission in the Wei Yang Lineage of the Ch'an School. Master Hua subsequently left China for Hong Kong. He spent a dozen years there, first in seclusion, then later as a teacher at three monasteries that he founded.

Finally, in 1962, several of his Hong Kong disciples invited him to come to San Francisco. By 1968, Master Hua had established the Buddhist Lecture Hall in a loft in San Francisco's Chinatown, and there he began giving nightly lectures, in Chinese, to an audience of young Americans. His texts were the major scriptures of the Mahayana. In 1969, he astonished the monastic community of Taiwan by sending there, for final ordination, two American women and three American men, all five of them fully trained as novices, fluent in Chinese, and conversant with Buddhist scripture. During subsequent years, the Master trained and oversaw the ordination of hundreds of monks and nuns who came to California to study with him from all over North America, as well as from Europe, Australia, and Asia. These monastic disciples now teach in the twenty-eight temples, monasteries, and convents that the Master founded in the United States, Canada, and several Asian countries. The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, located in California's North Coast 100 miles north of San Francisco, is home to over two hundred Buddhist monks and nuns, making it the largest Buddhist monastic community in North America.

Although he understood English well and spoke it when it was necessary, Master Hua almost always lectured in Chinese. His aim was to encourage Westerners to learn Chinese, so that they could become translators, not merely of his lectures, but of the major scriptural texts of the Buddhist Mahayana. His intent was realized. So far, the Buddhist Text Translation Society, which he founded, has issued over

130 volumes of translation of the major Sutras, together with a similar number of commentaries, instructions, and stories from the Master's teaching.

As an educator, Master Hua was tireless. From 1968 to the mid-1980s he gave as many as a dozen lectures a week, and he traveled extensively on speaking tours. He also established formal training programs for monastics and for laity; elementary and secondary schools for boys and for girls; Dharma Realm Buddhist University at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; and the Institute for World Religions, in Berkeley.

Throughout his life the Master taught that the basis of spiritual practice is moral practice. Of his monastic disciples he required strict purity, and he encouraged his lay disciples to adhere to the five precepts of the Buddhist laity. Especially in his later years, Confucian texts were often the subject of his lectures, and he held to the Confucian teaching that the first business of education is moral education. He identified six rules of conduct as the basis of communal life at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; the six rules prohibited contention, covetousness, self-seeking, selfishness, profiting at the expense of the community, and false speech. He asked that schoolchildren at the City recite these prohibitions every morning before class. In general, although he admired the independent-mindedness of Westerners, he believed that they lacked ethical balance and needed that stabilizing sense of public morality which is characteristic of the East.

The Venerable Master insisted on ecumenical respect, and he delighted in interfaith dialogue. He stressed commonalities in religious traditions—above all their emphasis on proper conduct, on compassion, and on wisdom. He was also a pioneer in building bridges between different Buddhist national traditions; for example, he often brought monks from Theravada countries to California to share the duties of transmitting the precepts of ordination. He invited Catholic priests to celebrate the mass in the Buddha Hall at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, and he developed a late-in-life friendship with Paul Cardinal Yu-Bin, the exiled leader of the Catholic Church in China and Taiwan. He once told Cardinal Yu-Bin: “You can be a Buddhist among the Catholics, and I’ll be a Catholic among Buddhists.” To the Master, the essential teachings of all religions could be summed up in a single word: wisdom.

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There are those who have supported this process of birthing a new field in religion and ecology in special ways. They include Thomas Berry for his inspiring view

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It is to my parents that I dedicate this book for it is they who first showed me the myriad aspects of worldly wonder in both nature and in culture.

The Cosmological Context: Evolution and Extinction

AS WE SURVEY OUR HUMAN PROSPECTS on the threshold of this new millennium, we find our global situation fraught with particular irony. Over the past century, science has begun to weave together the story of a historical cosmos that emerged some thirteen billion years ago. The magnitude of this universe story is beginning to dawn on humans as we awaken to a new realization of the vastness and complexity of this unfolding process.¹ At the same time that this story becomes available to the human community, we are becoming conscious of the growing environmental crisis and of the rapid destruction of species and habitat that is taking place around the globe.² Just as we are realizing the vast expanse of time that distinguishes the evolution of the universe over some thirteen billion years, we are recognizing how late is our arrival in this stupendous process.³ Just as we become conscious that the Earth took more than four billion years to bring forth this abundance of life, it is dawning on us how quickly we are foreshortening its future flourishing.

We need, then, to step back to assimilate our cosmological context. If scientific cosmology gives us an understanding of the origins and unfolding of the universe, the story of cosmology gives us a sense of our place in the universe. And if we are so radically affecting the story by extinguishing other life forms and

destroying our own nest, what does this imply about our religious sensibilities or our sense of the sacred? As science is revealing to us the particular intricacy of the web of life, we realize we are unraveling it, although unwittingly in part. As we begin to glimpse how deeply embedded we are in complex ecosystems and dependent on other life forms, we see we are destroying the very basis of our continuity as a species. As biology demonstrates a fuller picture of the unfolding of diverse species in evolution and the distinctive niche of species in ecosystems, we are questioning our own niche in the evolutionary process. As the size and scale of the environmental crisis is more widely grasped, we are seeing our own connection to this destruction. We have become a planetary presence that is not always benign. We have become a religious presence that has atrophied.

This simultaneous bifocal recognition of our cosmological context and our environmental crisis is clearly demonstrated at the American Museum of Natural History in New York with two major new exhibits. One is the Rose Center that houses the Hall of the Universe and the Hall of the Earth. The other exhibit is the Hall of Biodiversity.

The Hall of the Universe is architecturally striking. It is housed in a monumental glass cube, in the center of which is a globe containing the planetarium. Suspended in space around the globe are the planets of our solar system. In a fascinating mingling of inner

and outer worlds, our solar system is juxtaposed against the garden plaza and street scenes of New York visible through the soaring glass panels of the cube. After first passing through a simulation of the originating fireball, visitors move on to an elevated spiral pathway from which they participate in the exhibit. The sweeping pathway ushers the visitor into a descending walk through time that traces the thirteen-billion-year-old cosmic journey from the great flaring forth in the fireball, through the formation of galaxies, and finally to the emergence of our solar system and planet. It ends with the evolution of life in the Cenozoic period of the last sixty million years and concludes with one human hair under a circle of glass, with the hairsbreadth representing all of human history. The dramatic effect is stunning as we are called to re-image the human in the midst of such unfathomable immensities.

The Hall of Earth continues this evocation of wonder as it reveals the remarkable processes of the birth of the Earth, the evolution of the supercontinent, Pangaea, the formation of the individual continents, and the eventual emergence of life. It demonstrates the intricacy of plate tectonics, which was not widely accepted even as late as fifty years ago, and it displays geothermal life forms around deep-sea vents, which were only discovered a decade ago. This exhibit, then, illustrates how new our knowledge of the evolution of the Earth is and how much has been discovered within the last century.

In contrast to the vast scope of evolutionary processes evident in the Hall of the Universe and the Hall of the Earth, the Hall of Biodiversity displays the extraordinary range of life forms that the planet has birthed. A panoply of animals, fish, birds, reptiles, and insects engages the visitor. A plaque in the exhibit observes that we are now living in the midst of a sixth extinction period due to the current massive loss of species.⁴ It notes that while the five earlier periods of extinction were caused by a variety of factors, including meteor collisions and climate change, humans are the primary cause of this present extinction spasm.⁵

With this realization, not only does our role as a species come into question, but our viability as a species remains in doubt. Along with those who recognized the enormity of the explosion of the atomic bombs in Japan, we are the first generations of humans to actually imagine our own destruction as a species.⁶ And, while this may be extreme, some pessimists are suggesting this may not be such a regrettable event if other life forms are to survive.

The exhibition notes, however, that we can stem this tide of loss of species and habitat. The visitor walks through an arresting series of pictures and statistics where current destruction is recorded on one side and restoration processes are highlighted on the other. The contrasting displays suggest the choice is ours—to become a healing or a deleterious presence on the planet.

These powerful exhibits on cosmic evolution and on species extinction illustrate how science is helping us to enter into a macrophase understanding of the universe and of ourselves as a species among other species on a finite planet. The fact that the Rose Center is presenting the evolution of the universe and the Earth as an unfolding story in which humans participate is striking in itself. Indeed, the original introductory video to the Hall of the Universe observed that we are “citizens of the universe” born out of stardust and the evolution of galaxies, and that we are now responsible for its continuity. In addition, the fact that the Hall of Biodiversity suggests that humans can assist in stemming the current extinction spasm is a bold step for an “objective” and “unbiased” science-based museum. Scientists are no longer standing apart from what they are studying. They are assisting us in witnessing the ineffable beauty and complexity of life and its emergence over billions of years. This macrophase dimension of science involves three intersecting phases: understanding the story of the universe, telling the story as a whole, and reflecting on the story with a sense of our responsibility for its continuity.

The world’s religions and scholars of those religions are also being called to contribute to this macrophase understanding of the universe story. The challenge for religions is both to revision our role as citizens of the universe and to reinvent our niche as members of the Earth community. This requires addressing such

cosmological questions as where we have come from and where we are going. In other words, it necessitates rethinking our role as humans within the larger context of universe evolution as well as in the closer context of natural processes of life on Earth. What is humankind in relation to thirteen billion years of universe history? What is our place in the framework of 4.6 billion years of Earth history? How can we foster the stability and integrity of life processes? These are critical questions motivating the religion and ecology dialogue.⁷

We might rephrase these questions in specifically religious terms. Can religions situate their stories within the universe story? Can they revision human history within Earth history? Can the religions open up their traditions to embrace the planet as home and hearth? Can religions re-evoked and encourage the deep sense of wonder that ignites the human imagination in the face of nature's beauty?

For if the Earth is not in some sense a numinous revelation of mystery, where indeed will the human find mystery? And if humans destroy this awesome matrix of mystery, where will we find sources of inspiration pointing us toward the unfathomable vastness of the sacred? Will religions assume a disengaged pose as species go extinct, forests are exterminated, soil, air, and water are polluted beyond restoration, and human health and well-being deteriorate? Or will they emerge from their concerns with dogmas and policy regarding their own survival to

see that the survival of the myriad modes of life on Earth is also at stake?

We seek signs of hope, as we are poised at this simultaneous juncture of awakening to the wonder of cosmic evolution and of despairing at witnessing environmental destruction. Although our deleterious role as humans is becoming clearer, so, too, are various efforts emerging to mitigate the loss of species, restore ecosystems, prevent pollution of air, water, and soil, and preserve natural resources for future generations. The question for religious traditions, then, is how can they assist these processes and encourage humans to become a healing presence on the planet. Can religious traditions help us to find our niche as a species that does not overextend our effects and overshoot the limitations of fragile ecosystems?⁸

Indeed, the environmental crisis calls the religions of the world to respond by finding their voice within the larger Earth community. In so doing, the religions are now entering their ecological phase and finding their planetary expression.⁹ They are awakening to a renewed appreciation of matter as a vessel for the sacred. Just as they have been working in the twentieth century to embrace diversity within the human community, so now they are called to encompass the diversity of life in the Earth community. From a concentration on God-human relations and human-human relations, they are being invited to reconfigure human-Earth relations. In Christianity, for example, human-Earth concerns have largely been framed in

terms of Creator-Creation interaction. Christians are now called to reconstruct this configuration in terms of evolution and extinction.¹⁰ From a concern for an ethics responding to the tragedies of homicide, suicide, and genocide, the world religions are being summoned to develop an ethics responding to biocide and geocide.¹¹ This expansion of concern is an invitation to extend comprehensive care and compassion toward the great fecundity of life that the planet has brought forth. It implies a decentering of the human and recentering of our lives within, not apart from, the myriad species with whom we share the planet. Their birthright becomes linked to ours; their flourishing is inseparable from ours; their continuity is intrinsically linked to ours.

The emergence, then, of the world's religions into their ecological phase and their planetary expression implies not simply reformation but transformation. For as they identify their resources for deeper ecological awakening—scriptural, symbolic, ritual, and ethical—they will be transforming the deep wellsprings of their tradition into a fuller expression. As they adapt their traditional resources and adopt new resources, they are creating viable modes of religious life beneficial not simply for humans but for the whole Earth community. This involves initiating and implementing new forms of the great wisdom traditions in a postmodern context and may involve opposition to certain aspects of modernity (such as relentless consumption) and change in other aspects of modernity (such as

emphasizing individual rights, especially property rights, over communal responsibilities).

