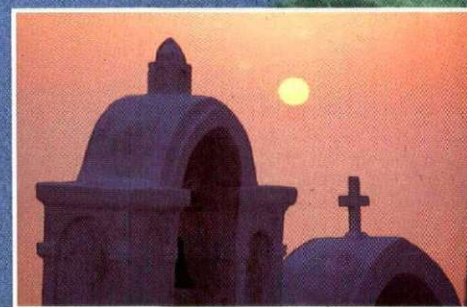
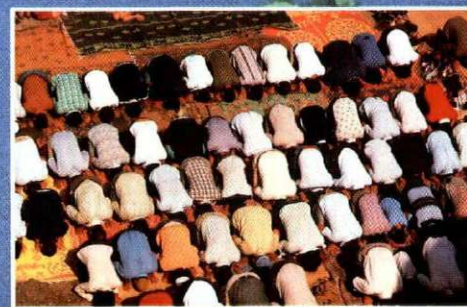


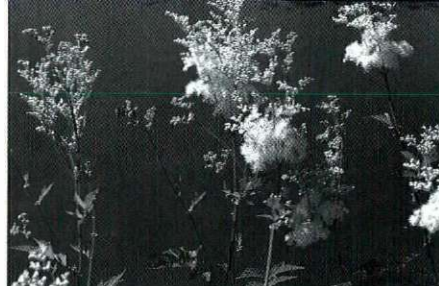
Naturopa 83-1997

ENGLISH

Naturopa

COUNCIL OF
CONSEIL DE L' Europe





Naturopa

N° 83-1997

Naturopa is usually published in English, French, German and Italian by the Centre Naturopa of the Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex.

Chief editor:
Jean-Pierre Ribaut

Conception and editing:
Marie-Françoise Glatz

Production:
Artegrafica Silva s.r.l., Parma, Italy

Articles may be freely reprinted but it would be appreciated if reference is made to the source and copy sent to the Centre. The copyright of all photographs is reserved.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council of Europe.

Next issue's theme: Sustainable tourism development

Since 1993 Naturopa has been printed on chlorine- and wood-free paper.

Cover page: A. Balestreri; **vignettes:** M. Theiler/Sipa Image, C. Hamm, G. Engel

Pages 16-17 from left to right:
1. Y. Noto-Campanella,
2. J. Stegen, 3. P. Lissac/CIRIC,
4. A. Kaiser, 5. P. Lissac/CIRIC,
6. J. Stegen, 7. P. Lissac/CIRIC,
8. P.P.L./Sipa image, 9. P. Lissac/CIRIC,
10. V.P. Gritsyuk/Sipa Image

Background p 23: J. Stegen

Nature and the different religions	
Editorial	3
Christianity: protector of nature	J.-P. Ribaut 4
Ecology and orthodoxy	Metropolitan Cyrille 5
Judaism: ecology and the citizen	N. Lipszyc 6
The nature of being human: a Buddhist view	A. Tiradhammo 7
The Islamic approach	F. Khalid 9
The sacred kaya forests of Kenya	E. Obel-Lawson 10
What risks to the environment	
An African animist's reply	A. C. Anyozogo 11
Nature in Hinduism	A. Nayak 12
The Shinto concept	H. Sakurai 13
The Bahá'í perspective	A. L. Dahl 14
Aboriginal spirituality	H. Furber 15
The Klingenthal Appeal	17
Spiritual universe of Brazilian Indians	M. C. Ossami de Moura 18
The approach of the Incas	
A living example for sustainable development	E. Carreno 18
Religions and nature	
Varied and intersecting viewpoints	J. Ki-Zerbo 19
Forests: immediate action	
Initiatives of the Church of Freiburg	R. Bäuerle 20
Between nature and the consumer society	
The Norwegian dilemma	B. Bue 21
Romanian Churches at work	L. Gavrilă and I. Sidó 23
Christian belief and climate change	L. Vischer 24
Christian Churches get involved	
The Kehl-Strasbourg Ecumenical Group	E. Vogelweith 25
COTE's contribution	C. Grupp 26
Projects of the Francis of Assisi Academy	R. K. Stappen 28
Buddhist monk fights to save Thai forests	L. Alyanak 29
At the Council of Europe	30

Religions, cultures and the environment

The Second European Ecumenical Assembly will take place in Graz (Austria) from 23 to 29 June 1997, bringing together thousands of Christians from all Churches from all over Europe to look at the many challenges facing our societies and to advocate practical measures for reconciliation, justice and solidarity.

The Council of Europe, an organisation which since its foundation has worked towards the same goals - human rights, respect for minorities, tolerance, in short for a better quality of life - has decided to play an active part in this important initiative, particularly in the field of the environment.

Surprising though it may seem, Churches, all Churches, and all religions are taking an

increasingly active interest in their responsibility for the Creation, calling upon their followers to respect nature and to use natural resources "wisely". As for indigenous peoples, they have always applied the principles of sustainable development. They therefore have much to teach us.

Given that mankind's power to destroy and transform the world is increasing all the time, it is more urgent than ever for all people of good will to join forces, regardless of their natural and spiritual sensibilities, to protect our natural resources, especially for future generations.

Jean-Pierre Ribaut



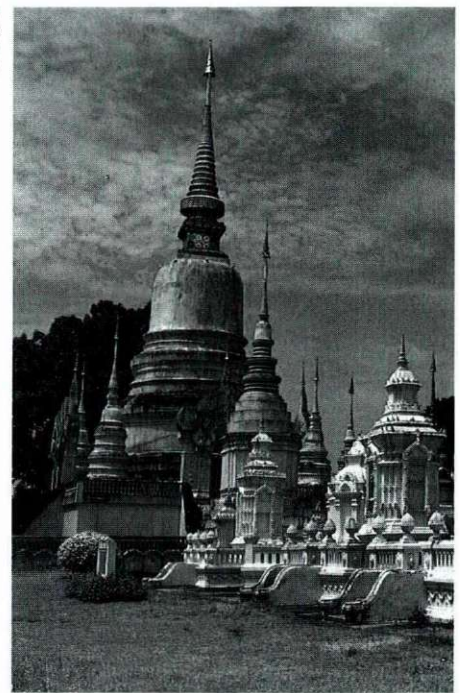
J. Stegen

Church and mosque, Sarajevo



J. Stegen

Hindu temple, Bali



G. Engel

Buddhist temple, Thailand

Editorial

Nature and the different religions

The state of the environment in Europe causes continual anxieties. The dangers are so numerous and so great that our society's natural-resource conservation problem is now urgent.

A paradoxical frustration has set in amongst those in Europe who are interested in environmental issues. On the one hand, awareness has grown significantly over the last few decades; on the other, it is becoming increasingly difficult to enable wildlife to coexist with human activity.

The resultant feeling of powerlessness is not justified, in my view, provided we eschew an overly idealistic approach to nature conservation and bear in mind the nature of environmental decision-making.

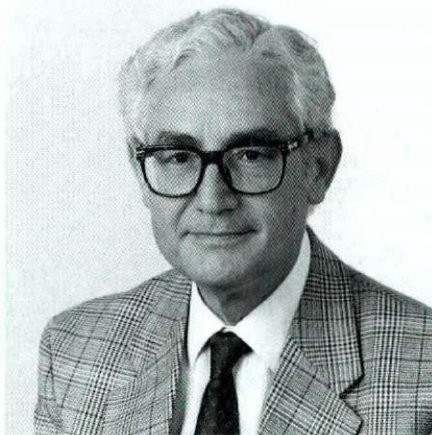
However, first of all we need to recognise that all human activity has an impact on the environment. No activity is entirely "clean" or "innocent". Man is a great converter and consumer of natural resources. Thus, the key question is how this impact can be minimised or, better still, how to ensure that human actions, rather than destroy the natural world, conserve natural resources in the long term.

Decision-making processes must seek to determine the "threshold of acceptability" of activities affecting the environment.

Decision-making - whether public (legislative, administrative, judicial) or private (financial, entrepreneurial, etc.) - can be illustrated by a graph where the vertical axis A represents interest in nature conservation and the horizontal axis B interest in development. Any decision on the environment can be located on the A and B axes according to its degree of

commitment to environmental protection or economic development.

Various kinds of factor - for example, scientific, economic and social - will influence the decision but in practice the choice is always political in the sense that it endeavours to fit in with public opinion as far as possible. It is therefore important to make the obvious point that committed and effective nature conservation is only possible if public opinion unequivocally wants it.



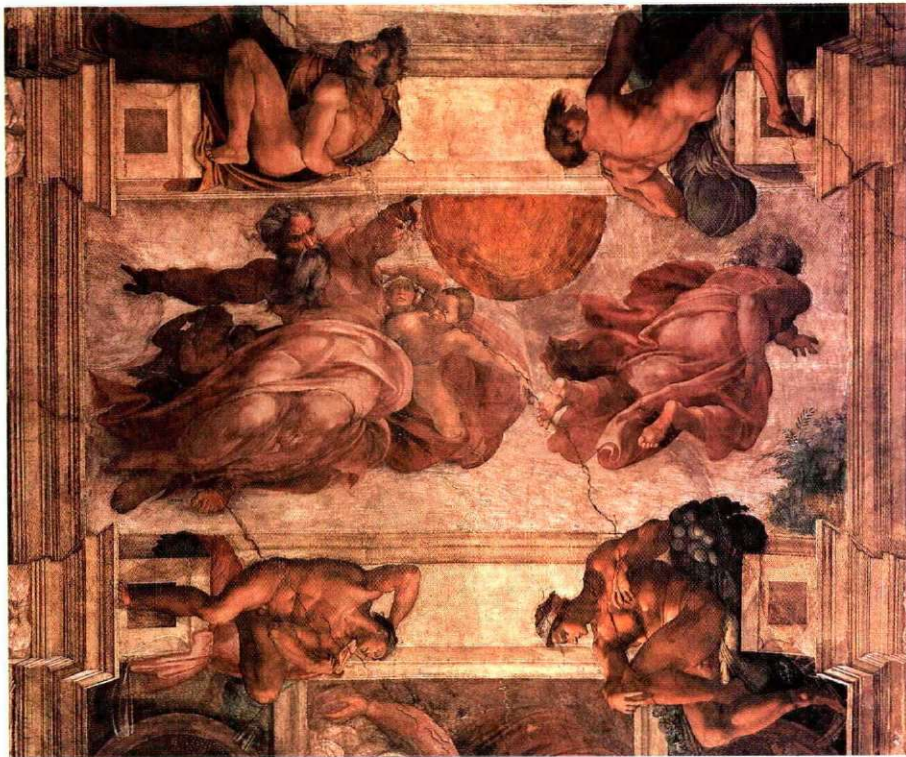
Viewed in this light, the role and responsibility of those who shape public opinion are crucial, and among the main shapers of public opinion are religions and Churches, which are the source of many of our values and have a decisive influence on human action.

The Council of Europe has accordingly decided to devote this issue of *Naturoipa* to religions' attitude to natural resources.

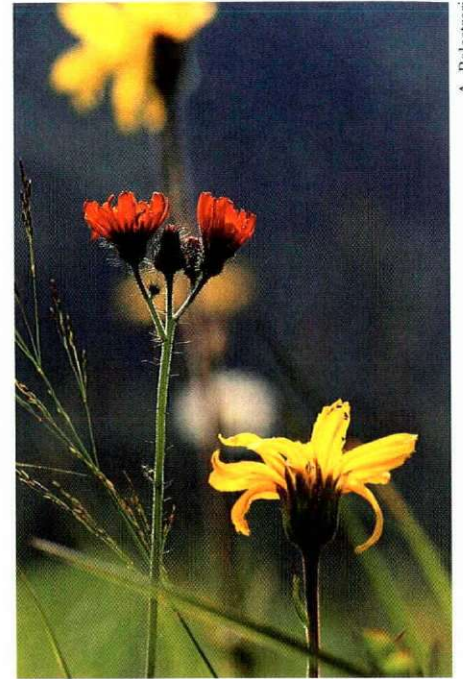
The European Ecumenical Assembly will be held in Graz in June 1997. I wish it not only every success, but also an impact on grass-roots church membership such that all spiritual energies are harnessed to meeting the next century's main challenge, that of conserving our natural resources for future generations and all humanity. ■

Ferdinando Albanese

Director of Environment and Local Authorities
Council of Europe



Random/Sipa Icono



A. Balestreri

◀ Creation of the Sun and the Moon, Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo

Christianity: protector of nature

Jean-Pierre Ribaut

“**W**hat nonsense!” is likely to be most people’s spontaneous reaction to the suggestion that Christianity protects nature. How could anyone seriously claim that to be the case, when you consider the state of the environment in the Christian world and, above all, the many passages in the Bible which encourage humankind to dominate and, indeed, overexploit nature, especially, for instance, in the early chapters of the Book of Genesis: *And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered* (Genesis, 9:2) or *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air ...* (Genesis, 1:28).

How should the Bible be interpreted?

The meaning of the above passages would appear to be clear enough. But no, the first impression is misleading: the real message is not the one we get at first sight, and the fact is that all of the Bible and all of God’s teaching actually assign humankind the task of caring for the world He created and ensuring that it flourishes forever. The most significant verse here is *And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it* (Genesis, 2:15). “Cultivate” and “preserve”, modern equivalents of “dress” and “keep”, remind me of the conclusions of the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, which called for resources to

be used carefully and sustainably and thus preserved for future generations.

Other biblical commands are equally explicit. For instance, when Noah is preparing to enter the ark with his family, God says to him, *And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female* (Genesis, 6:19).

The difficulties

However, the problem of interpreting the - apparently - contradictory passages remains. In order to understand their real message, we must place them in their historical and social context, while remembering that they are translations. Two examples illustrate this crucial point:

- *Be fruitful and multiply* is a call which seems to provide a clear indication of Christian support for a policy of rising birth rates. But that interpretation is entirely wrong! The fact is that the prophet spoke these words at a time when the Jews had been deported to Babylonia and were experiencing their second period of exile. Losing faith and convinced that Yahveh had abandoned them, they were giving up hope and asking what the point was in fighting, as they had been orphaned anyway. It was against this dramatic background that the prophet tried to persuade this people - who were asking what the point was in having children, if they were going to be enslaved again - to fight back, telling them not to give up hope, as better days would come, calling on them to *be fruitful and multiply*. When seen in context, this call is a long way from advocating proliferation.

- *Have dominion over the fish...:* in today’s language, the term “domination” unquestionably implies something very negative for the party that is dominated. However, in the original Hebrew, the term “ve-yirdu” can have two different meanings, including the idea of descentance. It should also be noted that, in Jewish society at the time, where fathers “dominated” their families, this implied not only certain powers but also important responsibilities by way of protection, assistance in the event of danger and help when necessary. Accordingly, when God tells man to “have dominion” over nature, this implies obligations as much as privileges.

We should welcome the contribution of biblical exegesis and also encourage socio-historical research, not to mention the study of literary genres. It is the tendency to neglect them that has resulted in so many misinterpretations persisting even today. Including the belief that the world was created in seven days!

That said, we have to admit that Christians have not shouldered their responsibilities towards Creation. Our unbridled desire to have “more and more” of everything, and our innate self-interest - which I have no hesitation in equating with original sin - are the most likely explanation for this.

A late , but decisive, awakening of the Churches

While the Churches have always advocated support for “the widow and the orphan” and the poorest in society, it is only very recently that they have discovered or, to be more precise, rediscovered Christians’ responsibility towards nature.

Although they may have been late in waking up to environmental issues, they have often acted with great commitment and made very clear statements.

At a conference on man and the environment on 6 December 1971, Cardinal Villot, then Secretary of State at the Vatican, declared that every attack on Creation was an insult to the Creator. But did any section of the media report his comments? And are any Christians guided in their actions by this outright condemnation of both the extermination of species and the degradation of the environment?

The Protestant Churches, which are often quicker to ring the alarm bells in this area, have also been very active, and particular attention is drawn here to the excellent booklet on the threat to nature and Christian responsibility (*Nature menacée et responsabilité chrétienne*) published by the Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine (France).

The Orthodox Church is now also beginning to mobilise its followers, Patriarch Dimitrios I having proclaimed the first of September of each year the "Day of Creation".

Pronouncements and other appeals are being made more and more frequently, whether by leading religious figures and thinkers such as John-Paul II or Carl F. von Weizsäcker, conferences of bishops such as that in the Philippines, which has condemned the devas-

tation of tropical forests, or Church movements such as Pax Christi. These calls are increasingly accompanied by practical activities of various kinds, as illustrated in several articles and features elsewhere in this issue:

-training colloquies on greater efficiency in the use of water, air and other resources (Orleans 1991, Chantilly, 1996, France);

-extensive farming instead of intensive farming of Church land (eg in Munich, Germany);

-awareness-raising among the clergy and seminarians (eg in Iasi, Romania);

-adapting parish buildings (churches, schools, etc) for bats and barn owls (Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany).

Without question, most emphasis is placed on educational activities, the aim being to make it more and more "natural" for Christians to take account of environmental concerns in their prayers, religious ceremonies, contemplation and, above all, daily lives.

Increased ecumenical activity

This widespread awareness of environmental issues is having another most pleasing consequence: an acceleration in ecumenical activity. Indeed, working together to save the planet seems to pose fewer problems than the ordination of women!

One of the most important events in this connection was the First European Ecumenical Assembly (Basle, 15-21 May 1989), which gave official recognition, at the highest level, to the need to preserve God's Creation. The Second Assembly, to be held in Graz (Austria) from 23 to 29 June 1997, will again deal with major social issues, including the sustainable management of the environment, but this time with the full and active participation of central and east European Churches.

In an era when religious fundamentalism so often fills the headlines, we should welcome the fact that Christians are joining together, in the name of their faith, to protect the biosphere and preserve the environment for future generations. ■

J.-P. Ribaut

Chair of the Committee "Protection and Management of Creation"
Pax Christi
83 rue du Général Conrad
F-67000 Strasbourg

Ecology and orthodoxy

The need for a spiritual rebirth

For the Orthodox believer, there is no doubt that egocentricity and the priority given to the material over the spiritual have played a particularly decisive role in the destruction of nature. Moreover, the Creation cannot be restored intact unless we undergo a spiritual rebirth and unless we once again have peace in our hearts.

Thus, both ecological and other problems of the modern world remind us of the value of life in the universe, the predestination of human beings in the world and their free choice in distinguishing virtue from sin. All these issues are of primordial importance not only for mankind's spiritual health but also for the protection of nature, which will otherwise be destroyed.

In the recent past, our country's economic policy was geared to building industrial giants, without any consideration of the local ecological situation. The consequences have been appalling: millions of hectares of forest and fertile land have disappeared for ever and the air and supplies of drinking water have been polluted. This is just one example of an irresponsible and short-sighted economic policy, and of the damage wrought by the authorities, which are constantly asking more of nature without giving it anything in return. An example is the

project entailing the artificial diversion of rivers in northern Russia to arid areas in the southern part of the country.

Co-operation is essential

Today, people in the former USSR are becoming aware of the great ecological dangers and are trying to rediscover a sense of moral values because without them it is impossible to resolve ecological problems. As for the Church, it is trying to do everything in its power to redirect public opinion, which, driven by the idea of a consumer society, is prompting people to misuse the natural assets of our planet. We have to learn to sacrifice individual interests today in order to protect the lives of future generations. This is why we need to co-operate with all nations so that nature in all its purity and splendour may be preserved.

HE Cyrille

Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad
President of the Foreign Affairs Department
Patriarchate of Moscow
Russian Federation



Orthodox church, Zagorsk

Judaism: ecology and the citizen

Norbert Lipszyc

The key Talmudic principles

When the Holy Blessed-Be-He created the first man, he took him aside and warned him: See my works, see their beauty, their perfection; everything I have created, I have created for you. Take care not to spoil or destroy my world, because there will be no-one to mend it after you.

The Talmud talks at considerable length about protecting the environment. The passage above, taken from the Kohellet Raba (7.28), perfectly sums up Jewish thinking on this subject. Man is responsible. This world is beautiful and perfect, ie beauty is one of man's primary needs, and the assertion that the world could meet all man's needs only comes second. The *midrash* also says that this world was created for man's use; this is the very basis of the idea of sustainable development advocated today. The fact that the Talmud affirms that the world was created for man also signifies that nature should be protected because it is something good as far as man is concerned, and man alone has been given the capacity to distinguish good from evil.

This is also the reason why Jews are forbidden to hunt, for they may not kill animals, except in self-defence (which includes eating). They may not eat animals unless they have been slaughtered ritually, and therefore they may not hunt because animals killed in such a way are not edible. They are also forbidden to make animals suffer and hunting causes pointless suffering.

The Talmud is full of references to environmental protection in the broadest sense of the term, through its laws on damage and the rules for sharing resources in times of shortage, particularly water, which has always been in short supply in the Middle East and which has been the cause of numerous wars. It is significant that the first conflict between communities mentioned in the Bible was between the shepherds of Abraham and of Abimelech for control of the Beersheba well. The way in which the conflict was resolved by Abraham, ie by sharing and jointly defending the well, is an example of the kind of sustainable development which we need to promote today if we wish to avoid the ecological catastrophe which threatens our species' very survival. It is also behind the Israeli attitude to the problem of water in its relations with the Palestinians and neighbouring countries.

The *midrash* also says: *If you pollute the world, you will destroy it and there will be no-one to repair it after you.* This idea, presented to mankind almost 2 000 years ago - that mankind had the power to destroy the world irrevocably - must have seemed highly unrealistic at the time. Today, we can see clearly

that mankind does have this power and that it is sometimes prepared to use it. *There will be no-one to repair the world after you.* Mankind has the power to put an end to the divine Creation, to bring about the failure of God's plan. What responsibility and what freedom mankind has been given!

Practical application in the Jewish world

Throughout the period of Jewish sovereignty in antiquity, these Talmudic rules formed the legal basis of Hebrew society. They generated a prosperous agricultural society which marvelled at natural beauty, particularly in its artistic expression.

During their 2 000 years of exile, the Jewish people were not in control of their own history. With the advent of Zionism, they were able once again to put these Talmudic ecological principles into practice, sometimes in the guise of imported ideologies. The Zionist movement, by restoring the Jewish people to their land, a land which had been neglected by its successive occupants for 2 000 years, had long been associated with the idea of making the desert bloom. This was Israel's national motto from the time the State was founded. However, it was also recognised that empty spaces had a certain power. For it was in the desert that the divine revelation, which guides even the most atheistic of Jews, took place. Only in the desert can transcendence be revealed. Walking in the countryside, now the Israelis' national sport, harks back to the pilgrimages of their Hebrew ancestors. Modern-day Hebrews draw strength from visiting the desert. It is in the desert that sustainable development technologies are developing, which will form the basis of the economy of the whole Middle East in the 21st century: careful use of water, agriculture without soil, using non-polluting natural pesticides, solar and wind energy, the desert habitat. Sometimes these technologies are very simple, reviving the simple common sense demonstrated by the peoples of antiquity. In Israel today, archaeological agriculture is practised; the Negev forests are being replanted, using rainwater collection methods developed by the Nabataeans 2 000 years ago in the same place.

The Haï-Bar Programme aims to reintroduce species of animal to the wild which hunting, extensively practised by the land's successive occupants, caused to disappear. It has made it possible to reintroduce herds of ibex and onagers to their natural environment in the desert, and some species of falcon, and to prepare the reintroduction of many ungulates. Many nature reserves have been set up to protect ecosystems. Israel is among those countries which have devoted the largest proportion of their territory to nature reserves, in spite of its small size.