The great transformation of the religious traditions to their ecological phase calls forth enormous creativity of individuals and communities. It activates the human imagination toward a celebration of the awe and wonder of life—its emergence in the primal fireball, its unfolding in the universe story, and its flourishing in Earth's evolution. At the same time, this great transformation dynamizes human energy toward fulfilling the human role as a truly planetary species. It draws us into alignment with the Earth community. It invites us to participate in the flourishing of life on the planet; it evokes our celebration of worldly wonder.

This perspective calls us into contemplation of our own evolution as a planetary species with allegiance beyond regional or national boundaries. The inseparability of local and global—of hearth and cosmos—is breaking into human consciousness in myriad ways.¹² As part of the unfolding universe story, we celebrate our kinship not only with other humans but also with all life forms. We begin to find our niche. We realize we are not only part of humankind but of Earthkind; we are not simply human beings but universe beings. As such we are distinguished not merely by reflective consciousness but by wondering intelligence as well. This may be the indispensable capacity of humans that religions can evoke in the presence of the mystery of life. Along with gratitude, and reverence, wonder may be a key

to release the flourishing potential of our species and our planet.

The Historical Context: Change and Continuity

THE QUESTION FOR THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS THEN (and for the scholars and theologians of those religions) is how can they answer this call to move toward their planetary expression in response to the magnitude of the environmental crisis. The world's religions, while grounded in foundational beliefs and practices, have never been static, but have always both effected change and been affected by change in response to intellectual, political, cultural, social, and economic forces. In light of this, they may, in fact, more accurately be described as religious processes rather than simply as preservers of traditions. As religious processes they have embraced change and transformation; as preservers of traditions they have embraced the security and continuity of the past. Both change and continuity have been present in the unfolding of religions, and this can be a source of their creative expression now, in response to the environmental crisis.

At the risk of oversimplifying complex historical lineages, one might suggest that there have been three major stages of the world's religions associated with civilizational developments: classical, medieval, and modern. The first is the classical era of the emergence

of the major world religions and philosophy in the first Axial Age in the sixth century before the Common Era.¹³ This is a period of remarkable flourishing of creative spiritual leaders, ranging from Confucius and Lao Tzu in East Asia, to Buddha and the Upanishadic seers in South Asia, to the Hebrew prophets of West Asia, and the pre-Socratic philosophers in Greece. The second stage is their medieval period of new syntheses that were often the result of dialogue with other religious or philosophical traditions. Examples are the recovery of the Aristotelian philosophical tradition by the medieval Christian scholastics, such as Thomas Aquinas, or the rise of Neo-Confucianism in China and the synthesis of Zhu Xi, partly in response to Buddhism and Daoism. The third stage is the modern period of the last five hundred years, following the age of encounter and the emergence of the Enlightenment in the West. In each of these eras, the religious traditions developed significant new schools of thought and practice in response to challenges from within as well as to pressures from without.

Some scholars of religion would describe our current situation as a fourth period characterized as "postmodernism." In our postmodern era, new constructive syntheses are emerging in light of deconstructive analyses of hegemonic thought along with liberating calls to move beyond outdated practices. Moreover, other scholars, such as Thomas Berry and Ewert Cousins, have observed that we are now in a second Axial period characterized by the global

encounter of the world's religions. The first position calls for renewal within traditions, while the second calls for openness across traditions. We will discuss our postmodern circumstances when we highlight the limitations of religions in ecological dialogue and we will discuss the contemporary encounter of religions when we focus on inter-religious dialogue.

Our thesis here is that this fourth period may also be seen as a moment when religions are beginning to move into their ecological phase and find their planetary expression. From changes within religious communities and across religious communities, we are moving outward toward changes within the human-Earth community. To underscore the significance of these transformations, we will briefly highlight some of the intellectual currents of the third phase of modernity that have helped to shape our contemporary postmodern worldviews. These currents have emerged in the West and have now spread throughout the globe.

Among these complex tributaries to modernity are the humanist revolution that began in the fourteenth-century Renaissance, the expansionist revolution launched in the fifteenth-century age of exploration, the religious revolution of the sixteenth-century Reformation, the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, the political revolution of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, the economic revolution of nineteenth-century industrialization, the social revolution of twentieth-century human rights,

and what we may call the ongoing ecological revolution of twentieth- and twenty-first-century environmental movements.

None of these are singular as revolutions; rather, they themselves are the results of myriad forces with multiple outcomes that have shaped modernity. The intersection of various currents of modernity with religious traditions has created significant challenges for religions. Renaissance humanism, for example, began the process of recentering the human body, mind, and spirit in a new configuration of import and meaning which celebrated the human over the divine. The age of exploration initiated the comprehensive interchange of culture, ideas, and goods that has opened religions to other cultures and religions, sometimes with deleterious consequences for the non-Western traditions. The Reformation initiated a major challenge to the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church, to its orthodox teachings, and to the role of individuals in interpreting scripture and seeking personal salvation. Since the rise of the Enlightenment in the West and the foregrounding of ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, new notions of reason, individualism, and freedom have emerged along with fresh concepts of social contract, the role of law, and the desirability of democratic processes. The Enlightenment has helped to shape the contours of secular humanism that have dominated significant aspects of our modern and postmodern world.

This was intensified with the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, when religious cosmologies were severely called into question. The separation of reason and faith that began in the medieval period became more pronounced, and was further exacerbated by the emergence in the nineteenth century of the Darwinian theory of evolution, which religions are still trying to absorb. The human rights revolution of the twentieth century, which arose out of two world wars and the postcolonial era, has birthed a renewed sense of the dignity of the individual regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual preference. However, it has not yet sufficiently situated these individual human rights in relation to community responsibilities to other persons, other species, or the planet as a whole. As the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century coupled with market capitalism of the twentieth century spreads to every corner of the globe, religions are severely challenged to offer an alternative vision to the prevailing economic view of humans as primarily producers and consumers in the global market. Now the questions of the sustainability of life on the planet and the viability of our species give rise to a certain urgency in the ecological revolution and to new creative religious responses.

The particular modes of Western modernity which champion individualism, democracy, science, rationalism, and capitalism have now spread to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. From these encounters

across cultures, new forms of modernization—economic, political, social—have emerged in the non-Western world as well. At the same time, there are significant contemporary movements around the globe calling for constructive postmodern and postcolonial perspectives. These movements tend to recognize the limits of modernity in terms of reductionist science, rational positivism, utilitarian economics, inflated individualism, and exploitative politics.¹⁴ It is here that the emerging alliance of religion and ecology might be fruitfully situated.¹⁵ While drawing on constructive aspects of modernity such as democratic participation and the rich ethical resources of their own traditions, the religions can stand in opposition to the mindlessness of modernization processes which threaten to destroy ecosystems and abuse natural resources in the rush toward globalization.

Many theologians and religious leaders have already spoken out against these modernization processes, identifying them as part of an octopus-like “economism” in the service of destructive globalization.¹⁶ They are forming alliances with those who are alarmed by the unlimited economic growth, rampant consumption, and overuse of natural resources that are devouring the planet. They recognize that these alluring economic pursuits are siphoning off the enormous spiritual energies and creative impulses of the human. The search for meaning has become manipulated into materialist goals in the first world and diverted into economic development at any

cost in the third world. The natural and human worlds suffer as both the environment and human communities deteriorate in the race toward unrestrained economic globalization. Even the call for sustainability has frequently been manipulated by the drive for profit and growth rather than restraint. The alternative voices of the religions are needed, then, to imagine and create other possibilities for human life besides the accumulation and consumption that undermine fragile ecosystems and deplete natural resources. Surely religions in their postmodern phase can inspire larger aspirations for our place and purpose in nature than simply economic exploitation. The question arises: is the Earth a commodity to be bought and sold or a community of life that invites participation?

The Religious Context: Problems and Promise

THE SCOPE AND COMPLEXITY of the environmental crisis as situated within the varied intellectual, political, social, or economic revolutions of the last several centuries present significant challenges to the world's religions as they emerge into their ecological phase. A primary challenge involves acknowledging the limitations of religious traditions as well as underscoring their potential and actual contributions. This section will identify some of the limitations or problems of religions in responding adequately to the environmental crisis as well as the contributions and

promise of the religions in their emerging dialogue with ecological issues.

In acknowledging their problematic dimensions, we need to underscore the dark side of religious traditions as well as their lateness in awakening to the environmental crisis. In addition, we should note the ever-present gap between ideal principles and real practices as well as the inevitable disjunction between modern environmental problems and traditional religious resources. For all of these reasons, religions are necessary but not sufficient for solutions to environmental problems. Thus they need to be in dialogue with other religions and other disciplines in focusing on environmental issues.

We must begin, then, with both humility and boldness as we note the obstacles and opportunities confronting religious traditions in this emerging dialogue of religion and ecology. We note first the dark side of religions. The human energy poured into religious traditions can clearly be unleashed in both violent and compassionate ways as has been demonstrated throughout history, especially recent history. While the causes of conflict and war are frequently economic, political and environmental, the religious dimensions need to be understood as well. Even before the September 11th terrorist attacks, the near genocide against Native Americans on this continent and against Jews in Europe would be sufficient manifestations of this. In addition, the numerous religious wars that arose in Western Europe

and currently the religious conflicts in the Balkans, the Middle East, and South Asia are further evidence of the destructive dimensions of religious convictions, especially in service to exclusive claims to truth.

It is important to acknowledge also that religions are only one factor among many others contributing to new patterns of human-Earth relations promoting the flourishing of life. Religions can be isolated from critical contemporary issues and estranged from other institutions or disciplines involved in social and ecological change. For example, religions are sometimes antagonistic to science, both in assumptions and methods. Significant efforts have been made in the last several decades to assist in overcoming this antagonism.¹⁷

Religions have thus been late in coming to environmental discussions and they need to be in conversation with those individuals and groups who have been working on environmental issues for many decades.¹⁸ While there is growing evidence of the vitality of the emerging dialogue of religion and ecology, and while there are remarkable examples around the world of grassroots environmental action inspired by religion, it is clear that environmental changes will come from many different disciplines, motivations, and inspirations.

With these qualifications in mind, we recognize nonetheless that religions historically have been forces for positive change, liberating human energy for efficacious personal, social, and political

transformation. This potential for identifying resources for positive transformation is helping to shape the dialogue of religion and ecology.

It was in this spirit of recognizing both the problems and the promise of religions that an international conference series, entitled "Religions of the World and Ecology," was held at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard. The series critically explored attitudes toward nature in the world's religious traditions and highlighted environmental projects around the world inspired by religious values. From 1996 to 1998, a series of ten conferences examined the traditions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, Shinto, and indigenous religions. The conferences, organized by John Grim and myself in collaboration with a team of area specialists, brought together international scholars of the world's religions as well as environmental activists and leaders. Recognizing that religions are key shapers of people's worldviews and formulators of their most cherished values, this broad research project has identified both ideas and practices supporting a sustainable environmental future. The papers from these conferences are being published in a series of ten volumes from the Center for the Study of World Religions and Harvard University Press.¹⁹

In the autumn of 1998, three culminating conferences were held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at

the United Nations, and at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. These events brought representatives of the world's religions into conversation with one another as well as into dialogue with key scientists, economists, educators, and policy makers from various environmental fields. A multireligious and multidisciplinary approach was inaugurated.

A major result of these conferences was the establishment of an ongoing Forum on Religion and Ecology that was announced at a United Nations press conference to continue the research, education, and outreach begun at the earlier conferences. A primary goal of the Forum is to develop a field of study in religion and ecology that has implications for public policy. Toward this end the Forum has mounted a comprehensive website under the Harvard Center for the Environment (<http://harvard.environment.edu/religion>). It has sponsored workshops for high school teachers, and has organized various conferences at Harvard and on the west coast on World Religions and Animals; on Nature Writers and the Ecological Imagination; and on Cosmology in Science and Religion. The intention is to suggest the movement outward of cosmological awareness and ethical concerns from the human sphere to embrace other species, the larger web of the natural world, and the cosmos at large.

Just as religions played an important role in creating sociopolitical changes in the twentieth century

through moral challenges for the extension of human rights, so now in the twenty-first century religions are contributing to the emergence of a broader cosmological orientation and environmental ethics based on diverse sensibilities regarding the sacred dimensions of the more-than-human world.²⁰ They are moving from a primarily anthropocentric focus to include ecocentric and cosmocentric concerns. This movement acknowledges that much work remains to be done in the human realm in relation to issues of social, economic, and political justice. Yet it is increasingly clear that social and environmental issues can no longer be seen as separate concerns. The religion-and-ecology field embraces this continuity in helping to create the grounds for long-term sustainable human-Earth relations.