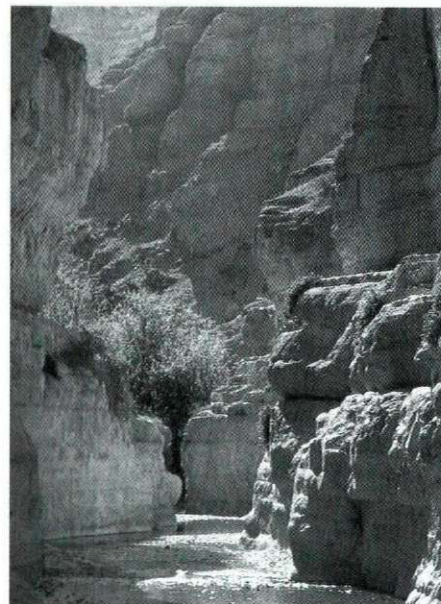
Hunting, considered by the Bible to be a highly reprehensible activity, is not entirely prohibited in Israel, simply to enable the Christian and Muslim populations living there to carry on what they regard as one of their legitimate traditions. However, it is tightly regulated, since most species are protected, including all migratory birds.

A federative association

The Association for Environmental Protection in Israel (SPNI) is an NGO with over 100 000 members today. It was founded 43 years ago. At the Rio Summit, it received a United Nations prize for its intercommunity work on the environment. At the authorities' request, its president is taking part in the peace negotiations with Israel's neighbours on all matters concerning environmental problems, the creation of jointly managed transfrontier nature reserves, the pooling of information on water and a general plan for sharing water resources.

The SPNI brings together people from all sections of the population, Jewish and Arab, religious and non-religious alike to work together to improve everyone's quality of life. Its members meet regularly to carry out green tourism activities organised by the SPNI and its many local branches. The SPNI has, in this way, built up a wide-ranging stock of information in both Arabic and Hebrew, which Palestinians may also consult.

Nahal El Al, Judaea desert



H. Badithi, SPNI

The SPNI has established an environmental training policy, implemented in a network of 26 local schools. This training is incorporated into the curriculum of all schools nationwide and over 80% of children in Israel take part. The SPNI has also introduced environmental training in officer cadet schools and now runs a programme to protect the flight paths of migratory birds which it devised and presented to the army and the national authorities. This programme involves the participation of thousands of volunteers from all countries and collaboration with research centres in Europe and Africa. In total, more than 15% of the Israeli population, ie over 750 000 people, take part every year in the SPNI's activities. It has set up its own research centres and is active in the field of green tourism.

Universal heritage

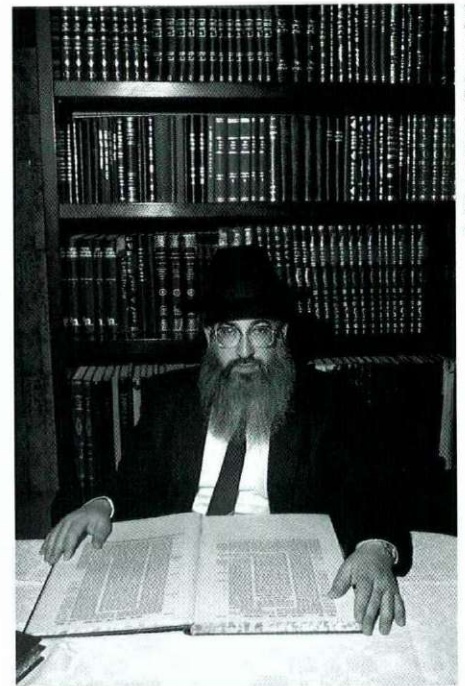
Israel's land ranges over four different climatic and geographical areas, which give it enormous biological diversity. It is one of the most important crossing points anywhere in the world for migratory birds. The variety of vegetation is incredible for a land which is imagined by people who do not live there to be barren desert. The biblical descriptions owed nothing to poetic licence. The SPNI's botanical centre has collected all the plants endemic to the country and created a seed bank for all Israel's wild plants. These include wild wheat, which was identified by the coun-

try's first botanist, Aaron Aronsohn, before the first world war.

Mankind has invented the concept of universal heritage during the 20th century in respect of whales, the Galapagos Islands, equatorial forests, and important cultural symbols such as the Egyptian pyramids. It is a concept which should enable us to preserve all these riches for the future of humanity. The land of Israel, with its visiting migratory birds (which are totally protected), its wealth of flora, its biodiversity, the variety of its landscapes, not to mention the richness of its archaeological sites, should have been declared universal heritage were it not for the fact that until now the region's political problems have ruled this out. ■

N. Lipszyc

President of the French Branch of the Association for Environmental Protection in Israel (SPNI)
14 rue Angélique Verien
F-92200 Neuilly



Rabbi

K. Fischer/Bruce Coleman Ltd

The nature of being human: a Buddhist view

*We only have one earth
and any damage which we do
to it will rebound upon us.*

(His Holiness the Dalai Lama).

Ajahn Tiradhammo

The Buddha was enlightened to the truth that the world is comprised of a rich and intricate flow of mutually interdependent processes. The illusion of separate, independent subjects and objects is merely due to the influence of self-centred ignorance.

All sentient beings, from the tiniest insects to the largest mammals, including human beings, are intricately connected in a vast hierarchy of consciousness, and all are dependent upon the physical environment for their subsistence. Human beings are merely one small, dependently-arisen part of this immense tapestry of interdependent processes. They are unique in the sense of having the ability to reflect and make choices to shape their future and affect the environment around them - either for better, i.e. striv-

ing towards ultimate truth, or for worse, i.e. trying to fulfill their selfish desires. Since human beings are intimately linked to and dependent upon their environment, what they do to the environment they also, consciously or unconsciously, do to themselves. The loss of natural beauty, solidarity with other creatures and the vitality of pristine wilderness and pure air and water, while hard to measure, is not negligible for human welfare. With every plant and animal exterminated from the world, human life correspondingly shrinks in diversity and creativity.

The development of the human mind is most important for the realisation of truth and liberation. With a foundation of moral behaviour the mind is trained in calm and insight meditation which generates a clearer and deeper understanding of the true nature of reality. This is characterised by profound insight into the truth of the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and impersonality of all phenomena, resulting in the experience of selflessness and a sense of compassion and benevolence towards all beings. However, rather than being a belief system, this is something each person must realise for themselves.

Ethical causality

Most people, however, are concerned with achieving happiness and preventing suffering. Thus the Buddha gave many teachings relating to how human beings create their own happiness and suffering according to the principles of ethical causality.

Practically speaking, the amount of happiness or suffering we experience is a direct result of what we do, that is, our morality. The basis of morality in Buddhism is the "Law of *Kamma*". *Kamma* literally means action; however, the Buddha defined *kamma* as intention, volition, or will. That is, the ethical quality of any action is determined by the intention or volition motivating it. All volitional actions have a potential to give a result: *vipaka*.

This is the principle of ethical causality in Buddhism. In simple terms this is the principle that wholesome actions give wholesome (i.e. pleasant) results and unwholesome actions give unwholesome (i.e. painful) results. However, this is not a static, deter-

ministic process, since human beings are continually acting, in ways that may alter or even cancel previous potential results. The Buddhist understanding of *kamma* is a middle way between free will and determinism - human beings have a certain degree of choice but are also influenced by the forces of previous conditioning or habit (some is said to come from previous lives). Thus, for example, if one is in the habit of getting angry, they have a certain amount of choice whether to give into it or to resist it. This depends, of course, upon how strong the habit is, how strong their desire to be free of it is and on how much energy (*kamma*) they put into working on this particular problem.

Buddhism emphasises the importance of human effort and initiative, and assuming responsibility for one's own actions. It is important to put energy into making good, wholesome *kamma*, to make the most of one's ability to choose a beneficial direction for one's life.

As a practical example, all Buddhists realise that it is unwholesome to harm animals. Thus, more devoted ones may undertake to refrain from eating meat for certain periods of time and in Asia some may buy animals intended for slaughter and set them free in monastery grounds. In Thailand Buddhist monks, emphasising the traditional Buddhist values of harmlessness, are taking a leading role in forest conservation, sometimes in opposition to government agencies, heavily influenced by the western pro-development model, which are only looking for ways to exploit the forests for financial gain.

Harmony with nature

In the Buddhist view the true nature of human beings is to strive towards realisation of the ultimate truth, to free themselves from the enticing illusion of self-centredness, to return



Young Thai Buddhist monks

to the perfect peace of living in harmony with the totality of the interdependent processes comprising the world. True happiness results from the giving up of selfish greed and living in selfless harmony with nature rather than exploiting nature in the relentless, never-ending pursuit of trying to satisfy selfish greed. It is important to recognise human beings' place and responsibility within the natural world in a long-term perspective - to understand that our own attitudes have an effect upon our environment and our environment affects our mind. If we investigate life we realise that it is interwoven with diverse cause and effect relationships (the principle of ethical causality). And most importantly, we can affirm that human beings have the power, ability and freedom to make fundamental changes, before it is too late.

In order for modern over-production/over-consumption consumer society to become environment-friendly, major social and psychological changes will have to occur. Will this usher in or be ushered in by a new spiritual awakening as a counterbalance to excessive materialism? Unfortunately, it seems to

be a characteristic of human beings that only a crisis will shake them out of their complacency. Perhaps the environmental crisis is that crisis.

Fortunately there is a small but ever-growing number of people who are willing to say "I have enough for my needs, thank you"! They prefer to give emphasis to the quality of life enriched by spiritual values rather than quantity of life swamped with material possessions, but empty of joy. ■

A. Tiradhammo
Dhammapala Buddhist Monastery
Am Waldrand
CH-3718 Kandersteg

Buddhism

Buddhism originated in northern India from the teachings of Gotama Buddha (563-483 BC). With a strong monastic foundation and an emphasis upon practical and intelligent spiritual teachings, it spread rapidly through the Ganges valley, and by the 3rd century BC, to south India and Sri Lanka under the patronage of King Asoka.

Buddhism's focus on spiritual essentials has allowed it much flexibility and cultural adaptation. However, three main traditions have predominated, the Theravada or Southern School which eventually spread through south-east Asia, the Mahayana or Northern School which moved into China, then Korea, Japan, Taiwan, etc. and the Vajrayana, which took root in Tibet, Mongolia, Bhutan, etc.

Although half the world's population lives in areas influenced by Buddhism, its numbers have been severely reduced by Communism, other religions and secularism from a turn-of-the-century high of one-third of humanity to approximately 500 million followers at the present time (4-5 million in Europe and North America). However, it has seen a revival in some areas (Japan, India, etc) and is attracting increasing interest in western countries due to its tolerance, emphasis upon free inquiry and personal experience, and its intelligent "scientific" philosophy which can be applied to a wide range of present-day issues from psychology to sociology to ecology.

The Islamic approach

Now whatever ye have been given is but a passing comfort for the life of the world (XLII,36)

Fazlun Khalid

The human race today is set on sabotaging its own existence. We have desecrated all of nature by claiming dominion over it and have lost sight of the fact that we ourselves are an intrinsic part of the natural order and dependent on it for our very survival. In our eagerness, not just to sustain our lifestyles but to continually improve them, to what degree one is not very clear, we have disorientated ourselves from our understanding of the finite and delicate nature of planet earth and the place of the human species in it. Islamic teaching offers us an opportunity to understand the natural order, our relationship with the rest of creation and to define human responsibility within it.

Four principles

It could be said that the limits of the human condition are set within four principles. They are *Tawheed*, *Fitra*, *Mizan* and *Khalifa*. A brief examination of these principles follows.