In these efforts it is important to keep in mind that there is inevitably a gap between theory and practice, between ideas and action. This is perhaps one of the major obstacles to the efficacy of religion in environmental discussions. The expectations placed on religions are often unrealistically high because the desire for religions to be ideal models is so great. It is easy to point out inadequacies and thus dismiss the religious traditions as ineffective or hypocritical.

In identifying potential and actual ecological resources from the world's religions, it is important to recognize the complexity of the relationship of ideal and real at the outset and to avoid idealizing any one religion as having the best theories or practices. It will

also be critical to examine the historical record of cultures and traditions, as environmental historians are beginning to do. Finally, we can observe that even as the ecological attitudes of religions begin to change we can ask: will practice follow of its own accord, or will religions have to be prodded to translate ideas into action?

In light of these qualifications we can cultivate an appropriate hermeneutics of suspicion regarding blanket claims to environmental purity in theory or in practice. For example, many have described Native American or other indigenous traditions as especially ecologically sensitive. However, not all indigenous practices can be defended as environmentally sound; one example is the slash and burn agriculture practiced by indigenous peoples in some parts of Southeast Asia. It is also frequently claimed that the traditions of Asia are more attuned to nature, especially Buddhism and Daoism. Rich ecological resources clearly reside in these traditions. Yet otherworldly movements toward withdrawal into individual meditation or the quest for personal liberation or immortality cast doubt on any such unqualified claims about these traditions. In truth, among the religious traditions, the record is mixed with regard to their ecologically friendly resources, both historically and at present. Moreover, ecologically relevant texts do not necessarily result in ecologically appropriate practices.

The Harvard conference series and the resulting volumes on world religions and ecology were designed

to begin examining the multiple resources of the traditions both theoretically and practically. Further studies need to be done on these resources as well as on the actual historical records of the traditions in relation to environmental practices.

In this spirit, the emerging dialogue on religion and ecology also acknowledges that in seeking long-term environmental solutions, there is clearly a disjunction between contemporary problems regarding the environment and traditional religions as resources. The religious traditions are not equipped to supply specific guidance in dealing with complex issues such as climate change, desertification, or deforestation. At the same time certain orientations and values from the world's religions may not only be useful but even indispensable for a more comprehensive cosmological orientation and environmental ethics.²¹

The disjunction of traditional religious resources and modern environmental problems in their varied cultural contexts needs to be highlighted so that new conjunctions can be identified. We acknowledge that religious scriptures and commentaries were written in an earlier age with a different audience in mind. Similarly, many of the myths and rituals of the world's religions were developed in earlier historical contexts, frequently agricultural, while the art and symbols were created within worldviews very different from our own. Likewise, the ethics and morality of the world's religions respond primarily to anthropocentric perspectives regarding the importance of human-

human relations, and the soteriology and spirituality are formulated in relation to theological perspectives of enhancing divine-human relations.

Despite these historical and cultural contingencies, there are particular religious attitudes and practices as well as common ethical values that can be identified for broadening and deepening environmental perspectives. Thus we affirm the actual and potential contribution of religious ideas for informing and inspiring ecological theology, environmental ethics, and grass-roots activism. Religions are now reclaiming and reconstructing these powerful religious attitudes, practices, and values toward reconceiving mutually enhancing human-Earth relations. Careful methodological reflection is needed in considering how to bring forward in coherent and convincing ways the resources of religious traditions in response to particular aspects of our current environmental crisis. It entails a self-reflexive yet creative approach to retrieving and reclaiming texts and traditions, re-evaluating and re-examining what will be most efficacious, and thus restoring and reconstructing religious traditions in a creative postmodern world. All of this involves a major effort to evoke the power and potential of religious traditions to function even more effectively as sources of spiritual inspiration and moral transformation in the midst of the environmental challenges faced by the Earth community.

Pluralistic Perspectives: Multireligious and Multidisciplinary Approaches

NO ONE RELIGIOUS TRADITION OR DISCIPLINE will be sufficient in the search for a more comprehensive and culturally inclusive global environmental ethics. Thus the multireligious dimensions of this effort need to be underscored. Dialogue between and among religious traditions around environmental concerns is already taking place. Similarly, a multidisciplinary approach to environmental problems is emerging in academia, in policy institutes, and in national and international agencies focusing on the environment. These discussions need to become more sophisticated and integrated. Such multireligious and multidisciplinary discussions have emerged in various international arenas such as the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1993 and in Capetown in 1999, the Tehran Seminar on Environment, Culture, and Religion held in Iran in June 2001, and the Earth Dialogues on "Globalization: Is Ethics the Missing Link?" held in Lyon, France, in February 2002.²²

The world's religions are now international presences with followers well beyond the country or culture of origin. Their international presence is part of their enormous potential to effect change in attitudes toward the environment. Religions are flourishing around the world, even in China and Russia where

communism intended to stamp out the need for religion, and despite the prediction that religions would disappear as modernization arose and secularization spread.²³ The international presence of religion means multi-religious dialogue is more crucial than ever before.

Pluralism thus needs to be highlighted and celebrated, especially as we realize the extraordinary migration patterns that have occurred around the globe in the twentieth century. More than at any other time in history, people have migrated from their homelands due to adverse economic, political, and environmental conditions. As the Pluralism Project at Harvard has so comprehensively documented, the entire landscape of American religious life has changed radically since the doors of immigration were opened with the Immigration Act of 1965. In addition, demographics show that in several years Islam will be the largest religion in the world. Already the majority of Muslims live outside the Arab world. Likewise, the majority of Christians are located in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Tolerance and celebration of diversity are essential as we try to create the conditions for a sustainable future. Diversity is enormously valuable in both human and biotic communities. Ecosystem models tell us that the health of biotic communities depends on diversity and exchange. So, too, the health of the human community depends on diversity. Just as monoculture farming is problematic for

ecosystems and for healthy agriculture, so can monoculture in human societies result in blandness and lack of creative exchange of ideas. This is especially true in religious communities. Historically and at present, religious traditions have grown and developed in creative interaction with other religions as well as in response to internal institutional and intellectual challenges. This has resulted in new syntheses within traditions and across traditions.

Failure to appreciate diversity has serious consequences, among them a religious triumphalism that highlights the virtues of one tradition as opposed to those of another. Similarly, the exclusivism of truth claims creates the potential for conflict and resentment and can give rise to rigid hegemonic or fundamentalist perspectives. While truth claims within religions need to be respected, different avenues to truth also need to be honored. Fortunately, in the last four decades, inter-religious dialogues have prepared the grounds for religious pluralism to be better understood. Indeed, these dialogues have moved from appreciation of differences to recognition of the urgent need for even greater cooperation for the sake of both the human and natural communities. Thus inter-religious dialogue has broadened its focus to include not only theological topics such as the nature of God and spiritual topics such as meditation and prayer but also shared ethical perspectives on social justice, human rights, and, more recently, the environment.²⁴

Lasting ethical solutions to our global environmental and social problems will need to come from diverse perspectives. Here the world's religious traditions are a major resource. In addition, important work is being done within and outside of academia in environmental philosophy and in environmental and social ethics, drawing on science, philosophy, literature, and other sources. A broader ethical synthesis can emerge with such an exchange of ideas. Indeed, the search for a comprehensive global ethics has already benefited from the input of the world's religions in such documents as the "Earth Charter"²⁵ (See Appendix IV) and "Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration" issued at the Parliament of World Religions in 1993.

Religions, however, will need to be self-reflective and self-critical rather than self-promotional in contributing to environmental discussions, especially in international forums. When participants are attuned to both the special insights and the limitations of their particular traditions, a global ethics can indeed emerge. Examples may be seen in the current rethinking of issues such as population, development, and the role of women. Multireligious discussions are essential for identifying what will be helpful and what will be problematic in diverse religious perspectives. Lessons can be learned from the field of human rights, where religious and cultural diversity have been highlighted with beneficial results. For example, many scholars have identified minimum standards for universal

human rights along with the recognition of the importance of cultural diversity.²⁶

Thus, with the realization of the critical nature of the environmental crisis, multi-religious dialogue is being drawn into a search for both a common ground and common good beyond the particular differences and historical conflicts of the religions. The common ground is the Earth itself as an expression of numinous creativity, a matrix of mystery, and a locus for encountering the sacred. This common ground of mystery is in danger of being blindly wasted. It can be said, then, that the environmental crisis may disclose not only the common ground of the mystery of the Earth itself, but also the higher ground beyond differences in the search for the common good to promote the flourishing of life. In this effort common ground and common good are joined.

Just as multireligious perspectives are indispensable, so too multidisciplinary approaches to environmental problems are clearly needed.²⁷ It is, in fact, encouraging to note that entirely new multidisciplinary fields of environmental study and policy are already being established both within academia and without. Key examples of these are the push for limits to growth and new cost accounting coming from ecological economics, the emergence of the fields of conservation biology and restoration ecology within science, the movement toward ecological security and sustainability from the international political community, and the

development of renewable energy, alternative technologies, ecological design, and biomimicry coming from many areas including architecture and engineering.

In the humanities, important multidisciplinary fields of study are emerging in environmental history, literature, and philosophy. Religion and ecology can be situated as a new field of study in the humanities that is similarly multidisciplinary in outlook and in concern. From the perspective of this field, based within religious studies or theology, the contributions of religions to environmental studies and policy may become clarified. This is particularly true as various religious and cultural attitudes toward nature are identified.

This emerging field of religion and ecology, then, looks both inward and outward. It looks inward to the resources of the traditions, historically and at present, that foster mutually beneficial human-Earth relations. At the same time it looks outward toward dialogue with those in other disciplines such as science, economics, and policy, knowing that lasting cultural changes will depend on such key intersections.

In addition to the practical skills and insights from various disciplines, multiple ethical motivations for environmental protection and restoration can be identified. This includes appreciation of the intrinsic value of nature and the critical importance of biodiversity, acknowledgement of aesthetic and recreational needs for contacts with nature, improvement of human health by protecting water, air,

and soil, and the rights of future generations to a sustainable life.

Secular humanists and religious believers often share these motivations, especially the importance of valuing nature intrinsically.²⁸ This contrasts sharply with the predominantly utilitarian drives that tend to motivate business. Thus environmentalists usually feel that unrestricted economic development and the exploitative use of nonrenewable resources are problematic. For many environmentalists logging and road building should be limited in national forests, oil should not be extracted from pristine reserves or coastal regions, and the rights of spotted owls and other species to exist and to populate their own habitat should be honored. These views have sometimes led to acrimonious conflicts between environmentalists and those concerned with economic development. This is especially true in international conferences and discussions at the United Nations where third world countries sometimes want to push forward with development goals often at the expense of the environment. This was a source of tension at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and at the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002.

This tension is highlighted when one reflects on the fact that one billion people live on \$1 per day and some two billion people exist on \$2 per day. The

ravages of poverty on people and the environment cannot go unaddressed. The lure of economic development is real for so many who long for minimum sources of food, clothing, shelter, and employment. Drinkable water and breathable air are becoming scarce commodities in many parts of the world. When one factors in the more than two billion people in India and China alone who seek a better standard of living for themselves and their children, one wonders how this can be managed without massive destruction of the life systems of the planet. The rapid deterioration of cities and countryside in South and East Asia in the last thirty years is a chilling reminder of the complex issues we face as a planetary species. Can we in the industrialized world deny the minimum fruits of modernization to the less-developed countries? How to manage this without exacerbating the already fractious relations between developed and developing countries is a major challenge. Yet there are before us many models of alternative technologies and energy sources, sustainable agriculture, green businesses, and environmental education that can be invoked for the transformations ahead. We need not destroy ourselves with unrestrained development that ultimately impoverishes both people and the planet.

Most environmentalists are wary of short-term projects for profit that do not take into account the long-term effects on species, habitat, and resources. Their anxiety arises from a variety of ethical motivations that include a concern for the immediate

well-being of land and species as well as for the welfare of present and future generations. In attempting to reconcile these apparent conflicts between economics and ecology, broader intergenerational and interspecies environmental ethics are being developed that suggest human responsibilities should extend to future generations of all species. In addition, the call for the precautionary principle to be operative is becoming more widespread. This encourages the mindful prevention of pollution before it occurs. All of these are reasons why the Earth Charter is such a critical document.

In many of these sometimes heated discussions of economic development versus environmental protection, the world's religions can play a vital role. This is especially true in providing both spiritual resources and insights as well as culturally particular but globally comprehensive environmental ethics. Of particular relevance here are the common concerns of *reverence* for the Earth, *respect* for other species, *responsibility* to the welfare of future generations, *restraint* in the consumption of resources, and *redistribution* of goods and services more equitably. In summary, the contributions of religions are one part of a larger complex of various disciplines and motivations. Multidisciplinary approaches and the development of comprehensive environmental ethics will be indispensable for long-term environmental solutions. Religions are beginning to contribute to these endeavors.

The Transformative Context: Reclaiming and Reconstructing

The challenge, then, for religions (and for scholars of religions) is how to participate in this transformative moment by reclaiming and reconstructing religious traditions so as to promote flourishing human-Earth relations. This will involve the careful retrieval of selected scriptures and commentaries, symbols and myths, rituals and prayers. It will also require the re-evaluation of particular beliefs and practices in light of the environmental crisis. Finally, it will necessitate the reconstruction of traditions in their fuller planetary expression.

This section will explore several key topics in this process of retrieving, re-evaluating, and reconstructing traditions, namely dogma, rituals and symbols, moral authority, soteriology, and ethics. Within these topics we will highlight some of the creative tensions that are involved in such reconstructive processes. These creative tensions are intended to be viewed as dyadic and interpenetrating relationships rather than as irreconcilable dualisms. In other words, our aim is to see such tensions as interrelated forces, not as clashing opposites. In the space between such creative tensions there can emerge the deeply motivating spiritual resources of the religious traditions toward grounded transformative action.

1 DOGMA: ORTHODOXY VERSUS DIALOGUE

As teachers of doctrinal truth or dogma, some individuals or institutions in particular traditions assume self-appointed roles as repositories of orthodoxy. These individuals or institutions tend to be conservative in that they wish to preserve particular versions of "truth," which they sometimes claim as special revelation through scripture. Consequently, religious traditions can promote triumphalism and exclusivity that may lead to proselytizing and even to violence. The counterpoint is that religions are constantly being brought into dialogue with contemporary issues and ideas, and thus they continue to change. Furthermore, as noted earlier, religions throughout their history have frequently been in active conversation with other religious traditions and been transformed in response to this dialogue. Indeed, the changes may be in the form of syncretism and fusion of religions, as is frequently the case in East Asia and South Asia. The major counterweight to rigid orthodoxy or exclusivist claims to truth is ecumenical and inter-religious dialogues.

During the last forty years, significant steps have been taken in ecumenical and inter-religious dialogues. The Christian churches have held important ecumenical meetings to discuss differences of doctrine. Moreover, significant inter-religious discussions have taken place between Christians and Jews, Christians and Buddhists, and Christians and Confucians. With

regard, then, to ecological issues, the ground for further inter-religious discussion has already been prepared. There is thus great potential for focusing inter-religious dialogue on the urgency of the environmental crisis. With several decades of preparation, the religions may be poised to move beyond dogmatism to a shared sense of the common good of the planet. This may result in a renewal for the religious traditions themselves through a restoration of the planet.

Examples of such cooperation include international multi-religious projects such as the Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE) based at Harvard; the Alliance of Religion and Conservation (ARC) based in England; and the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), also based in England. Within nations, important long-term efforts include the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) in the United States and the Zimbabwean Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation (ZIRRCON). Also, major international conferences involving the world's religious leaders and laity have focused on the environment. Among them are the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders in Oxford in 1988, in Moscow in 1990, in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, in Kyoto in 1993; the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1993 and in Capetown in 1999; and the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the United Nations in 2001.

2 RITUALS AND SYMBOLS: TRADITIONAL OR TRANSFORMATIVE

Religions are also inheritors of cultural traditions and as such they may become ritually constrained or fossilized in forms of worship. Ritual and prayer can become rote or remote while symbols and images may no longer convey the depth of meaning they originally embodied. As a result, rituals and symbols are reduced to flattened forms of reference. The connection to the living biological context in which they are embedded may need renewal or reactivation. For religious rituals and symbols to be vibrant, they need to be connected to the living world, even if they point beyond it. A deep numinous mystery resides in this connection and when rituals and symbols are disconnected from this reality they cannot activate a resonance with the ineffable power that sustains life. Hence, they become withered and attenuated.

The historian of religion, Mircea Eliade reminded us of this when he illuminated the implicit layering of references from the natural world underlying Christian rituals and symbols.²⁹ Central to Christianity is the reflection on birth, death, and rebirth that is present in the natural world. The liturgical cycle is set entirely within the larger rhythms of nature's seasons. Christmas is situated at the winter solstice with the return of light; Easter is celebrated at the spring equinox and the renewal of life. The sacraments, too, draw on the rich bounty of the natural world. The

Eucharist uses bread and wine associated with harvest, thanksgiving, and life-regenerating processes. Baptism uses water to welcome an individual into a community of faith. In monastic life the cycle of daily prayers is coordinated with the diurnal turning of the planet around the sun.

A contemporary example of opening traditional forms of ritual and symbol into their ecological phase is the *Missa Gaia* or Earth Mass with the music of Paul Winter. This moves the Christian Mass into its planetary expression. The Earth Mass has been celebrated for the last two decades in October on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. Many local parishes across the country have been inspired to hold similar rituals. Returning to recapture the spirit of Francis with regard to the animals and the inspiration of medieval cathedrals in fostering community, St. John's opens its great entry doors for the procession of the animals down the main aisle and the blessing of the animals in the context of the Earth Mass.

Other examples of contemporary ecological rituals can also be identified from among the world's religions. These include the Hindu ritual of tree planting as likened to a *prasad* offering in South India, the Theravada Buddhist monk's ordaining of trees in Thailand so as to stop loggers from clear-cutting the forest, Shona and Christian tree planting in Zimbabwe to counteract deforestation after the civil war, the Jewish practice of observing Shabbat to allow time for

rest and rejuvenation of individuals and communities, and the Jain respect for life so that meat or fish are not eaten.³⁰

Dialogue between religion and ecology can revivify rituals and symbols in light of the current environmental crisis. Moreover, it can assist in awakening a renewed appreciation for the intricate cosmological web of life in which we dwell.

3 MORAL AUTHORITY: OPPRESSIVE OR LIBERATING

As conservators of moral authority, religious traditions can become institutionally rigid citadels of power. The misuse of power by religions has been documented throughout history. It is all too familiar and need not be elaborated here. The authoritarian aspects of religion are often what make people flee its influence. Institutional moral authority, however, can be oppressive or liberating according to how it is invoked. Religions can be cradles of conformity or vessels of creativity. They can be suppressors of change or beacons of transformation.

The narrowness of religions can also be seen in the fact that most of them have been gender biased, some have been militantly ethnocentric, and others have been racially prejudiced. In the twentieth century, liberation movements for human rights have helped to overcome some of these constraints. Indeed, the religious traditions themselves have often provided leadership

for these movements, recognizing the inherent dignity of the individual and the right to equitable employment, decent housing, and adequate education.

Discussions of human rights have broadened to include a sense not only of individuals but also of communities, both of the human and the more-than-human worlds. For example, feminist studies have expanded their focus to identify the degradation of women and the Earth as part of a continuity of the devaluation of matter. By the same token, these ecofeminist studies have suggested that attention to women's concerns and to the nurturing of the Earth need to be seen as part of a larger social transformation of consciousness, without essentializing women by identifying them exclusively with the Earth. Recent ecofeminist thinking in the world religions has helped to expand environmental discourse and pluralize its perspectives by foregrounding women of various ethnic and racial backgrounds.³¹

Similarly, by seeing environmental racism as morally problematic, religions have helped to expand the focus for human rights to include the right to a clean and healthy environment. This has involved identifying previously invisible arenas of racial prejudice and environmental injustice where minority communities have been viewed as dispensable and have been used as dumping grounds for waste, incineration, and pollution. Black, Hispanic, and Native American communities in the United States and African communities abroad have been particular

victims of these callous attitudes whereby the excesses of industrial society have been deposited in their communities. Religious leadership has helped to uncover these problems and called for their rectification. The United Church of Christ statement on environmental justice is particularly important in this regard.

While much remains to be done, it can be said that Christian churches in the twentieth century have embraced teachings regarding social justice and human rights and brought them out of the words of encyclicals, pastoral letters, and policy statements and into the world with calls for racial and economic equity. (Gender equity still seems to lag behind, however.) For example, in the Jubilee 2000 movement, Christian churches urged the World Bank and major lending institutions to consider debt reduction for poor nations.³² Religions have the potential for similar transformative leadership in the area of ecology, justice, and the future of life forms on the planet.³³

No other group of institutions can wield the particular moral authority of the religions, notwithstanding the abuses this authority has also been subject to. Thus the efficacy of religions in encouraging individuals and communities to protect the environment is considerable in potentiality and demonstrable in actuality. Indeed, many scientists have recognized this. They have called upon the religious traditions to provide a compelling moral force for drawing citizens into a larger sense of concern for

the reality of environmental degradation. The scientists note the potential of religions for highlighting the awe and wonder of nature and the need to preserve it for present and future generations of all species. Examples of this appear in key documents such as “Preserving and Cherishing the Earth: An Appeal for Joint Commitment in Science and Religion,” released in 1990; “The Joint Appeal in Religion and Science: Statement by Religious Leaders at the Summit on Environment,” published in 1991; “World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity,” issued by the Union of Concerned Scientists in 1992 (See Appendices I, II, and III). More recently, in the United States the Coalition on Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) and the National Council of Churches have conducted campaigns on climate change. This has highlighted the moral authority of Jewish and Protestant leaders in relation to this massive global problem. Similarly, the “Common Declaration by Pope John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I” has had wide circulation. (See Appendix V)³⁴

4 SOTERIOLOGY: WORLDLY OR OTHERWORLDLY?

In discussing the positive and negative dimensions of religions with regard to environmental issues it is sometimes observed that religions can tend toward an otherworldly soteriology. In other words, they have a salvific orientation that privileges the divine as residing

in the transcendent world of Heaven, Nirvana, Moksha, or the Pure Land. This encourages concentration on personal salvation or liberation out of this world and into the next. The critical question arises: How, then, can religions be attentive to this world and to the environment? When the transcendent becomes primary, what happens to the sense of the divine or the immanent reality in nature? It should be noted, however, that indigenous traditions stand in stark contrast to this otherworldly orientation in their participation in natural cosmological processes.

It is undeniable that an otherworldly orientation and a focus on personal salvation in some of the world’s religions can create a tendency to see this world as simply a vale of tears to be endured and ultimately transcended. The sometimes exclusive focus on an individual’s relationship with God or the divine can diminish the sense of the importance of the Earth. Worship, prayer, and meditation are often directed at purifying the soul, praising God, or getting rid of ego in order to advance toward the goal of personal salvation. The consequence of this orientation toward the next world and personal salvation is the tendency in some religions to devalue nature and deny the importance or even the reality of matter. Redemption out of the world as fallen and liberation into a Heavenly realm is seen as a primary aim. This dualism that divides matter from spirit and privileges spirit as the highest good has created ambivalent attitudes toward nature in a number of the world’s religions.³⁵

WORLDLY WONDER

That many religious traditions have elements of an other-worldly orientation is not necessarily an exclusive or defining concern. Religions can, in fact, embrace both world-affirming and world-negating dimensions. In Christianity, for example, the idea of the Kingdom of God may be used to establish criteria for justice on Earth or for entry into a paradisaal world beyond. Similarly, in Mahayana Buddhism, the Pure Land is seen as a salvific next world, while the Tathagatagarbha doctrine affirms the Buddha Nature as present in the natural world. In Daoism, achieving immortality may be a long-term goal, but practices are encouraged that induce health in this life such as balanced diet, meditation and breathing, and movement exercises like *tai qi* and *qi gong*. These exercises place the practitioner in alignment with nature through drawing on the elements and on the varied movements of animals, insects, and birds.

Thus, it is helpful to recognize that there may be fruitful and creative tensions between the transcendent and immanent dimensions of the world's religions. In other words, the pull toward wholeness, completion, and fulfillment represented by the transcendent longings of the human can be balanced by a sense of reverence, reciprocity, and care for the fecundity of life that reflects the presence of the divine in this world. The here and hereafter can be seen in a creative dialectic of intimacy and distance, of commitment to change in the world along with detachment from the fruits of one's actions.³⁶ In Christianity, for example,

the broadening of certain theological or sacramental perspectives may enhance an appreciation of the beauty and sacrality of this world without diminishing the sense of a larger reality beyond this world. Through a renewed sense of the incarnational dimensions of Christianity, there may emerge a more encompassing Christology that embraces the Cosmic Christ of the universe.³⁷ Similarly, a richer sacramental theology may be articulated which recognizes all of nature as part of a sacred reality. The work of Matthew Fox and others to identify a Creation-Centered Spirituality in the Christian tradition have been an important contribution to these efforts.³⁸

5 ETHICS: ANTHROPOCENTRIC OR ANTHROPOCOSMIC

The focus of ethics in the world's religions has been largely human-centered. Humane treatment of humans is often seen not only as an end in itself but also as a means to eternal reward. While some have criticized this anthropocentric perspective of world religions as rather narrow in light of environmental degradation and the loss of species, it is nonetheless important to recall that this perspective has also helped to promote major movements for social justice and human rights.