Tawheed

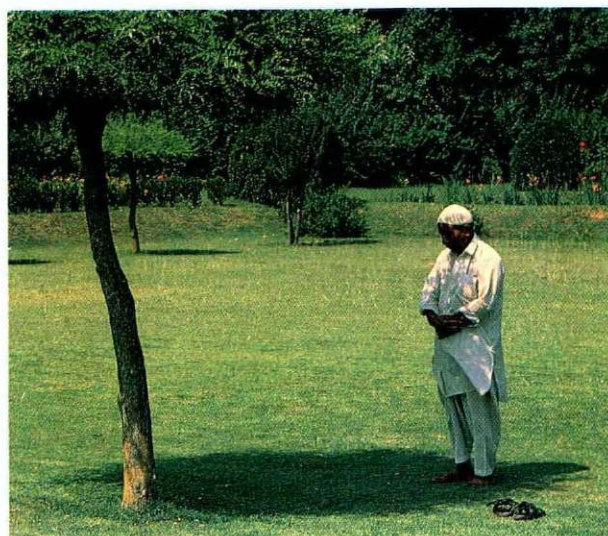
Tawheed is the fundamental statement of the oneness of the Creator from which follows everything else. It is the primordial testimony to the unity of all creation and the interlocking grid of the natural order of which humanity is intrinsically a part. God says in the Qur'an about Himself:

Say: He is God, One, God, the Everlasting Refuge Sura 112: 1-2

and about creation:

*To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth, all obey His will. And it is He who originates creation,...*30: 25

The whole of creation being the work of one Originator works within one stable pattern however complex. Another verse in the Qur'an refers to the heavens and the earth as extensions of God's throne conveying the idea that Creation was designed to function as a whole. Each of its complementary parts, including humankind, plays its own self-preserving role, which in so doing supports the rest. Dominion over Creation remains with the Creator Himself and there is no evidence here of Him having abdicated His responsibilities to one of his creatures no matter how intelligent.



Muslim praying

ICOREC/Circa photo library

Fitra

The *Fitra* describes the primordial nature of creation itself and locates humankind in it. The Qur'an says:

So set thy face to the religion, a man of pure faith - God's original upon which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the right religion; but most men know it not - 30: 29

This defines a zone of understanding of our relationship with the rest of God's primal Creation. God originated humankind within His Creation, which He also originated. Humankind is then inescapably subjected to God's immutable laws as is the rest of Creation. Creation cannot be changed and in this light we can see the greenhouse effect and global warming as the earth's endeavours to maintain a balance in the face of the human assault against it.

Mizan

The *Mizan* is the principle of the middle path and in one of its most eloquent passages the Qur'an describes creation thus:

The All-Merciful has taught the Qur'an. He created man and He taught him the explanation. The sun and the moon to a reckoning, and the herbs and trees bow themselves; and heaven - He raised it up and set the balance. Transgress not in the balance, and weigh with justice, and skimp not in the balance. And earth - He set it down for all beings, therein fruits and palm trees with sheaths, and grain in the blade, and fragrant herbs. Of which your Lord's bounties will you and you deny? 55: 1-12

God has singled out the human species and taught it reason - the capacity to understand. All of Creation has an order and a purpose. If the sun, the moon, the stars, the trees and the rest of Creation did not conform to the natural laws - "bow themselves" - it would be impossible for life to function on earth. So we have

a responsibility not to deny "Lord's bounties" and actively recognise the order that is around us, for ourselves, as much as for the rest of Creation and indeed for future generations.

Khalifa

Khalifa, or the role of stewardship, is the sacred duty God has ascribed to the human race. There are many verses in the Qur'an that describes human duties and responsibilities such as the following verse which aptly summarises man's role:

It is He who has appointed you viceroys in the earth 6: 165

Guardians of the earth

Humankind has a special place in God's scheme - we are more than friends of the earth - we are its guardians. Although we are equal partners with everything else in the natural world, we have added responsibilities by virtue of the fact that we are able to reason. We are decidedly not its "lords and masters".

We may deduce from these four principles that Creation, although quite complex and yet finite, only works because each of its component parts do what is expected of it - in the language of the Qur'an, submit to the Creator. Man is inextricably part of this pattern. The role of humans, who uniquely have wills of their own and are thus capable of interfering with the pattern of creation, is one of guardianship. This added responsibility imposes limits on their behaviour and should lead to a conscious recognition of their own fragility. They achieve this by submitting to the divine law which is the primary meaning and purpose of Islam.

Regardless of whether we are talking about small self-governing communities or vast empires, barbarian tribes or points of high civilisation, or rebels or conformists, or the ignorant or the enlightened, the human race functioned unconsciously within natural, unwritten boundaries until quite recently in history. There was then an intuitive disposition to live within the *fitra* but only achieved by a conscious recognition of the existence of a superior force - the divine. This was an exis-

tential reality and it was neither idyllic nor utopian.

Two determining factors

We are now clearly not functioning within these limits. What has caused the human species to breach them? It is possible to recognise two events in 16th and 17th century Europe that allowed it to break free from the natural patterning that it has always been part of. One of these was the appearance of the Cartesian world view which propounded a dualism which separated mind and matter and allowed for the development of science on purely mechanistic lines. Cartesian scepticism brushed aside the accumulated wisdom of the ages and sowed the seeds of doubt in the soil of the human community. From then on humanity began to worship itself and in Descartes' own words the human species were "lords and masters of Creation". Now man had reason on his side to support him in his acts of predation. This was the beginning of the amoral quest for unfettered development.

This period also saw the laying down of the foundations of the banking system we are all in thrall to now. In Islamic terms they have

quite decidedly sabotaged the *mizan* of Creation by not only charging interest but doing this on money they create endlessly out of nothing. This explosion of artificial wealth provides us with the illusion of economic dynamism but in reality it is parasitic. Endless credit devours the finite *fitra* which would, if we kept this up, eventually result in the earth looking like the surface of the moon.

People who lived in the pre-Cartesian dimension, that was before we were told that nature was there to be plundered, were not basically different to us. They had the same positive and negative human attributes we have today, but the big difference was that the results of human profligacy was contained by the natural order of things. This was a condition that transcended technological and political sophistication and even religious disposition. Excess in the natural order was contained because it was biodegradable. When old civilisations however opulent, profligate, greedy, or brutal died, the forest just grew over them. They left no pollutants, damaging poisons or nuclear waste.

Assuming we survive as a species, archaeologists a few millennia from now excavating our present rampant civilisation, are going to have a problem or two. ■

F. Khalid

Founder Director
Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental
Sciences
PO Box 5051
GB-Birmingham B20 3RZ

Note

The Qur'anic references are from The Koran Interpreted by A.J. Arberry, 1983. The World Classics Series, Oxford University Press.

The sacred kaya forests of Kenya

The sacred *kaya* forests are a patchwork of tropical coastal forests of invaluable biological and cultural significance. The Mijikenda peoples (a group of nine tribes) who live along the Kenya coast, have been instrumental in conserving them for cultural reasons for the last three centuries.

The word *kaya* means homestead in several Bantu languages. Historically, these forest patches sheltered small fortified villages or *kayas* which were set up in the late 16th century by the Mijikenda people fleeing from Somali Galla enemy groups in northern Kenya.

The *kayas* were the burial grounds of the founding leaders of the Mijikenda society. The trees in the forests thus came to represent the Mijikenda ancestors and for this reason, the *kayas* became sacred spiritual sites. Even today, Mijikenda traditions do not allow the cutting of trees except for controlled harvesting of trees and plants for use in the sacred rites taking place within the *kaya*.

Sacred ceremonies

The *kaya* elders periodically hold sacred cultural ceremonies to pray for the community's various needs such as rains, bumper crop harvests, fish catches, health or peace. The *kayas* are also used as shrines for meditation, oath-taking ceremonies and cleansing of any Mijikenda offender who has desecrated the *kaya*.

Scientists estimate that more than half of Kenya's rare plants occur in the Coast Province, most of them in the *kayas*, but little in-depth research has

been carried out on them. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has, since 1986, been working in collaboration with the National Museums of Kenya, to inventory all the coastal plants, lobby for a national conservation strategy to protect the *kayas* and develop education and public awareness programmes. So far, 23 out of about 60 *kayas* have been gazetted as national monuments under Kenya's Antiquities and Monuments Act.

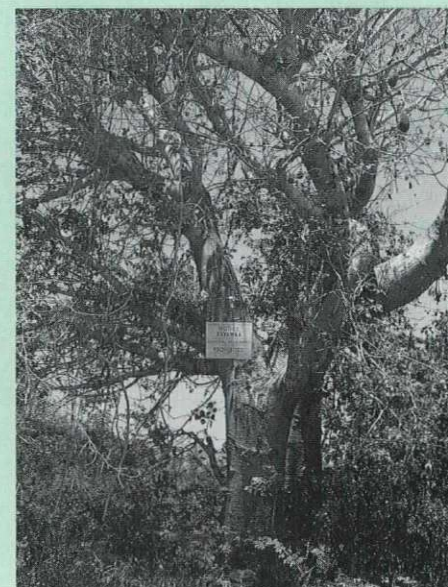
Encouraging these traditions

The Coastal Forest Conservation Unit project last year contributed 2 500 Swiss francs to help *kaya* elders buy traditional items for their cultural ceremonies. "By encouraging and supporting the Mijikenda's traditions, the project reinforces an indigenous conservation ethic and helps preserve the forests. It is an invaluable focus for general environmental education", says Quentin Luke, WWF Project executive.

But much as the *kayas* are important scientifically and culturally, they are now under enormous pressures from a growing demand for timber and land for farming, housing and tourism development. "In the long term, the *kayas*' survival will depend on the success of the awareness programme and on the project-funded review of the existing legislation to give it the necessary strength to face modern day threats to their existence", adds Quentin Luke.

Elizabeth Obel-Lawson
WWF EARPO
Eastern Africa Regional Programme Office
PO Box 52440
Nairobi, Kenya

Sign proclaiming protected *Kaya* forest, Kenya



J. Newby/WWF



Seitre/Bios

Bush fires, Harare region, Zimbabwe

What risks to the environment? An African animist's reply

Apollinaire Claude Anyouzogo

Who could fail to understand nowadays how much at home a fish feels in clean water that has not been polluted by human waste?

I shall use this concept to try and show that animists in central Africa feel just as much at home in their environment as fish do in water. However, one opening remark has to be made here. They feel "at home" only as long as the "hand of civilised man has not stepped into their environment". This is a powerful image when you consider the startling distinction that is often made between animists (defined as such by their beliefs) and civilised human beings (regarded as such because of the new way of life they bring). The distinction is startling, as I said, because Africans do not regard their animism as a religion, but as a way of life that has similarities and parallels with the life of civilised human beings. In short, if the latter's way of life damages the environment, then so does that of African animists, despite their closeness to nature. Before condemning civilisation (in other words, westerners), it is therefore necessary to identify the situations where there is a risk of the action of animists damaging the environment in animist Africa. It is when the two ways of life come together that the negative impact of western influences really becomes evident.

Animists endanger the environment...

It would be wrong to believe that a way of life which is in communion or in symbiosis with nature harbours no dangers for the latter. Many Africans, perhaps unwittingly, damage the environment and fail to realise the dangers of pollution and the degradation of nature.

A few examples should suffice to illustrate the various kinds of damage caused to the environment in the equatorial forest region of Africa - a continent where it is always best to define the region in question exactly.

Many peasants spare themselves the effort of digging cesspools, hiding behind the divine pretext that everything disappears in nature anyway. Those who live near watercourses therefore see no need for cesspools, and use the watercourses instead. Unfortunately, these do not flow into a sewage system, but carry the water to other settlements which have no idea what use has been made of it by the villages upstream.

Moreover, those who light, or enjoy, bush fires - whatever their purpose - do not understand the scale of the devastation which the fires cause. They result in degradation of the soil, even in rain forests, and drive out the animals which provide the only source of meat. The list could go on, but these examples are enough to show that, despite appearances, the environment is indeed in danger in animist Africa.