While social justice is an ongoing and unfinished effort of engagement, the challenge for the religions is also to enlarge their ethical concerns to include the more than human world. Social justice and

environmental integrity are now being seen as part of a continuum. For some decades environmental philosophers have been developing the field of environmental ethics that can now provide enormous resources for the world's religions in considering how to expand their ethical focus. Emerging biocentric, zoocentric, and ecocentric ethics are attentive to life forms, animal species, and ecosystems within a planetary context. A new "systems ethics" of part and whole, local and global, will assist the religions in articulating a more comprehensive form of environmental ethics from within their traditions. This is a major part of the development of religions into their ecological phase.

Thus religions can move from exclusively anthropocentric ethics to ecocentric ethics and even to anthropocosmic ethics. The latter is a term used by Tu Weiming to describe the vibrant interaction of Heaven, Earth, and humans in a Confucian worldview.³⁹ In this context, humans complete the natural and cosmic world by becoming participants in the dynamic transformative life processes. This idea can extend ethics to apply to the land-species-human-planet-universe continuum.

As Tu Weiming observes for the Confucian tradition:

Human beings are . . . an integral part of the 'chain of being', encompassing Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things. However, the uniqueness of being human is the

intrinsic capacity of the mind to 'embody' (*ti*) the cosmos in its conscience and consciousness. Through this embodying, the mind realizes its own sensitivity, manifests true humanity and assists in the cosmic transformation of Heaven and Earth.⁴⁰

This cosmic transformation implies that humans have a special role in being aligned with the fecund, nourishing powers of life. They need to be responsive to other humans but also to the larger macrocosm of the universe in which humans are a microcosm. This is clearly expressed by the Neo-Confucian thinker Zhang Zai in his renowned essay "The Western Inscription" which hung on the western wall of his study:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst.

Therefore that which extends throughout the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature.

All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions.

. . . Respect the aged . . . Show affection toward the orphaned and the weak . . . the sage identifies his virtue with that of Heaven and Earth . . . Even those who are tired and infirm, crippled or sick, those who have no brothers or children, wives or husbands, are all my brothers who are in distress and have no one to turn to.

. . . one who puts his moral nature into practice and brings his physical existence to complete fulfillment can match [Heaven and Earth] . . . and one who penetrates

spirit to the highest degree will skillfully carry out their will.⁴¹

The Comprehensive Context: Restoration of Wonder

If our optimal role as humans is to be creative participants within cosmological processes, how can the world's religions foster that role? The religions have been challenged over the last several centuries by major revolutions in the understanding of the role of humans in relation to science, politics, economics, and society. Some may see the ecological revolution as just another step in these significant movements in human history and consciousness. However, we might observe that this is more than simply a slight shift of perspective. It is rather a major transformation that involves both effort and evocation. It requires a comprehensive re-visioning of what it is to be human on a finite planet amidst infinite immensities. We have the possibility to envision ourselves now not only as political, economic, or social beings, but also as planetary beings embedded in and dependent on nature's seasons, cycles, and resources. Although urban living and modernity have removed many humans from this direct experience, it has not lessened our capacity for biophilia, as E.O. Wilson suggests, or for a deep sense of renewal and wonder in contact with nature's rhythms. Through science we understand that we are cosmological beings within a vast evolutionary

universe and now have a responsibility, in some way, for the integrity and stability of these life processes.

Religions have historically served as a means of channeling the hopes and aspirations of humans toward a larger vision of their place and purpose. Now religions are challenged to provide a more comprehensive narrative perspective for situating human life in relation to our finite planet. The renewing energies that ground and dynamize the human spirit must be brought forward. For millennia, these energies have provided the spiritual orientations of the world's civilizations and cultures. Religions have traditionally been a means of expanding the measure of the mind through the power of the religious imagination; now is the moment for the religions to move forward boldly with comprehensive narrative perspectives that are grounded in relevant traditional resources, open to a sense of wonder, and guided by inspiring moral visions for shaping human-Earth relations for a sustainable future.

In this spirit, the religions of the world are moving into their ecological phase and finding their planetary expression. This is their fundamental challenge in relation to the environmental crisis. Can the religious traditions awaken a renewed sense of awe and reverence for the Earth as a numinous matrix of mystery? Can they activate the depths of resonance in the human that will resound with the awesome beauty of the universe? Can they open a space for our participation in the life processes that is healing

and renewing for human-Earth relations? Can they raise key ethical questions regarding the destruction of the environment, and at the same time provide resources of inspiration that will sustain the energies needed to preserve, protect, and restore the environment? Can the religious traditions speak effectively to the contemporary world while challenging the limits of modernity as well?

These are their challenges and indeed all of our challenges as we begin to take on our cosmological being, to dwell in intimate immensities. We are cracking open the shell of our anthropocentric selves and our particular religious traditions to move toward more expansive religious sensibilities that embrace both Earth and universe. New configurations of tradition and modernity will emerge, and with them will come retrieval of texts, reconstruction of theologies, renewal of symbols and rituals, re-evaluation of ethics, and, most importantly, a revived sense of wonder and celebration.

Central to this great transformation of the religions into their ecological phase is the reawakening in the human of a sense of awe and wonder regarding the beauty, complexity, and mystery of life itself. Rachel Carson highlighted this many years ago in her reflections on *A Sense of Wonder*.⁴² In his book, *The Tangled Wing*, the anthropologist and neurologist, Melvin Konner, calls for this recovery of wonder:

It seems to me we are losing the sense of wonder, the hallmark of our species and the central feature of the human spirit. Perhaps this is due to the depredations of science and technology against the arts and humanities, but I doubt it—although this is certainly something to be concerned about. I suspect it is simply that the human spirit is insufficiently developed at this moment in evolution, much like the wing of *Archaeopteryx*. Whether we can free it for further development will depend, in part, on the full reinstatement of the sense of wonder.⁴³

Will the world's religions assist in the further development of the human spirit as they have throughout their long, unfolding journey to the present? If religions are vessels for nurturing the sense of the sacred, surely they will continue to respond to the sacred that is manifest in the wonder of life and in its continuity. If indigenous traditions have sustained human-Earth relations for some 150,000 years, surely their traditional environmental knowledge and sense of awe in the presence of nature will continue to contribute to the future of the Earth community. If the human mind and spirit has created compelling and coherent visions to inspire the flourishing of civilizations for the last five thousand years, surely that same rich and diverse religious imagination will continue to activate the energies and commitments needed to sustain life on the planet. These are our collective tasks; these are our particular challenges.

Those energies and commitments will depend in large part on the measure and magnitude of the awe and wonder we evoke. And let us remember it is not only awe and wonder but also dread and terror that awakens the human imagination and lies at the heart of the burning bush. That which is numinous attracts us and repels us, as Rudolph Otto reminds us.⁴⁴ Nature is filled with awesome mystery, with beauty and death inextricably intertwined. Will the fire consume us or transform us? Will it ignite worldly wonder?

Commentary by Judith A. Berling

PROFESSOR TUCKER'S LECTURE, although graciously worded and graciously delivered, is befitting for Christians in the Lenten season, for it calls us to serious self-reflection and a turning away (repentance) from long established habits of thought and action. Although the lecture is particularly seasonal for Christians, it is in fact addressed equally to adherents of all religions. It is an important and significant message that I pray we may be ready to hear. It is a message particularly challenging for North Americans, who are profoundly attached to a standard and style of living that threatens the survival of human populations in poverty-stricken areas of the world as well as of biological species and irreplaceable natural resources throughout the world.

Professor Tucker briefly describes the ecological crisis, and then articulates the ways in which the world's religions (including Christianity) can offer resources to respond to it, providing not only articulations of values higher than consumption and accumulation, but also the moral authority to inspire human beings to change their ways of living for the sake of the long-term survival of our species, all species, and the planet. This is the good news.

The bad news is that there are significant challenges for each of the religions in "stepping up to the plate" on this issue. Let me review a few of these in ways that I hope will stimulate response and discussion by this audience.

First, Tucker joins Joanna Macy and others calling religions into their planetary or Gaia phase: "Just as they have been working in the twentieth century to embrace diversity within the human community, so now they are called to embrace the vast diversity of life in the Earth community." The challenge here is that we have to admit that our twentieth-century work is far from complete: the embrace of diversity within the human community remains unfinished as long as the specters of racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of unjust discrimination haunt us. So, we can't simply say, "Well, now we've handled human diversity, it's time to move on to diversity of life in the Earth community." Moreover, the long and hard struggles for human justice remind us that the struggle for biojustice or geojustice will also be vexing and difficult. From a Christian perspective, human sinfulness is a deeply rooted and stubborn enemy.

Second, it is a great challenge to reconcile the worldviews of the various religions with a view that calls human beings to their responsibilities for sustaining the planet in its biodiversity. This requires some fundamental rethinking of religious cosmologies and religious anthropologies. John Cobb and others have argued that Process Theology is promising for Christians in this regard, but that itself is a challenge, since Process Theology has not been a dominant (or even prominent) theological discourse.⁴⁵

Third, Professor Tucker argues that the ecological crisis is more than simply one more issue, and yet

religious thought does not start from this crisis. The thinking of all religions begins somewhere else, and works its way to the relations of human life to all life on the planet by a rather long and tortuous road. I admit that I have a hard time envisioning how this issue will move front and center in the thinking of any of the religions: that is to say, we may worry about our "primary" issues within each of the religions while the planet dies around us.

Fourth, Professor Tucker acknowledges the disjunction between tradition and modernity, but argues rightly that religions are never static, that they respond to challenges and change over time. However, they tend to respond very slowly indeed, and too often their first response to challenge is to turn back to tradition, where "sureties" are to be found. The strength of fundamentalisms in various religions both around the globe and here in the United States are ample testimony to this. How are the more "liberal" voices of the various religions to find their authority in the face of terrifying challenges that seem to require fundamental rethinking of the "verities" and patterns of virtually all religions?

Fifth, who is to take the lead in this dialogue? The persons perhaps best prepared and most motivated to enter into a dialogue with other faiths and other disciplines (economics, the sciences, and so forth) are the academics, who are more likely to have the training to participate in such multifaceted conversations. But, at least in our culture, will the

academics have any power or influence to motivate the changes required to save the planet—changes either within the religious communities or within society? I see two major problems: 1. Academic dialogues tend to become very sophisticated, but as they do so, they become less comprehensible and accessible to a general audience, or the media. 2. Academics often fail to see the gap between ideas and actions, cited by Professor Tucker in her lecture. How are dialogues among academics going to be linked to actions which might change the course of planetary destruction? Are we as academics ready and willing to link our discussions to practical actions and policies, and then to communicate our ideas and effect changes within the religious communities and within society?

Finally, the changes required of North Americans will mandate a significant change in lifestyle to embrace moderation and simplicity rather than unfettered growth and accumulation. The economic and political “engines” of this society are powerfully arrayed against such a change—so powerfully that embracing a life of genuine moderation and simplicity is no easy matter in this culture. (Many of us may believe we live a moderate or simple life compared to others in the United States, but on a global scale our level of consumption is still extremely high.) Does religion (and today it would have to be a strong coalition of the many religions represented in the culture) have the moral authority, the voice, and the

clout to move us toward such a change? What would it take to develop such authority, voice, and clout?

The six difficulties I have posed are not a criticism of Professor Tucker’s premises, or of her belief that religion can be a significant contributor to addressing the ecological crisis. On the contrary, I believe that she is entirely correct. What I give voice to is my deep concern about how challenging it will be for all of the religions. It is my hope and my prayer that participants in all religious communities will recognize the ecological crisis and the importance of addressing it—that each religion will be willing to recognize ways in which its tradition has contributed to the crisis, and to articulate values and strategies to change human behavior into planetarily as well as humanly compassionate behavior.

MARY EVELYN TUCKER: I agree with Judith Berling that there is still much to be done regarding justice in the human community. As I have tried to suggest in my talk, there is an important continuity between social and ecological issues. We can no longer afford to address them as separate. The liberation of humans and the protection of the planet can be seen as part of a larger movement of the creation of an integral Earth community.