...and western life-style?

Overall, however, the threats described above are negligible compared to those posed by the arrival of western life-styles. What could be better than buying a gun and obtaining all the necessary licences and permits? Unfortunately, although western guns are useful for hunting for meat, they ultimately make it scarce. In short, they lead to the extermination of certain species that are too much in demand because of their financial value. The problem of the disappearance of gorillas, elephants and hippopotamuses is not new.

For their part, pesticides are used to boost cocoa and coffee yields. Who would have thought that, unfortunately, they would also serve to destroy many, if not most, of the fish in the rivers? The concentration of pesticides in mud and in watercourses has deprived women and children of the pleasure of fishing and angling.

However insignificant these examples may seem, they provide a clear illustration of the disaster which occurs when the two ways of life described above come together.

Environmental education

In the face of this slow and unwitting destruction of the environment, the only solution is environmental education at two levels. Africans, especially those living in the equatorial forest region, must be made aware of the threat posed by bush fires. At the same time, they must also be made to realise the dangers of polluted watercourses, before it is too late. That is the first level at which environmental education is needed.

The second level concerns those involved in bringing about development and progress in Africa. Without wishing to be prophets of doom, we can detect in such development signs which herald the destruction of a previously more intact environment about to lose its virginity.

The risks for the environment in Africa are therefore substantial. There can be no question of using underdevelopment as a pretext for claiming to have no environmental problems. The more Africans (be they animists or not) try by all possible means to catch up with westerners, the more damage they will cause to the environment, despite their own closeness to nature.

A. C. Anyouzogo

Doctor of Linguistics
12 rue Zellenberg
F-67100 Strasbourg

Nature in Hinduism

*We must see God in all things,
behind all forms and behind all
names. There is not a grain of earth
that is devoid of God*

(Ma Ananda Mayi)

Anand Nayak

The term Hinduism uses to describe itself is *sanatana dharma*, meaning the law of the rightful order of things, law with no beginning and no end. This law of the rightful order of things can be seen in the nature of the cosmos, in the nature of the world, in the nature of all living creatures, and should be evident in the behaviour of all individuals as well as of society; it is the art of living with nature, which is within and without the human being, but without confusing nature with the ultimate purpose of existence. As the *Kena upanisad* (1,4 and 6) says:

Know thou this: that the Brahman is that which is not expressed in words and through which the word is expressed, and not that which is revered here as such. Know thou this: that the Brahman is that which is not seen with the eyes and through which the eyes see, and not that which is revered here as such.

Hinduism is permeated by nature in its conception, its rites and its vision of the world. The same applies to its literature, its art and its philosophy. Here are two illustrations:

Nature in Sanskrit

Let us look at the linguistic conception of its sacred language - Sanskrit. The word "sanskrit" means "refined", a language refined from dialects which are the *prākṛit*, ie natural languages, those which develop amongst people as trees and bushes do in nature. In fact, Sanskrit was artificially constructed to communicate the revelation of the *vedas* in pure sounds and signs from nature. Its vowels and consonants, which are very systematically classified so that all grammatical rules can be derived from them, are the sounds of nature - wind, thunder, waterfalls and streams. For its alphabet, scholars took the forms of dried twigs and leaves fallen under trees in forests. It should be mentioned here that Sanskrit origi-

nated during the *aranyaka* period, ie forest treatises. Sanskrit calls a letter a leaf, while a line is a twig, a chapter is a branch, a section of a book is a trunk and the book itself is a tree.

This shows the close relationship of nature and language. But the Hindu approach to nature is illustrated more profoundly in its philosophy as described in the *Bhagavad Gita* (verses 1-3 of chapter 15):

There is a tree, the tree of Transmigration, the Asvattha tree everlasting. Its roots are above in the Highest, and its branches are here below. Its leaves are sacred songs, and he who knows them knows the vedas. Its branches spread from earth to heaven, and the powers of nature give them life. Its buds are the pleasures of the senses. Far down below, its roots stretch into the world of men, binding a mortal through selfish actions.

Men do not see the changing form of that tree, nor its beginning, nor its end, nor where its roots are...

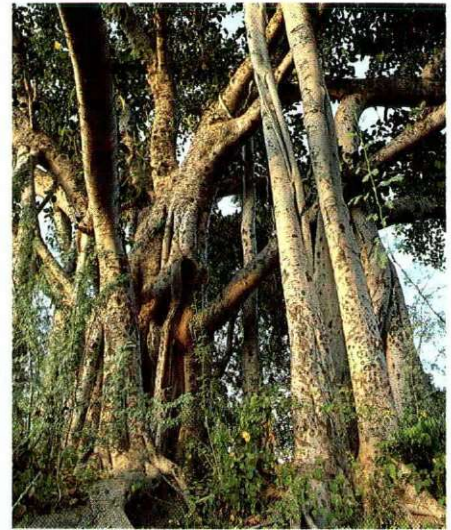
The tree of Transmigration

First of all, there is marvelling at the grandeur of Creation conceived as a tree, which has its roots at the top and stretches downwards, this immense Creation which is our world, our society and ourselves. In this passage, the *Bhagavad Gita*, which dates back to the start of our own era, states in a poetic form what Hinduism was later to express in highly philosophical and technical terms in its philosophy of *samkhya*.

It is *prakṛti*, nature, which appears in its rich variety as a physical presence as well as a refined spirit of reason and intelligence. It is the beauty and grandeur of nature in the cosmos outside, as well as of nature within us, in our bodies and in our spirits.

However, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the philosophy of *samkhya* do not stop there. They do not claim that nature has its own absolute value, nor do they preach nature conservation as if it had absolute and inalienable rights. The *Bhagavad Gita* says quite plainly that (15, 3-4):

*...this fig tree with its roots so fatly nourished.
Take the stout axe of detachment and cut it*



Banyan-tree, India

down! Seek that path wherefrom those who go never return.

This was why this tree was revealed and spread out: to show the way towards its unrevealed source.

This is Hinduism's basic attitude towards nature and ecology. They do not have an absolute value, but rather wholly assume the value attributed to them, ie their value denotes other greater values; their order remains because there is another greater order. In other words, nature must be seen and respected as a sign leading towards what might be called God or the Absolute.

In my view, this Hindu attitude is a healthy one which can provide the necessary counterbalance to a view which regards nature as an absolute end in itself, as can be sometimes observed in studies and discussions over demographic and environmental ecology, the human body and its well-being. What Hinduism means is that all these rights exist because the Absolute exists and that we should recognise this in everything that can be called nature. ■

A. Nayak

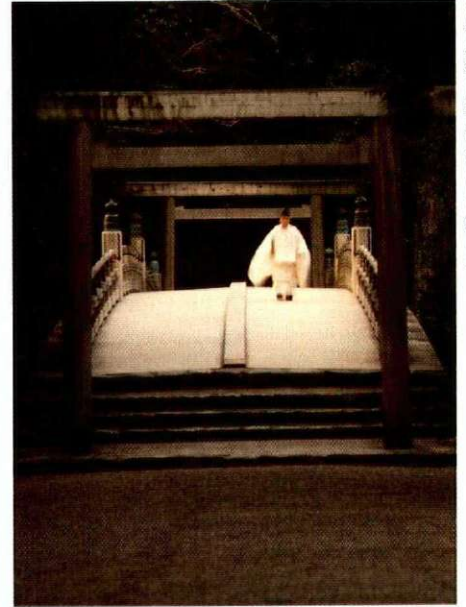
Institute of Missiology and the Science of Religion
University of Fribourg
CH-1700 Fribourg

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधःशाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।
छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥
अधश्चोर्ध्वं प्रसृतास्तस्य शाखा



Aero Photograph Pro/Ryu Shinohara

Meiji-jingu sacred forest in Tokyo where there is a shrine dedicated to the Emperor and Empress Meiji. About 3.4 million people go there to worship at New Year



Aero Photograph Pro/Ryu Shinohara

Shinto priest crossing the Isuzu river

The Shinto concept

Haruo Sakurai

Human life within the natural environment

In Shinto, there is no need to lead a lifestyle founded on the logics of a doctrine or to retreat from secular life to practise a specific religious life. Rather, the role of Shinto is to provide religious meaning and direction through understanding and respecting the lives of others, while consciously striving to live a peaceful, safe and creative existence.

It is through this kind of collective consciousness that the act of worshipping *kami* (the deities) has come to be expressed and the actual place of worship of the *kami*, the *Jinja* or shrine. There are approximately 80 000 shrines legally registered as religious organisations in Japan. However, in reality there are more shrines in existence, deeply rooted in the community. Shrines are also called *Chinju no mori*, or the forest of a village shrine, and structures exist in the forests where the *kami* are enshrined along with other necessary facilities.

Even in densely populated cities, the groves we happen to discover are usually recognised as shrines. The *Chinju no mori* is accepted to be the abode of the *kami* which indicates that the forest of the *kami* is one of intimacy and an integral part of our lives. Colourful shrine festivals observed in various regions link people to people, creating a well-spring of activity that returns us collectively to the source of a sacred world, by living our present life meaningfully, and can be said to offer a chance for new life-force by experiencing the origin of Creation.

Basic characteristics

In Shinto, the importance of life and its perpetuation, harmony of self and the cosmos, and the relative merits of the *kami* are revered. The continuous symbiosis of all life forms existing on earth and not only in the world within our reach, receptive posture and acceptance of foreign cultures, the impelling force to discover Japan's identity from the past to present, can be said to be the basic religious characteristics of Shinto.

From ancient times, it has been taboo to cut the trees of a shrine. The forests of the *kami* were conceived as being a whole entity, a world with a life force of its own. When trees were cut, new trees were planted immediately to nurture and sustain the forest. This is best exemplified by the forest of Ise Grand Shrines, the symbolic shrine of Japan. As the need for human dwelling space increases, the forests are exploited and shrine forests once considered sacred and left untouched continue to diminish in the name of development. Especially in the cities, shrine groves are decreasing due to public projects. There is an alarming rise in the number of people who have become indifferent to the devastation of nature for a more convenient life-style.

We should cease all thoughts of preserving a limited portion of nature. Moreover, there is a need to reconsider our living space as we are being nurtured and empowered within nature. We should also deepen our realization that we are all linked within our living space and work toward preservation of our environment. One of the reasons for stressing this point is the following movement current in Japan. People working near the sea attach great importance to the growing and nurturing of trees on the mountains, because disorderly cutting of trees on the mountains bring about the devastating

effects of natural disasters on their environment. This reflects that our living environments do not exist independently, but only through respect for the living spaces of others, and only through the realization that all environments are linked are we able to grasp the sensation of living. I feel that, based on actual living, the image of worship in Shinto is expressed in its awe and respect towards nature. ■

H. Sakurai
Professor
Kogakkan University
1704 Kodakujimoto-cho
Ise-city, Japan 516

On Shinto

Shinto is an indigenous religion closely interwoven with the daily life of the Japanese. Many do not realize that they live under its cultural and social influences aside from special occasions such as local festivals, worship to Shinto shrines at new year, baby's bath and so on. In essence the characteristic of Shinto is religious symbiosis with other religions. Many pray simultaneously to *Hotoke* or buddhas while having faith in *kami* or deities. According to 1996 statistics, there are 79 202 registered Shinto shrines where the *kami* are enshrined, with 19 066 Shinto priests including 2 038 women priests in employment.

The Bahá'í perspective

Civilisation, so highly praised by the most eminent representatives of the arts and sciences, will bring great evils upon humanity if it is allowed to overstep the boundaries of moderation...

Civilisation, which brings so much good in moderation, will become, if taken to excess, an equally abundant source of evil...

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CLXIV).

Arthur Lyon Dahl

The essence of the Bahá'í approach to the environment is founded in the fundamental principle of the harmony of science and religion, which must be in balance. Science without religion tends to materialism, while religion without science can fall into superstition. Science can give us tools to help us live in the physical world, but only religion can tell us how to use those tools for good rather than for evil.

Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith, described nature as God's Will and as its expression in and through the physical world. For Bahá'ís, nature and all the Creation reflect the qualities and attributes of God, to be contemplated and admired in all their diversity. The beauty and verdure of the country are seen as the world of the soul. Mercy and compassion must be shown not only to human beings, but to every living creature, and cruelty to animals is prohibited.

The Bahá'í writings refer to the natural world as a unified system in which all beings are connected together, such as in the dependence of plants on carbon dioxide produced by animals and microbes, and of animals on the oxygen produced by plants. Co-operation and reciprocity are seen as essential properties of nature.

Humankind's realities

Humankind has a special place in the natural world. While the human body has a physical reality that is, like animals, subject to nature's laws, it is endowed with a second rational or intellectual reality, which can guide, control and overcome nature. Then there is a third human dimension, the spiritual reality, that delivers us from the material world to find illumination, transcending the limited human reality to attain to the infinitude of God.

Our physical, social and spiritual environments are all interrelated. We are organic with the world, and cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us. Our inner life moulds the environment and is itself

also deeply affected by it. Therefore, Bahá'í communities are called upon to assist in conserving the environment in ways that blend with their rhythm of life, and many undertake tree planting, organic gardening, and other practical environmental projects. The Bahá'í International Community maintains an Office of the Environment as part of its United Nations representation.

Material development is important to free us from the captivity of the world of nature; for as long as man is captive to nature he is a ferocious animal struggling for existence. However, over a hundred years ago, Bahá'u'lláh warned about the hazards to the planet of too much material civilization: *If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation.*

Global society

Bahá'ís see the world as evolving rapidly towards a global society as technology breaks down barriers between nations. The problems of the environment are symptoms of the larger imbalances in society, and the barriers to their solution are largely economic, social and political. Changes in behaviour, sacrifices of individual interests in the common good, and major social adjustments will be required. Even where solutions have been agreed, as at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the will to apply them has been lacking, and this lack of will is fundamentally a spiritual problem. Changed values and a restoration of moral and ethical principles are needed.

Society needs to be reorganised on a more organic pattern to reflect the diversity and decentralised nature of planetary environments. Local problems should be addressed at the local level, but with a sense of global responsibility. At the same time, the planetary scale of certain environmental problems escapes from the control of national governments. A rapid transition to a world society,

with the establishment of the appropriate institutions of a world federation or commonwealth, will be necessary to address these global problems effectively. All humanity needs to recognise its oneness and develop a sense of world citizenship. The central aim of the Bahá'í Faith is to help to lay spiritual foundations for such a world civilization. As Bahá'u'lláh has said, we should become like the leaves of one tree, the flowers of one garden, the waves of one sea. ■

A. L. Dahl

Co-ordinator
UN System-wide Earthwatch
UNEP
15 chemin des Anémones
CH-1219 Chatelaine-Geneva

The views expressed are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Environment Programme.

The Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith is an independent world religion with consultative status at the United Nations, widely recognised for its tolerance, openness and contributions to understanding between diverse races, religions and cultures. Founded some 150 years ago in Persia, it is now established in over 100 000 localities in 235 countries and territories and is the second most geographically widespread religion after Christianity. Its founder, Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), renewed the essential spiritual truths of all religions, and brought social teachings to establish the oneness of humankind and to lay spiritual foundations for a united world.

Bahá'í initiative near Panchgani, India : tree planting



P. Slaughter 1997

Aboriginal spirituality

Traditional Aboriginal people have a view of the spiritual significance of the Australian landscape which has often conflicted with that of the dominant European culture in Australia. They often say that "the land is our mother" or that "we do not own the land, the land owns us". In Central Australia, they may point out a hill or a tree saying "that's my grandfather", an example of a common Aboriginal belief that our spiritual essence comes from the land at conception and returns to the land at death.

Aboriginal people have a different view of Creation to the European Christian one: in the Dreamtime, creative beings known as the ancestors lay dormant in the land, then emerged and started moving around, engaging in epic deeds and titanic struggles which left their mark on the landscape. These Dreamtime ancestors then returned back into the earth where they are still visible to this day.



▲ Central Australian Aborigines

J.-L. Klein/M.-L. Hubert

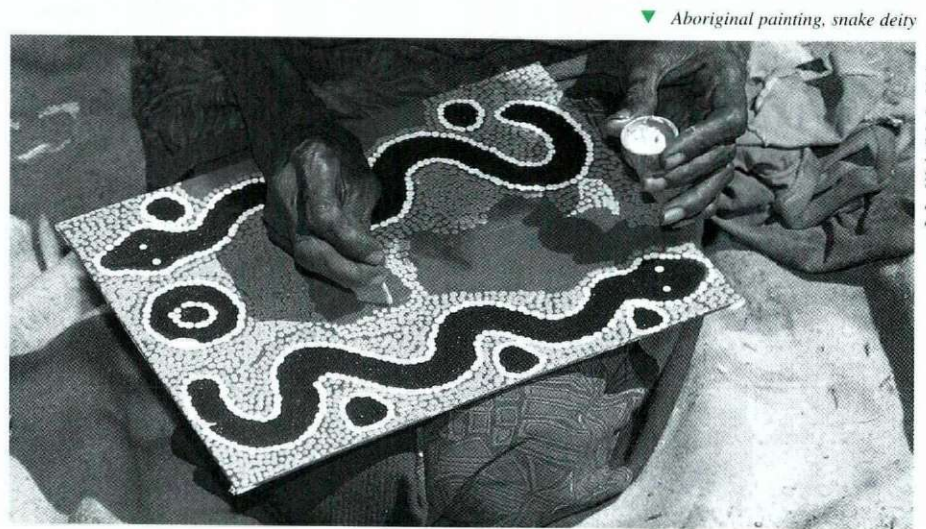
Close links with the land

Aboriginal spiritualism cannot be separated from the land, and this has brought Aboriginal people into continual conflict with the competing interests of white mining companies, agriculturalists and governments who see land merely as a resource to be exploited rather than the source of life and being itself. The fight to preserve the continuity of Aboriginal spiritual traditions has been maintained partly through the political struggle for land rights.

European ecologists have sometimes had a different understanding of land to Aboriginal people, although a very fruitful dialogue between white ecologists and traditional Aboriginal land owners has begun to take place over the last few years.

Idea of wilderness

One example of how differently ecologists and Aboriginal people have seen landscape is in the popular notion of "wilderness" which gained currency in the Australian conservation movement in the 1970s and 1980s. This idea of land seeks to project onto the Australian landscape the idea of a pure uncontaminated wilderness, untouched by human hand. But Aboriginal people once inhabited every area of the continent, so that historically, "wilderness" can only be defined as an area of land where the original inhabitants have been exterminated or driven away. The idea of "wilderness" is an unhistorical fiction which masks the brutal reality of what happened when Europeans colonised the country. For much of Australia's post-colonial history, Aboriginal people were driven off their land, killed by disease, guns or alcohol, and forced to assimilate to the dominant white culture.



▼ Aboriginal painting, snake deity

J.-L. Klein/M.-L. Hubert

Strong spirituality

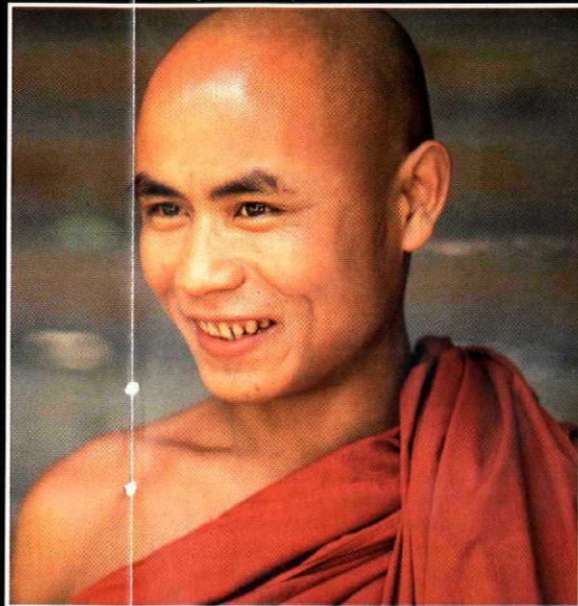
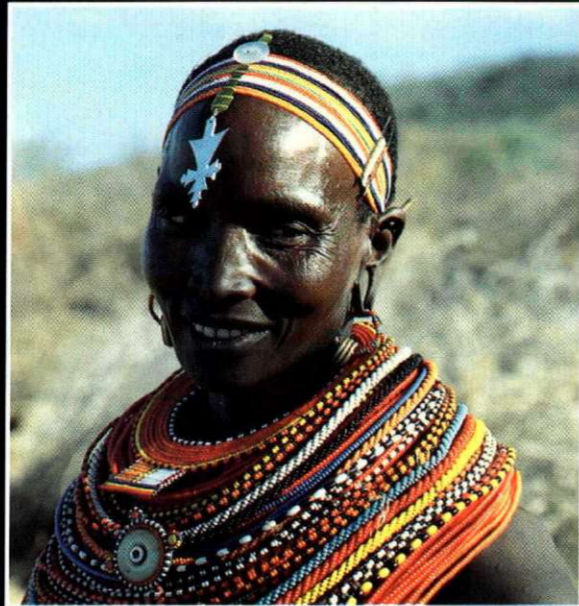
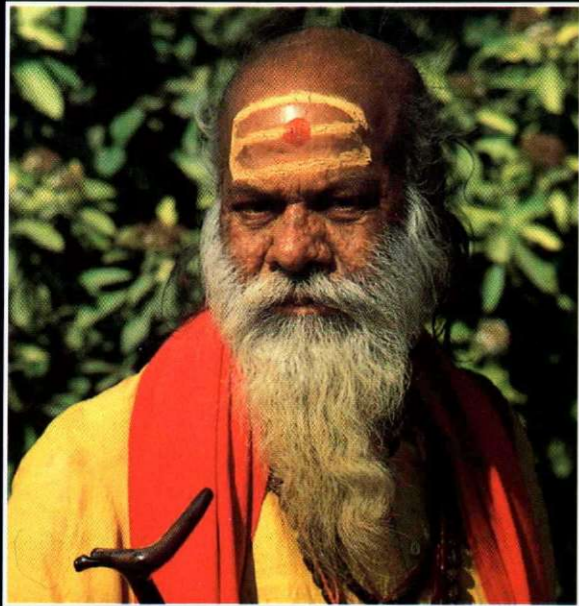
However, in Central Australia, and many other parts of the continent to this day, Aboriginal spirituality remains strong, because people's ties to country which is the basis of their spirituality remain strong. Each major geographical feature is named and celebrated in the Dreaming stories, the land is still criss-crossed with the dreaming paths and songlines of the Dreamtime ancestors and increasing ceremonies to maintain the land are still conducted.

Another version of the European myth of "wilderness" was enshrined in the legal fiction of *terra nullius*. This notion that Australia was in fact inhabited by no-one when Europeans arrived was used as the legal basis for the wholesale expropriation of Aboriginal land, and formed the economic basis for Australia's sheep, cattle and wheat industries.

The absurd and demonstrably unhistorical notion of *terra nullius* was finally overturned by the High Court of Australia in 1992, in the judgement known as the Mabo decision which legally recognised Native Land Title for the first time in Australian history. ■

Harold Furber

Extract from the "Ecology, Ethics, Spiritualities" colloquy Klingenthal, France, 27-29 October 1995



The Klingenthal Appeal

For the first time in history, representatives of all spiritualities, of all cultures, met together to discuss environmental problems and to adopt the Klingenthal Appeal.

"Baha'ists, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Shintoists, Australian Aborigines, African Animists, Incas, Canadian and Brazilian Indians, Materialists and adepts of Universalism, Freemasons, our beliefs and perceptions often differ.

... However, the environmental situation today is so serious that we believe that we need to work together and combine our efforts so that our different cultural and spiritual approaches, far from constituting obstacles or impediments to co-operation, instead become sources of enrichment.

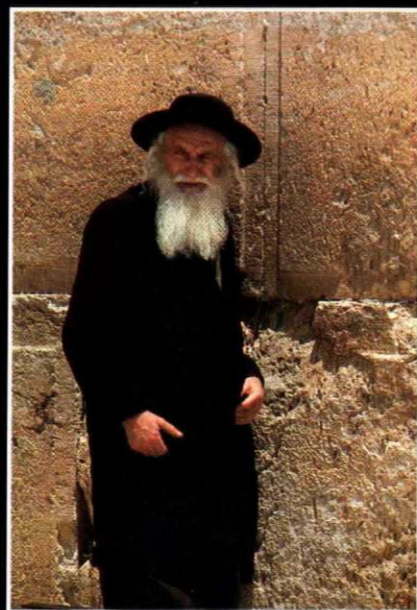
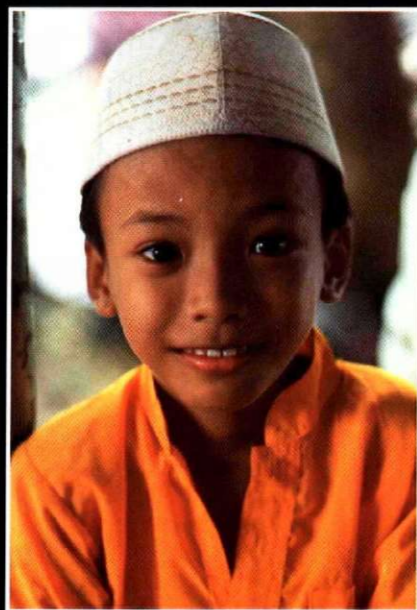
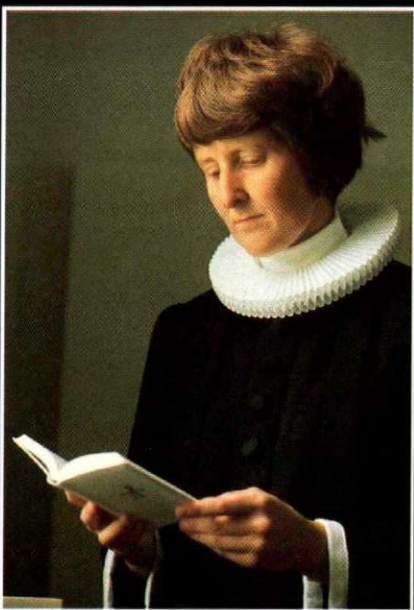
... Therefore, together we earnestly appeal to all men and women of good will:

- to foster their own spiritual and cultural traditions in order to discover the wise lessons they offer for respecting nature and promoting the sustainable development of natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations;

- to reconcile rational and scientific justifications for the conservation of resources with the emotional approach, for instance by highlighting the beauty of nature;

... Together, therefore, we entreat all peoples and their leaders to make practical and sustained efforts to ensure that our common heritage is managed and protected responsibly.

...
Extract from the "Ecology, Ethics, Spiritualities" colloquy
Klingenthal, France, 27-29 October 1995
Pax Christi, 58 Av. de Breteuil, F-75007 Paris



Spiritual universe of Brazilian Indians

Brazil now has about 300 000 Indians (0.2% of the Brazilian population) from some 220 different ethnic groups, who speak over 170 languages. In this multiethnic and multicultural country, these survivors of the six million Indians living there in 1500 when the Portuguese navigators arrived are today struggling to protect their way of life, based on a communal system and harmony with nature.

For these indigenous societies, the earth is neither an object of trade, nor an instrument of luxury, nor merely the source of their existence. The earth is the basis of their culture, the root of their family and community organisation and the source of their relationship with the supernatural. The earth is the cultural resting-ground of their ancestors. The foods produced by cultivated land - or found in the

wild (forests and rivers) - are shared amongst the community. No one sells or lends what nature has given to everyone. During festivals, indigenous peoples celebrate the cycles of life with dances and songs and demonstrate their gratitude for nature's generosity. Shamans maintain contact with the supernatural. Their wisdom reassures the community and heals illnesses caused by evil spirits.

The cosmology of the Indian peoples of Brazil is entirely permeated with nature: rivers, forests, terrestrial and aquatic animals, birds, rain, lightning, thunder, stars and even the heavens. Supernatural beings are present in nature. Forest spirits are, as it were, the forerunners of environmental activists. They protect the forest animals and punish hunters who kill for reasons other than for their own subsistence; they protect the trees and confound

and punish those who cut them down needlessly.

For instance, the Guarani (a people living in southern Mato Grosso, in Parana and other Brazilian states as well as in Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina) display such reverence for life and nature that, even while "telling" their traps not to miss their prey, they also beg the animal's forgiveness, explaining that they are only killing it in order to feed their family. ■

Marlène C. Ossami de Moura,
Antonio Carlos de Moura

Extract from the "Ecology, Ethics, Spiritualities" colloquy
Klingenthal, France, 27-29 October 1995

The approach of the Incas

A living example for sustainable development

The Incas did not die as it is normally believed in the world. The Incas or the Kechuas are alive and have kept their whole culture, religion and philosophy about life, the environment, the cosmos, God and the sustainable use of all biological resources. What was destroyed by the Spaniards was the juridical organisation of the Kechuas: the Inca state, but not their culture.

For the Inca philosophy, there are three worlds: *Hanan Pacha* or High World, *Kay Pacha* or this world, and *Uhu Pacha* or Mother Earth's world. God, known by the Kechuas as Wirawocha or Illa Tecse, together with the sun, moon and stars, is in the High World or *Hanan Pacha*. Men, women, animals, plants and micro-organisms are sisters and brothers and are living in this world or *Kay Pacha*.

Mother Earth or *Pacha Mama* keeps the secrets of this world. If human beings knew them, they would never have destroyed nor polluted the world. Incas or Kechuas know these secrets. That is why they built wonderful Andean terraces for agriculture and developed more than 150 genetic resources which today feed the world. Just to give some examples, let us mention potatoes, tomatoes, papaya and maize.

In fact, even nowadays, Kechuas keep a strong philosophy which permits them to respect all forces of nature and to practice sustainable uses of biological and natural resources coming closer to sustainable development than any other culture in the world.

Incas have in Kechua another name for uranium. It is called *ayacachi*, that means "salt of death" or "the killing salt" and they never touched it, which in these modern times means that uranium or plutonium should never be exploited or used. That is why all Kechuas, Aymaras and other indigenous peoples are against uranium mining, nuclear energy, nuclear weapons and atomic testing everywhere: exactly because they all are violating our Mother Earth's peace.

For Inca philosophy and Inca religion, all living beings and ecosystems are part of God and play a unique role within ecology and life. That is why all living beings must be respected. ■

Elias Carreno

Extract from the "Ecology, Ethics, Spiritualities" colloquy
Klingenthal, France, 27-29 October 1995

Kechuas near Lake Titicaca, Bolivia



B. & H. Weimer

Religions and nature

Varied and intersecting viewpoints

Joseph Ki-Zerbo

Human relationships with nature through different civilisations can be seen in the context of two main schools of thought in which religions play a major, if not determining, role.

With the first of these the mind, the hands or a tool are the instrument whereby the individual perceives nature to be a useful or pleasant object ordained for human beings as a means to an end. The second approach rejects detachment from nature and regards human beings as associates of nature and an integral part of it, as a microcosm in symbiosis within a macrocosm. Human beings thus appear as one subject among many others, whose partnership and alliance we must negotiate by means of appropriate religious, ethical, symbolic or other procedures.

However, the two approaches are not entirely opposed or dichotomous. They may be found in every civilisation, with one aspect tending to prevail over the other, according to the period and geo-cultural area concerned.

Symbiosis with nature

The symbiotic and participatory approach is not simply a cosmic pantheism. Human beings swim in the universe but do not drown in it.

The Ancient Egyptians, for example, believed in a grandiose scenario from the beginning, when human beings were "born from the eyes of the Sun", to the realm beyond the judgment of Osiris, when justified human beings are admitted to the Sun's chariot as companions of the divine Star (assimilated to the supreme God). Between those two temporal limits, human beings deal with a multitude of "natural gods", symbolised by or incarnate in the falcon, the ram, the cow and so on. Egyptian religious art in all its dazzling splendour teems like a bestiary.

What has been called Negro-African pandomy, with its profusion of masks, is very much a part of this tradition. Once again, however, it does not encroach upon the transcendent status of human beings, as is shown by the myth of the African Prometheus in whom God finally recognised "his equal and his brother".

India is one of the few regions in which schools of thought proclaiming human beings to be organic participants in the cosmos continued to grow in strength between the Hindu period (*Veda*, *Upanisad*, *Yoga*) and the age of Buddhism and Jainism.



P. Thebaut

The universe is a huge, osmotically permeable space in which beings move through cycles of existence frequently punctuated by reincarnations in a variety of visible species and forms, in accordance with a specific initial programme. The *Purusa* of the *Upanisads*, symbolised by "the man in the sun", is, like the *Brahman*, the supreme being.

Similarly, for the Chinese the world's Tao is the universal macrocosmic principle governing the progress of beings and things, the great "loom" from which everything comes and to which everything returns in order to be reworked: *After death, I shall frolic in the distant horizons of infinity. I shall unite my light with that of the sun and that of the moon, and join in the permanence of the sky and the earth.*

The same could be said of Japanese Shintoism with its innumerable *kami* (local spirits of Mother Earth or of birth), of Shamanism and of the striking myths about the construction of the world found among the Amerindians and in Oceania.

However, this global approach of and to human beings does not in any way exclude the operative, operational aspect of relationships with nature.

The exploitation of nature

We need look no further than the Egyptians' consummate mastery of the hydraulics of the Nile or the immense Aztec civil engineering works, such as the Mexico aqueduct or the imposing Sun and Moon pyramids erected two centuries before the Christian era. At times, the more intimate knowledge of nature inherent in this religious approach paradoxically seems to enable human beings to go further in mobilising all of nature's energies, including those which are currently least perceptible (pharmacopoeia).

The second religious approach is by far the better known. It is based on the Biblical texts

augmented by those of Christianity: *Replenish the earth and have dominion over it* (Genesis). Islam also embraces a very clear dualism, with human beings as the curates or caliphs of the one God, appointed to rule over nature.

Meanwhile, the Greeks and Latins, while drawing on Egyptian sources, developed a very secular and "positive" view of nature that prefigures the "modern" approach.

The Earth is seen as a tool to be managed, although mythology is there to provide an explanation of the order of things; Hesiod, Hippocrates, Galen, Lucretius, Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger tried to explain observed phenomena without recourse to religion, arguing that there were actions independent of forces not controlled by human beings. And yet, the idea of integration into nature underlies Greco-Latin thought. For the philosophers, the idea of the cosmos evoked a harmonious, infallible and universal order. Socrates and Plato had already said that the supreme good and the law (*nomos*) of development prescribed the alignment of human aspirations with the ideal order inscribed in the overall structure of the universe. Plato explained that the city would be just if it reproduced the natural order symbolised by the sun. Marcus Aurelius the Stoic went so far as to declare that there was just one God, immanent in all the beings of the universe.

These traditions continued in the Middle Ages with, for example, the neo-Platonic ideas of Duns Scotus and the writings of the mystic Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179): *As the powerful life of divine wisdom, I burn in the sun and the stars. I am the rain which makes the grass burst with the laughter of life.*

Above all, the Middle Ages saw the "barbarian" invasion and the advent of naturist ideas springing from the mists of time, as, for example, in the Scandinavian Kalevala and the powerful and tragic Germanic myths and cosmogonies. At the same time, the traditional "materialistic" approach to nature which had

begun in Europe with Lucretius continued to the end of the Middle Ages, occasionally helped along by Arab vectors of the Greek heritage such as Averroes.