The liberating impulses of the Enlightenment for human dignity, political democracy, and societal equity certainly need to be continued and extended to many parts of the world. At the same time, there is an overwhelming realization that the unlimited extension of human freedom along with economic drive and resource exploitation has compromised the development of community and ecosystems on many levels. The grounding of our human aspirations within the creativity of Earth processes and within the limits of ecosystems may give some appropriate measure to the expansive tendencies of the Enlightenment mentality. As we recognize more fully that humans are a subsystem of the Earth, we may have the basis for establishing equitable and sustainable economic, social, and political systems. To do this we need to develop new forms of eco-economics, eco-justice, and eco-democracy for the Earth community. Unless we sustain the basis of all life systems our efforts at justice for humans alone will be severely undermined.

An example of the alliance of liberating concerns for humans and for the Earth can be seen in ecofeminism. The voices of women, in particular, should be encouraged and supported against those repressive patriarchal forces often embedded in cultural attitudes and reinforced by religion. At the same time the liberating voices of women can also be seen in connection with the liberation of the Earth. Ecofeminism is making a distinctive contribution to this intricate alignment of ecological and feminist concerns.

In this same spirit, we need to see the call to respect biodiversity as in alignment with the call to respect cultural diversity. Indeed, preserving cultural diversity often depends on preserving biodiversity, for example, as in the intricate relations of native peoples to plants and animals in ceremonial and ritual life as well as in subsistence practices. The various types and colors of corn for the Hopi Indians are essential to their culture and their livelihood. Similarly, the Imara Indians of Bolivia and Peru have developed complex patterns of relationship between numerous forms of maize and potatoes. With the disappearance of species or pollution of bioregions, indigenous cultures are particularly vulnerable to erosion of cultural habits and values. For example, the presence of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in the Arctic region has had devastating effects on animals and cultures. As seals, walruses, polar bears, and whales show signs of

increasing contamination, so too does this effect the peoples who rely on these animals for food, clothing, and shelter.

RETHINKING RELIGIOUS COSMOLOGIES AND ANTHROPOLOGIES

I agree with Judith that calling humans to be responsible for creating the conditions for sustainability will be a significant challenge for religious cosmologies. This has been one of the primary concerns of indigenous traditions for thousands of years. For most of the other religious traditions it will require rethinking of their cosmologies and anthropologies. This is in fact already happening with religions that are beginning to absorb a sense of evolutionary history and to rethink their own anthropocentric perspectives in light of ecological concerns. It is also the case that many religious cosmologies and anthropologies have implicit or explicit resources illustrating how humans are part of nature and thus concerned for its continuity and well being. Identifying these cosmologies and anthropologies is a large part of the motivation behind the Harvard conferences and books on world religions and ecology.

Most religious cosmologies begin with an origin story that describes how the universe was born and what our role is in this world. While it is true that there is an other-worldly impulse in many of the world's

religions, that is rarely the exclusive thrust of the traditions. In fact, the rich symbolic imaginations evident in scriptures and in ritual practices of the world's religions abundantly reflect nature's processes. The magnificence of the seasons and cycles of nature are present in scriptures such as the Psalms in Judaism, the parables in Christianity, the *Vedas* in Hinduism, and the *Book of Changes (I Ching)* in Confucianism and Daoism. Commentaries on these scriptures in light of ecological sensibilities will be helpful in extending the import of scripture for contemporary circumstances. By the same token, rituals which embody and celebrate nature's variety, complexity, and powers of renewal include hunting rituals in indigenous traditions, agricultural rituals such as rice planting in Shinto, and harvest thanksgiving ceremonies such as *Sukhot* in Judaism. Moreover, the whole liturgical cycles of Judaism and of Christianity are in consonance with the seasonal cycles of agricultural societies reflecting the fecundity of nature in its "death" and "rebirth" patterns. Awareness of these deep connections to nature in ritual can be revitalized.

Thus it is not only to Whiteheadian versions of process thought that we can turn for cosmologies that have ecological implications. Rather, it is also to retrieving and renewing appropriate cosmologies and anthropologies that are already explicit or implicit in the world's religions.

WHERE DOES RELIGIOUS THINKING BEGIN?

Judith rightly observes that religious thought does not begin with the ecological crisis and that this will be difficult to bring to the center of attention for religions. It will indeed be a challenge but not one that it is altogether insurmountable. It is true that when the indigenous traditions arose and later when the world's religious and philosophical thought came into being one could not even conceive of a planetary crisis such as we are now facing. The religions are thus necessary but not sufficient to the task of transformation at hand. Clearly this is why we need a multidisciplinary approach involving science, social science, and humanities.

However, it is not fully accurate to claim that "all religions begin somewhere else" and work their way to the life of the planet. If what is implied here is that most religions are originally concerned with personal salvation, that may be said of the western traditions but not of all religions. Certainly indigenous traditions around the planet have been centered on the life of nature as a primary source of religious inspiration. The profound recognition of the dependence of humans on nature for subsistence becomes the basis for ritual and ceremonial life of indigenous peoples. They begin with gratitude for the animals, fish, plants, grains, water, soil, and sunshine that sustain life and livelihood. Moreover, the traditions of East Asia (Confucianism,

Daoism, and Shinto) as well as the East Asian forms of Buddhism (such as Chan and Hua Yan) have a fully developed cosmological sense of nature. The natural world is seen not simply as background, but as that with which one harmonizes oneself as a means of spiritual cultivation. The fecundity and rhythms of nature as expressed in the Dao pervade Confucian and Daoist thought. Indeed, this world-affirming sensibility transformed Buddhism into its Chinese forms of Chan and Hua Yan.

I want to return to Judith's point that the planet may die around us while the religions are preoccupied with internal issues. That is certainly a probability. There is, however, an urgency and ultimacy about the possibility of biocide that haunts us and calls the religions to a reawakening. There are signs that this is beginning to occur. Although many traditions are preoccupied with internal issues of survival, it may well be that in responding to the ecological crisis the religions themselves may be renewed. The movement of religions into their ecological phase is thus a means of transforming and extending their spiritual vision and direction for the future of life on the planet. This may not only be an intellectual option, but also a revivifying choice for the religious traditions to embrace the community of life with comprehensive moral imagination. In so doing, the traditions themselves may be revitalized.

THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

Judith's comments on fundamentalism are insightful, and various forms of fundamentalism are clearly flourishing around the planet. It is also true that religions have indeed changed over time in both ideas and practices. There is ample testimony to this fact, for example, in the broadening of social concerns from the powerful support that many religious movements have given originally to caring for the sick, the elderly, the infirm and later to providing shelter for orphans, homes for children, education for the next generation, and, in the twentieth century, lending support to farmers and laborers, and in recent years to women and minorities. All of these are examples of where religions have been active in the social sphere—often over opposition from the more entrenched forces in society.

It's true that "fundamentalisms" have arisen throughout the world religions over the history of their development. This is, I think, an inevitable aspect of the dialectical processes of conservative and liberalizing forces which are part of the development of institutions and ideas over time. Thus, the interaction of tradition and modernity are processes of the creative intersection of continuity and change of ideas and practice, which lend vitality to the movements of history and culture. Dynamic new syntheses inevitably arise from these exchanges and interactions.

The widespread presence of fundamentalisms in various parts of the globe is an indication of these processes at work. With rapid modernization, globalization, and secularization taking place, traditional religious thought and practice have been severely undermined. As people are thrust into the modern world with ever-greater speed, they seek anchors of security and fixity in the past. Fundamentalisms are such anchors as people long for assurance in the midst of uncertainty and change.

The liberalizing voices are challenged to be ever more clear, articulate, and persuasive in relation to the various forms of fundamentalisms that oppose their views. This is in some ways a fortunate inevitability of the manner in which ideas and attitudes move forward across the currents of time and history. Fundamentalisms or opposing viewpoints provide the occasion for more clearly thought out positions regarding the contributions of world religions to ecological concerns. Because this is a defining moment for the world's religions, clear and comprehensive reflection will be needed along with the appropriate transforming action. Simplistic solutions, sectarian rhetoric, or self-serving action will be inadequate for the tasks ahead. Carefully honing the voices of religions may be a valuable part of the process.

It's also true that we need not see these movements of "conservative fundamentalism" and "progressive

liberalism" as black-and-white oppositions. More complex readings and analyses need to be done regarding the spectrum of positions that are being articulated within religions and between religions. The word "conservation" itself implies conserving what is valuable in nature and by extension here conserving what is valuable in tradition. This is also the intent of the Harvard project. Thus we suggest there needs to be retrieval of religious resources, re-evaluation of what will be most helpful, and renewal and reconstruction of traditions.

An example of the more complex reality of conserving religious traditions in relation to the modern world arose in the Tehran Seminar on Environment Culture and Religion in June 2001, sponsored by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations Environment Programme. The Iranian government has a statement in its constitution highlighting the support of Islamic teachings for environmental protection. There is a widespread realization by government officials and religious leaders that this may be a key means of raising ecological consciousness in the region. Iran and other areas of the Middle East have been devastated by drought in the last several years and many leaders are conscious of how severe the situation is when cities such as Tehran, with twelve million people, often have water for only eight hours a day.

WHO WILL TAKE THE LEAD IN INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE ON THE ENVIRONMENT?

Judith raises the question of whether academics are up to the task. We conceived this Harvard project on religion and ecology as not simply one of academics talking with other academics, but rather as a project that deepens and expands the religious discourse so as to contribute to effective environmental policies and persuasive environmental ethics on issues affecting the future of the planet. We envision the project in a series on concentric circles that allows for the translation of ideas generated by the conferences and books to reach a wider audience. From its conception the project embraced both ideas and practices in varied publications that are accessible to academics and to non-academics.

Such a deepening of the discourse within each of the religious traditions and a broadening of the dialogue across traditions in addressing environmental issues have involved a major collaborative effort of scholars of religious studies. We are identifying a remarkably rich core of religious resources in this ten-volume Harvard book series, which will help to open up a field of study for future research in colleges, universities, and seminaries. This has been a scholarly endeavor but in conjunction with environmentalists who participated in the conference series. For a broadly educated public we have also published a synthesizing issue on religion

and ecology in the journal *Daedalus* (Fall 2001). See [www.daedalus.amacad.org /issues/fall2001/fall2001](http://www.daedalus.amacad.org/issues/fall2001/fall2001). This volume brings together scholars of the world's religions with thoughtful voices from science, ethics, education, and policy around the problem of global climate change.

We are conscious, however, that these concepts need to be made accessible beyond academia. Thus we have done publications to translate these ideas outward for use in seminaries, churches, synagogues, temples, and community groups. These publications include an issue of *Earth Ethics* in 1998 and a book on *Earth and Faith* in 2000 done for the United Nations Environment Programme that highlights key environmental problems such as water, oceans, climate change, and biodiversity. In addition, we are reaching beyond colleges and universities to secondary schools. For the last several years we have been organizing multidisciplinary workshops at the request of high school teachers. The younger generation both in high school and in college genuinely seems to understand and to be excited by this emerging field of religion and ecology. In fact, many of these students want to study it further on the graduate level so as to make contributions to a more sustainable future. In addition to making a variety of publications available, we hope to continue the interfacing of academics with those in science and public policy who welcome the ethical voices on these issues regarding the environment.

MODERATION AND SIMPLICITY VERSUS GROWTH AND ACCUMULATION

It is true, as Judith suggests, that movements toward moderation of lifestyle within the developed world—especially the United States—will be significant both symbolically and practically. The book on *Voluntary Simplicity* by Duane Elgin has sparked significant interest in this regard. Nonetheless, consumption habits are difficult to break, especially when driven by advertising, media, and cultural pressures for status. The growing gap between rich and poor is a cause of concern both as a matter of equity and as that which breeds resentment, encourages migrations, and fuels terrorism. This gap is especially visible between the developed and developing world. However, it is also present within the developing world itself as pockets of wealth stand in stark contrast to huge cities teeming with dispossessed migrants, unemployed workers, and homeless people.

Do religions have the moral authority to urge change in this regard? Liberation theology in Latin America is one example of the significant work of theologians and lay people to highlight the teachings of Christianity as being in solidarity with the needs of the poor. The efforts to preach this gospel of the dispossessed in word and in deed have been widespread and, by many measures, quite effective in shifting the focus of the Latin American churches. Clearly much still remains to be done in this regard—

in Latin America, in Africa, and in Asia by many of the world's religions.

In North America movements to shift patterns of consumerism and to make businesses more ecologically responsive have begun in several quarters. The Center for a New American Dream represents such a move, as does a wide range of business efforts such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). The question is to what extent religions may be aligned with these movements or inspire future movements. At this juncture it is probably more accurate to say that some leaders of these movements may have been inspired in part by religious values—for example, Robert Massie, the head of CERES is an Episcopal priest. There are certainly growing movements within churches to live more sustainably in terms of supporting recycling and alternative green energy programs. Much more can be done in this regard.

What will it take for religions to develop the moral authority, voice and clout? It may necessitate a further turning of religious institutions themselves to a simpler lifestyle and green living. It will require new kinds of coalitions of religious leaders and lay people, theologians and scholars of comparative religions to articulate a convincing vision and an achievable plan of action. In addition, it will be strengthened by alliances with environmentalists who recognize the value of authentic voices of moral persuasion. Such coalitions and alliances have enormous potential for

transformation if we hope to achieve the grounds for a sustainable future.

DISCUSSION WITH AUDIENCE

QUESTION: When it comes to the United Nations and the various resources that they can marshal, there's a building, there's a schedule, there's an address, there are translation facilities, there all the NGOs and all the constituents back home. Ideas can be disseminated in a variety of languages very quickly. When it comes to religions coming together to speak unequivocally, there's no building, there's no table, there's no translation facility, there's no fundamental agreement even within denominations about what might be their faith-tradition's approach to environmental crises, or what resources they might muster to respond to technological challenges. I would love to be encouraged that religions can contribute, but what have you seen, or where would you look, to bring religions together in their environmental expression in this ecological age?

TUCKER'S RESPONSE: That's a very important question. As you suggest, it may be helpful to have an international organization that would bring the religions of the world together in an effective manner—especially around environmental issues. On the other hand, we need to be duly cautious as we know that such bureaucracies have their limitations and forming

new institutions is enormously time-consuming and resource-draining. In addition, one of the practical limits is that the world's religions (unlike the nation states) don't have the same kinds of political structures to represent their varied constituencies.

We do, however, have some models of international organizations or conferences of world religions. One is the Parliament of World Religions that held its first meeting in Chicago in 1893. It did not meet again until one hundred years later, also in Chicago, and then in 1999 in Cape Town, South Africa. The next Parliament will be in 2004 in Barcelona. While this is a loosely structured organization it has been effective in highlighting environmental concerns along with social justice and peace as primary challenges for the religions to address. The World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) based in New York has also been effective in the arena of peace and conflict resolution. In recent years, the United Religions Initiative (URI) headquartered in San Francisco has begun to encourage grassroots inter-religious networking around the world.

These organizations will continue to play important roles in bringing together the world's religions around significant topics. With regard to the environment and the world's religions there is a need to deepen the discourse of the religious communities. In this way they will be able to move beyond mere rhetoric or a sense of sectarian self-satisfaction which is often evident in national and international conferences on

the environment where religious leaders or lay people have been present. This deepening of the discourse within each of the religious traditions and the broadening of the dialogue across traditions in addressing environmental issues has been the object of the Harvard conferences and book series on world religions and ecology. This is a major collaborative effort of scholars from the field of religious studies that is beginning to have an impact on policy.

There are many other angles for religions to enter this conversation on the environment and a sustainable future and to make effective use of their institutional power and presence. I find it particularly striking that doors one might think would be closed to religions are in fact opening. The doors of the United Nations are one example, especially through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The director of UNEP, Klaus Topfer, realizes that religions can make a real contribution in this arena. He has encouraged those voices in several international conferences. The scientific door is another. Religions need to realize there's more opportunity for collaboration with science than what might have previously been thought. In 1998 we went to the American Museum of Natural History in New York to explore holding a culminating conference there which would conclude the Harvard series of ten conferences on the world's religions and ecology. We wanted to bring together representatives of the world's religions and representatives from other disciplines

working on the environment. The museum's Provost, Michael Novacek, who I thought would be a gray-haired elderly man in a conservative suit, was a brilliant longhaired scientist who studies the evolution of birds and dinosaurs in the Mongolian desert. Within five minutes into our conversation he said, "You don't have to convince me of the importance of the role of religion. In fact, the need for this role has become quite apparent to some of the museum's curators. We have just hired an ornithologist, and four of the six final candidates had watched their birds go extinct while they were studying them." He acknowledged that this was a significant wake-up call for the museum and its mission. Indeed, he observed: "We realized we needed to encourage ethical voices regarding the environmental devastation that is taking place."

There are indeed fascinating and unexpected openings occurring for dialogue with religions and we need to see where we can go through the doors to move this conversation forward.

QUESTION: We are talking about very large and complex systems—I liked the way you phrased it earlier: "Even scientists don't have a complete handle on some of these issues." I would say, *especially* scientists don't have a handle on these issues. At the same time, I wonder who should have the authority to implement the changes the environmental crisis requires? In our society, there is a division between the rule of law (secular law and government) and the

influence of religious institutions. This represents a relatively new but effective arrangement. It implies a clear distinction between the rule of law and a moral force. In my opinion, the role of organized religions is to nurture and influence consciousness so that people develop their own ability to grasp these issues and to apply them to their own lives. It is not the role of organized religions, however, to implement these changes. Organized religions ought, in my opinion, to continue to do what they have always done: inspire and inform the individual conscience. It is up to the secular institutions to do what they do, namely, make laws and implement policy. We don't need to be anxious about the fact that organized religions lack the authority or agency to effect widespread change (as the earlier question implied). Don't you think that organized religion should vigorously do what it does best—to envision and articulate the right path, and quietly support, not direct its course? Shouldn't that be left to our secular institutions?

TUCKER'S RESPONSE: That is definitely a complex statement and question that requires further clarification and elaboration than I can go into here. Briefly, yes, religions need to do what they can do well, namely articulate an inspiring moral vision for human-Earth relations that will not allow us to simply witness the death of many forms of life on the planet. At the same time, we need to respect the separation of church and state as it has emerged in post-Enlightenment

democracies. All of that is extremely important. On the other hand, I think we would agree that law itself is certainly not uninfluenced by religious ethics and moral concerns.

Moreover, what I am suggesting is that we are in the midst of a transformation of all disciplines—science, humanities, social sciences—and that this multidisciplinary shift is certainly taking place in law as well. Environmental law, for example, is a new phase of law that we didn't even recognize twenty-five years ago, and certainly didn't evoke in the way we do now. The growing field of environmental ethics has clearly influenced environmental law. Moral principles, environmental ethics, and law are coming together in significant ways.

For example, on an international level, the Earth Charter is a soft-law document, namely, a statement of principles that serves as a moral compass for sustainable development. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has negotiated a comprehensive covenant of environmental laws to support these principles through enforcement. This illustrates how jurisprudence is clearly moving to another level of its own expression regarding the "rights of nature." It's part of this larger shift toward the formation of an Earth Community in which the religions are beginning to participate.

QUESTION: I'd like to ask Professor Tucker to respond perhaps in a different way as a follow up

to the last questioner's suggestion that religions should "stay out of it," so to speak. When you spoke earlier about ways in which religions had become involved in issues in the past, I immediately thought of the civil rights movement in this country—a movement led by religious leaders and one born and sustained by a religious impetus. I wonder if you could talk a bit more about how the world's religions can overcome some of their internal blocks to becoming bioethical. I'm sure you've struggled with these issues. What kind of scenario do you imagine that could stir the kind of passion that lay behind the civil rights movement? What could sweep religions into that same kind of energy and concern with regard to ecological problems?

TUCKER'S RESPONSE: Again that's a wonderful question and an excellent point that religions were very active in the civil rights movement in this country and certainly in the anti-Vietnam War movement as well. I went to college in Washington, D.C., and was an active participant in the civil rights marches and the demonstrations against the Vietnam War. These were often conducted with extraordinary leadership of many from the religious community. Martin Luther King, Jr., Daniel and Philip Berrigan and others with strong religious sensibilities for civil rights and peace are noteworthy examples. As you observe, there was a powerful religious impetus behind these movements. One can describe this as an impetus for justice which is especially pronounced in the Jewish, Christian, and

Islamic traditions. I am suggesting that concern for the environment is another dimension of that transformation of social and political consciousness that has moved forward with the support of religious leaders and communities. I see this as part of a continuity of concerns for the future of humans in alignment with other species and ecosystems. This evokes an expansion of ethical sensibilities as reflected in terms such as "human-Earth relations." Thus many in the religious communities are now calling for eco-justice or environmental justice. Chet Bowers's book *Educating for Eco-Justice and Community* (University of Georgia Press, 2001) illustrates the need to make the connections with social justice and environmental issues. All of this implies a profound and renewing realization that humans are a subset of the Earth and dependent on the Earth for our life and sustenance.

You are asking as well, what will it take for the deep passion for environmental transformation to be stirred? We can say there are at least two ways. One possibility is that environmental disasters will bring forth the passion, although I'd rather not think of it in that particular way. Nonetheless, we are facing environmental catastrophes on many fronts, some more visible than others. It is clear, for example, that we are living in a period of the greatest migrations in human history and much of this is due to environmental degradation. Forty million people a year are migrating and as a result megacities of almost unlivable conditions are emerging in Asia, Africa, and

Latin America. This should evoke some passion about environmentally sustainable futures for these migrants and their families.

Another way to evoke environmental passion in a positive sense is through the comprehensive perspective of evolution as articulated by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry in their book *The Universe Story*. This deep sense of our connection to a vast universe process has the potential to open our imagination to the sacredness and beauty of this cosmic, evolutionary journey that I referred to at the beginning of my talk. In awakening this deep feeling of connection, we can tap into the sustaining energies for living in alignment with earth's processes, seasons, cycles, and ecosystems.

And I believe those same kinds of Earth-connecting energies are beginning to arise anew in the religious communities and to be expressed in practical programs. We can highlight many environmental projects around the world that are inspired by religious convictions regarding the sacredness of life and the need for restraint in use of resources. Here in the United States the Global Climate Change Campaign of the National Council of Churches in conjunction with the Coalition for Environment and Jewish Life has been extraordinarily effective and quite outspoken. It has elicited letters with signatures from major religious leaders across North America directed to President Bush to say that global climate change is a moral issue and that the poor will especially suffer as climate

change becomes increasingly dramatized. Another example is the Episcopal Power and Light Project founded by Sally Bingham and Steve MacAusland. This has received tremendous attention and shows concretely how religious communities can participate in the use of renewable energy.

In these examples we are talking about more sustainable uses of physical energy that won't pollute the environment. We are at the end of the petroleum era. As Thomas Berry says in *The Great Work* we are participating in the "petroleum interval." Within fifty years all these kinds of configurations of petroleum-based energy will be changed in life-altering ways. The religious community is well placed to begin to illustrate how these changes are going to affect all of us, but particularly the poor. In the international community there is already a sophisticated understanding of the intricate connection between poverty, development, and the environment that has drawn in the religious voices. Because poverty and development have been concerns of the religious community over the last several decades, the linkage to the environment is just another step forward. The passion for speaking out on these issues is definitely emerging in the religious communities and can be connected to the international community and NGO networks in this area.

QUESTION: I would like to follow up on the previous questions a little bit. Various people have

suggested that religion is responsible in some part for the environmental crisis that we are in. For example, Lynn White's essay published in *Science* in 1967 on the religious roots of environmental exploitation makes this argument. You mentioned a number of things in this regard. One is that religions are changing and we are evolving into a new ecological age in religion. You also mentioned the problem of consumption and how we need to reassess our place in the world. If we think of religion as fundamentally the transformation of the heart, how do you think this new period of religions, with the new connection to the environment, can help with the problem of the transformation of the heart so we are not so sucked into the material world and all of the problems that causes for the environment?

TUCKER'S RESPONSE: Again, a superb and insightful question regarding an issue that I think is so much at the heart of these matters. Materialism and consumerism—and what John Cobb calls “economism” linked with “globalization”—is a major challenge. Judith Berling identified this very clearly in her question on lifestyles in the United States. When we are talking about consumption and the use of resources, we know that we in the United States account for only four or five percent of the world's population, yet we are using twenty-five percent of the world's resources. This is just astounding. We can see this with regard to oil use, especially in our resistance to driving smaller and more fuel-efficient cars. Without

being simplistic about it (because the issues are extremely complex and can be addressed in a number of ways) a counterpoint to the addiction of materialism is not necessarily telling people what they should do. Nor is it making them feel filled with guilt more than they already are for what's wrong with the world or what's wrong with them.

I would suggest that a counterpoint to addictive materialism is evoking both understanding and wonder that assists us in seeing ourselves as part of the vast processes that have sustained life on the planet. Understanding Earth processes and their extraordinarily delicate and complex components makes us realize that we are part of an intricate web of creative life forces. Moreover, these natural processes are ways in which modes of divine presence become clarified in our mind, body, and spirit. So the question is how do we also evoke wonder regarding the world that has heart-transforming potential. Wonder and understanding are what elicits and ignites in humans something of their participation in this process of life that transcends words, yet creates a deeply felt resonance that inspires action. Such an experience of resonance with life can surely affect the kinds of transformation away from materialism and toward creativity that many of us imagine is possible.

QUESTION: When I think of environmental degradation I think of not only individual lifestyles and personal choices, but also of large institutions

like corporations and governments with their military policies that create a lot of environmental devastation. My question is: To what extent do you see religions and initiatives involving multiple religious faiths presenting some kind of focused critique of economic systems that allow that kind of degradation to take place, or perhaps incur that kind of degradation? I am referring not necessarily to focused critiques of capitalism, but critiques of the profit motive and the ways that contributes to environmental degradation.

TUCKER'S RESPONSE: As you suggest, the changes many of us envision will require not only rethinking individual lifestyles but also making larger structural changes. This involves a whole new understanding of ecological economics that encourages us to see the Earth not simply as commodity but as community, not simply as resource but as source of life. Herman Daly, Richard Norgaard, Robert Costanza, Paul Hawkins, Lester Brown, Neva Goodwin, and Juliet Schor and others are pointing the way toward such ecological economics.

This perspective is far removed from the pervasive corporate view of profit at any cost where the bottom line does not take into account the depletion of Earth's resources or pollution of its ecosystems. The consequent transformation of human energies into processes involving production and consumption as the main direction of human endeavors is very much at the base of many of our current problems. And the

other area that you identify—the government and the military—really needs to be addressed with regard to environmental degradation. The clean up of toxic waste on military installations in this country is estimated to cost well over twenty billion dollars. One of my colleagues at Bucknell University has been a consultant for the government on the studies for Yucca Mountain in Nevada to be used as a national repository for nuclear waste. The studies alone have taken up some six billion dollars over a decade. All of this is virtually invisible in terms of the reported costs of a military presence and of nuclear energy.

In terms of who is addressing these issues from within the religious community, a number of Christian theologians are doing an extraordinary job of critiquing “economism” in its various forms: homogenizing globalization, exploitative processes of extraction, profit creation that overrides social justice, and wealth making that causes severe inequities. The theologian John Cobb wrote a book with the economist Herman Daly called *For the Common Good* addressing many of these questions. Sallie McFague, a feminist theologian, has continued this critique in her latest book, *Life Abundant* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001) and in her article in the *Christianity and Ecology* volume from Harvard Press where she speaks of the need to address this mindless economic drive. Another hopeful sign is a movement which was begun by an Episcopal Minister, Robert Massie, called CERES—the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies. CERES has

received significant funding from the United Nations Foundation and from corporate sources. They have compiled an impressive list of corporations to sign on to an environmental mission statement based on the Valdez Principles. I think these are important signs of change, although clearly more needs to be done.

We have a professor here tonight from the Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley who might like to speak to this topic.

COMMENT: My name is Jack Philips. I would just mention that, at the Haas School of Business, ethics has been a required component of the graduate program—although only one unit—for maybe six or seven years. That program has been expanding somewhat. More interestingly, in the undergraduate program, there is a new ethics course that is an elective, but hopefully can be moved to the core, which is at least two units. The students' response to it is absolutely overwhelming. The degree of inquiry, open-mindedness, and creative problem-solving is astounding. So I have noticed the shift from what the program had been earlier when most business schools had either no elective or compulsory ethical component. What I see happening in Berkeley from an evolutionary perspective is positive and I'm encouraged by it. The degree of creativity and open-mindedness among the undergraduate students is really heartening, especially with regard to attitudes toward the environment.

QUESTION: You encourage a "moderation and simplicity" model for us to use in addressing the massive environmental problems brought on by development and expansion. But isn't this approach lop-sided and even a bit disingenuous, as it favors the "over-developed" and privileged few who currently possess a near-monopoly on the world's goods and services? Doesn't it ignore the very real needs and desires of much of the developing world? What would you say to critics of this "less is more" approach who argue that only aggressive and widespread economic development and modernization can bring about social, political, and economic justice; a fair distribution of the world's resources? And that "moderation and simplicity" merely dooms most of humanity to lives of continuing impoverishment and backwardness? That it widens the gap between the "have" and "have-nots" and thus creates conditions that breed religious fundamentalism and terrorism?

TUCKER'S RESPONSE: This may be one of the most pressing problems facing us as a global community—how can we sustain life on the planet at the same time as providing an adequate standard of living for the growing human population which is now more than six billion people. Ever since the Rio Earth Summit of 1992 this has been a central focus of the United Nations efforts to promote "sustainable development," even though many have questioned the usefulness of the term itself. Indeed, the Rio summit

was called the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and brought together the largest number of heads of states ever gathered. In the last decade since UNCED, the United Nations has sponsored a series of international conferences to try and implement and expand Agenda 21, the major report that came out of the Rio conference. In September 2002 the United Nations sponsored another conference called the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa.

All of these meetings and the ongoing work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) represent a historic and unprecedented effort of the human community to find a way forward through the intractable maze of supporting economic development and preserving the environment on a global basis. The conflicts and the opportunities that have arisen around these issues in the United Nations and beyond may well define the shape of the twenty-first century. For it is quite true, as you suggest, that equitable distribution of the world's resources needs to be negotiated. Moreover, it is also true that many believe that development and modernization will bring greater benefits (economic, social, and political) to those in need. However, it is also the case that in the recent international meetings in Monterrey, Mexico, that optimistic position has been severely undermined by statistics that report that trade without aid is not

working to promote development. In addition, the massive protests in recent years surrounding meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the G8 (countries representing the industrialized nations) has demonstrated significant disillusionment with free trade that ignores the environment, health, and fair labor practices.

I would suggest that in the midst of this difficult challenge of balancing the genuine need for appropriate development along with environmental preservation the religious community may discover a particularly important role. In other words, it is not a question of choosing between "justice" for the human and maintaining the "integrity of Creation" as some religions might phrase it. Rather, what is needed is to envision the conditions of a vibrant Earth community where the continuity of humans and the Earth is cherished and celebrated as a single multiform event. To give language to this realization may be the special task of the world's religions as they evoke the sensibilities and programs that are needed not simply for sustainable development but for sustainable life on the planet.

A specific document that provides a moral compass through the challenging path of sustainable development issues is the Earth Charter. This was first proposed as a soft law document at the Rio conference in 1992. However, it took five more years to bring this into being and to establish an Earth Council in Costa

Rica. At the Rio+5 conference in 1997 a Benchmark Draft was presented to the co-chairs Mikhail Gorbachev and Maurice Strong. The Earth Charter is based on a Preamble that outlines the cosmological context of our global situation and the challenges ahead. It states: "Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The forces of nature make existence a demanding and uncertain adventure, but Earth has provided the conditions essential to life's evolution." The Preamble concludes with a call that suggests we all share "responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature." It is in language such as this that the religious community can find resonance and a point of entry into these discussions on sustainability. For surely these qualities of reverence, gratitude, and humility are at the heart of our experience of both spirit and nature.

QUESTION: You described three concentric circles of expanding identity that we are situated within—the cosmological, historical, and religious. Moreover, you propose that the religious circle offers the best prospect for reinvigorating and enlarging our vision to unite us with this vast and interconnected universe. Yet what is it about religion *per se* that makes

you optimistic? Hasn't organized religion more often served as a reactionary and regressive force, that shrinks our identity into narrow shards of clan, tribe, ethnic/national "us" versus "them"? Some would argue that religion, both in its scriptures and habits of exclusive claims, divides us not only from our fellow humans, but also fosters a hubris that sets us apart from and above nature itself. Karen Armstrong points out that religion at best is a two-faced god: one that heals and one that harms; that it often functions to insulate us from the very expansiveness you advocate; that it serves as a bulwark against change, the global, the loss of self. Isn't there another "circle" that lies beyond or within the religious that must be tapped? You allude to that in your Confucian quote. The religious impulse itself relies on something to inspire and continually rediscover this larger view. If so, what is it? And how do we nurture it often in opposition to religion itself?

TUCKER'S RESPONSE: This is a superb and thought-provoking question. I don't think, however, that I meant to suggest that the religious circle offers the best prospect for reinvigorating and enlarging our vision, but I would say it offers a viable and as yet not fully explored avenue for that task. In other words, there are many other paths to a reinvigorated vision. Nature writers in the United States such as Gary Snyder, Terry Tempest Williams, Barry Lopez, Scott Sanders, Richard Nelson, Pattiann Rogers and their

predecessors such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Ralph Waldo Emerson provide such a gateway. They give the reader a fresh and unmediated sense of the power and mystery of the natural world. They evoke wonder, awe, mystery, fear, and gratitude in observing nature's many faces.

These are qualities of religious experience that you point toward when you observe that there is another circle within the religious one that needs to be tapped. It is true that there is something transreligious, if you will, about being in the presence of nature that needs to be evoked. That is in part what I was referring to with the idea of "worldly wonder." How does one become fully present to the elements, the soil, the plants, the flowers, the trees, and the winged, finned, scaled, and legged species that roam the planet? This requires entering into a space that can hold "intimate immensities" in creative equilibrium. It involves cultivating a multilayered sensibility of the deep interconnection of person, planet, and cosmos. It suggests that being in the presence of mystery is at the heart of the religious experience and this is what we sense in nature. No matter how much we know about its workings (and our sense of wonder can only be enhanced by scientific understanding) there is something that eludes us and yet attracts us beyond any words or means of expression. It is here in the ineffable silence that mystery makes itself felt and we are somehow transformed.

QUESTION: Can you speak at more length about how the "devaluation of matter" and the orientation toward a next world in many religious traditions may make it difficult for them to see the importance of the ecological crisis? Can you explore further some of the noumenon-in-phenomenon alternatives that you mention briefly (*Tathagatagarbha* doctrine, Creation Centered Spirituality) as possible guides for recognizing immanence in the natural world? Relatedly, what are we to do about the God-for-humans-only attitude of the Abrahamic religions if we want them to take responsibility for the fate of other species?

TUCKER'S RESPONSE: This other-worldly orientation that I referred to in my talk is indeed a major challenge for many of the world's religions with regard to activating environmental awareness and concern. However, it is not an insurmountable obstacle and it may be one of the ways in which the environmental crisis will also transform religions. Will religions simply watch the natural world being destroyed as passive witnesses awaiting salvation in the next world or will their sense of immanence be rekindled so as to respond in a timely manner to the current crisis? I think there are grounds for hope in the latter position.

The severe dichotomy of spirit and matter that has been a legacy of Enlightenment rationalism and of Cartesian dualism can no longer be sustained.

Indeed, the sciences of cosmology, quantum physics, and of evolutionary biology are giving us a highly sophisticated picture of the integrated nature of reality and of the self-organizing properties of matter itself. Emergent patterning and systems theory are pointing toward the deep integration of energy and matter.

Clearly matter can no longer be seen as dormant, dead, and disposable. The response of religious and non-religious people alike is one of an awakened sense of the wonder of life in its myriad material forms. From a wide variety of perspectives, then, from science and from religion, a new reverence and respect for the Earth is emerging.

Religions value matter from such perspectives as an indigenous recognition of a spirit presence in nature, such as *manitou* among the Anishinabe peoples in North America or the Shinto notion of *kami* (gods) referring to the presence of spirits in the natural world. The Chinese understanding of *qi* (translated as material force, vital force, and matter-energy) is that which infuses the entire universe. There are also expressions of the noumenon in the phenomenon such as in the Brahman-Atman (divine-self) identity of the Upanishadic tradition of Hinduism or the *Tathagatagarba* concept in Mahayana Buddhism where the Buddha Nature is present in all reality.

In the western religions the idea of creation *ex nihilo* by a Creator God grounds the importance of matter and Creation as a whole. Moreover, in Judaism *Shekinah* in the Kabbalistic tradition highlights the

feminine presence of the divine in the natural world. In Christianity the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ (the Word made flesh) and the understanding of the Cosmic Christ present in the universe are important bases for valuing matter. This is in part what has been emphasized by Creation Centered Spirituality developed by Matthew Fox and others who suggest that the world is the source of original blessing not of original sin. In Islam the Sufi term *wahdat al-wujud* refers to the unity of all being as manifest in the created order. These are all important counterpoints to a focus on God-human relations in the Abrahamic traditions or to an exclusive emphasis on otherworldly salvation as primary.