Issues and hopes today

The major turning-point in the understanding of the individual's relationship with nature occurred between the 16th and 20th centuries.

In theoretical terms, the break consisted in identifying and liberating the field of science: confronting natural objects with human reason (Copernicus, Galileo), "in order to make us the masters and owners of nature" (Descartes). In practice the 16th century also witnessed Europe's worldwide expansion and its brutal takeover of three continents. Then came the Enlightenment, positivism, Darwinism, the first industrial revolution and so on.

However, the participatory and symbiotic approach to nature nowhere disappeared entirely, witness romanticism in poetry and the continuing popularity of certain sects, many of which refer to the cosmic (the Order of the Solar Temple, for example).

Even today, science and the market are set before nature like new religions. Nevertheless, in the age of Bhopal and Chernobyl, these neo-religions cannot yet claim to master nature. The market's "invisible hand" may be presented as a "natural" law, but nature's invisible hand is still a long way from having revealed all its secrets. ■

J. Ki-Zerbo

Director of the Centre of Studies for African Development
01 BP 606 Ouagadougou 01
Burkina Faso



A very interesting example of solar heating facilities: "Haus Gertrud"

Forests: immediate action Initiatives of the Church of Freiburg

R Bäuerle

According to the annual reports of the German federal government on the state of the forests, in 1991 "two trees out of three were diseased". The authors of the 1996 report noted that "one quarter of the trees are seriously threatened". On the other hand, German forest officials observe that "in the forests, tree growth has never been so rapid". This has probably been brought about by climatic change and nitrogenous emissions from industrial livestock-breeding (ammonia) and automobile traffic (oxides of nitrogen). Hence the growth disorders, the pollution of ground water and the proliferation of atypical plants in the forests.

It is sometimes said that the *Waldsterben* (literally, the death of the forest) is of little concern to the French, because this phenomenon does not appear to be as serious in France as in Germany.

The greenhouse effect

Yet with every year that passes, the risk which climatic change entails for the earth's biotope grows. If we do not take care, the destruction of the ozone layer through human activity (*Bundestag* Commission of Inquiry on the protection of the earth's atmosphere, 1992) will have unpredictable consequences. Drawing upon the findings of this study, German bishops have adopted the following declaration: "We know enough about this to act. The time has come to take real measures that have a sufficiently far-reaching effect".

It is absolutely essential to reduce pollution from the carbon dioxide emissions of the main offenders (households, automobile traffic, industry and power plants), but also such pollutants as CFCs, sulphur dioxide, nitric oxide, methane etc. Each of us, and humanity as a whole, must try to save energy.

Given the climatic problems brought about by CO₂ production and the fact that 49% of the

energy consumed by German households goes to produce heat, the Church of Freiburg would like to concentrate its efforts in this area.

What does the Church of Freiburg do?

When the heating in parish buildings needs to be modernised, financial incentives are offered for using environmentally sound and renewable energy sources. Although the contracting authorities bear the bulk of the expenses, if it makes use of alternative energy sources it will receive a contribution equivalent to 10% of the investment from the services of the diocese and a special subsidy from the diocesan committee responsible for environmental protection.

- The archbishop pays a subsidy of 2 000 DM (about 7 000 FF) for particularly energy-efficient heating systems.
- The installation of solar panels for hot water production also opens the way to a subsidy of 2 000 DM. Experience shows that solar energy can meet 50% of hot water needs.
- Dual systems that produce both heat and electricity are used: with the help of an internal combustion engine or a gas turbine, a generator and a heat exchanger, it is possible to produce heat and electric current in separate cells. A subsidy of 7 500 DM (26 250 FF) is offered for the installation of such systems.
- Photovoltaic systems with silicon cells allow solar energy to be converted directly into electric current. Freiburg's electricity board presently charges 16.5 pfennigs (0.58 FF) per kWh and as much as 49.6 pfennigs (1.74 FF) at peak times.

Why offer such subsidies?

In general, it can be said that heating facilities which have been in operation for more than ten years do not benefit from the latest technical developments. Given their consumption of heating oil and the pollution they cause, they are neither economical nor clean.

With modern low-temperature boilers, an energy utilisation of 90% and an annual fuel consumption of 15 to 20 litres per square metre of living space can be attained. Thanks to these systems, it is possible to save 30% on energy and reduce emissions of pollutants even more.

Energy consumption can be reduced by 50% by using economical heating systems, improving thermal insulation and ensuring that heating facilities are operated rationally.

The Church spent 15 000 DM (52 500 FF) on a first solar energy project for the St. Michael kindergarten in Freiburg-Haslach. Since then, the above-mentioned subsidies have been granted to a whole range of presbyteries and kindergartens in the archdiocese which have had solar heating facilities installed. The holiday centre "Haus Gertrud" in Falkau, with 100 beds, is an excellent example: 60% of daily hot water needs and 17% of the under-floor heating are generated by solar energy.

In 1997, a solar heating facility will be installed at the family holiday centre on Reichenau Island (Lake Constance). The centre, which has 156 beds, uses 4 500 litres of hot water daily when all the rooms are taken.

Two dual heating and electricity systems have been installed at the "Haus Nazareth" children's home in Sigmaringen. A modern combined residence and clinic under Caritas management that is to be built in Sigmaringen will also be equipped with such a system. Similar systems have also been installed at the Freiburg Catholic Academy and in two old people's homes run by Caritas in Lahr. All these systems, which produce heat and elec-

tric current without consuming too much energy, are very economical and ecologically sound.

The only photovoltaic installation currently in operation is at the "Gfäll-Mattenhof" youth centre in Kirchzarten, which is situated on an island, where such a solution makes sense. It is planned to install a photovoltaic facility in the private Catholic school of the Wald monastery. Another such system (with a 9 kW photovoltaic cell and a 40 kW solar heating cell) is to be installed at the Freiburg Parish Pastorate Seminar.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that in 1997, it is planned to equip two private Catholic schools in Sasbach/Bühl (the Lender and St. Landolin boarding schools in Ettenheim) with wood-chip burning furnaces, whose operation is very environment-friendly.

Attention should also be drawn to the "shining example" campaign, launched in early 1996, to install energy-saving light-bulbs in Baden-Württemberg's churches; thanks to this campaign, a total of 13 500 such lamps were purchased in the space of two months. ■

R. Bäuerle

Delegate for the environment of the archdiocese of Freiburg
Erzbischöfliches Ordinariat Freiburg
Herrenstr. 35
D-79098 Freiburg i.B.

Other initiatives

There have been other similar initiatives in the Freiburg archdiocese, which is very active in the area of environmental protection. A number of them deserve a mention:

- in 1977, letters were sent to all the parish priests of the Freiburg archdiocese to alert them to the need, in the event of renovation or reconstruction work, to protect and safeguard the nests of barn owls, which are often built in church steeples;

- in 1992, the Archiepiscopal Equipment Services were asked to take particular care when performing maintenance work or installing ventilation tiles on church roofs, to preserve the habitat of bats;

- in 1994, a competition was held to award an "environment" prize for activities and pilot projects on the theme "Creation - Responsibility".

Between nature and the consumer society

The Norwegian dilemma

Bjørn Bue

Norway is situated on the outskirts of Europe. Brussels, London and Bonn are closer to Oslo, the capital, than is Tromsø, the biggest town in northern Norway. Fear of centralisation of power has marked Norwegian history. With this background we understand the opposition by many to centralise power in Brussels. In two different referendums, in 1972 and 1994, by a very slight majority, Norwegians have voted "no" to join the European Community.

Scarcely populated, with open sea, high mountains and fresh nature close to any population concentration, Norwegians love their land and use the nature for recreation in summer as in winter. If Norway has chosen to stay outside Europe economically and politically, from the environmental point of view isolation is not possible.



P. Christensen



S. Cordier

Pollution knows no frontiers

A winter morning back in the 1960s, the inhabitants of the narrow valleys in the southern part of Norway woke up to discover with great surprise that nature had got the jaundice. This sulphur yellow snow, coming from the industries of the European continent, awakened the Norwegian opinion: ecological problems know no frontiers, neither geographical nor ideological. The ecological question can only be dealt with in a trustworthy way, when treated internationally.

During my childhood, we spent our leisure time fishing in the mountain lakes. What a delight - trout fried in the fire at the lakeside. The quietness, the light of the summer night, the echo - those are memories forever engraved in my mind.

Today, one-third of all the lakes in the southern part of Norway are dead because of acid rain. 50 000 tons of lime poured into the lakes and rivers every year has revived only 12% of the dead waters. It is a long march to re-establish the ecological equilibrium, and to revive nature. A sustainable Europe will be costly. But we have no choice.

Norwegians are confronting an ethical dilemma. On the one hand, we want to safeguard our nature and pass it on to future generations. On the other, we are imprisoned by the consumer society. We know that if the rest of the world consumed the same as the western world, our globe has not enough resources. We cannot continue to protect our own nature and at the same time consume the resources of other peoples.

In 1989, 20% of the world population used 82% of the global resources. It is not a law of nature that it should be this way. We cannot go on tolerating an economic world order creating and maintaining such a global apartheid. We cannot claim that we did not know. We do know, and the Church is being called upon to be a prophetic voice in our western world.

Church involvement

In 1992 the Bishops' Conference in Norway published an extensive report on "The consumer society as an ethical challenge". The report and the statement from the bishops have generated an awareness among Christians in our country to the challenge of committing ourselves to a new life-style.

In November 1996 the General Synod of the Church of Norway treated the issue under the title "Consumption and justice".

The world has enough for every man's need, but not for every man's greed. (Mahatma Gandhi)

In our present context, says the General Synod, this is for sure a word of wisdom that can guide us in the changes that we all have to face. The Church wants to unite with all

human beings and organisations of good intent to build broad alliances, locally, national and globally. We want to make way for personal commitment and political changes for less consumption and more justice. Being a Church in one of the world's wealthiest countries and having enormous resources, the Church of Norway has a major responsibility in questions relating to consumption and justice.

The consumer society

But in order to help us out of the grip of the consumer society, it is important that we disclose the enchantment of the consumer society. We must try to understand what is happening to us and what is the mark of the consumer mentality. The modern pleasure-seeking consumer is characterised by longing, daydreaming fantasies that anticipate the future. The spell of longing fantasies more than equals the reality of life. All needs cannot be met immediately, and man is trained to postpone the satisfaction for that for which he is longing. Needs that are not satisfied immediately become sources for further satisfaction. However, the problem is that the fulfilment of the dreams often is disappointing and disillusioning. The modern hedonist often finds the words of the author G. B. Shaw to be true: *There are two tragedies in life. One is that you don't get what your heart desires. The other is that you get it.* In other words, reality is not equal to the dream. The realisation of the dream becomes a disappointment because the enjoyment of the fantasy at an earlier stage was more perfect. Therefore new needs are created all the time and consumer-man is investing in ever new objects for his dreams. This constant longing for something is used by the advertisers. They turn to our dreams rather than to our real needs, in order to increase our desire for consumption. This explains the constant need for new products and frequent changes of style and fashion.

Christian counter-culture

In the time to come we must reflect on the role of the Church in the rich part of the world. The consumer society influences the Church as well as the rest of our society. How could we as a Church become a real counter-culture in the orgy of consumption in which we are taking part in the west?

We have a long journey. We have all embarked the same ship, we are responsible to each other. Co-operation and interaction are needed. It is a question of creating awareness and to admit our imprisonment as consumers and our willingness to be liberated. Only liberated individuals can help create a new policy for equal global sharing of the world's resources.

It seems to me that it is high time to reconsider the exhortation of the Bible to a simple life-style. In fact, is this quotation from the Bible a description of our time? *People who*

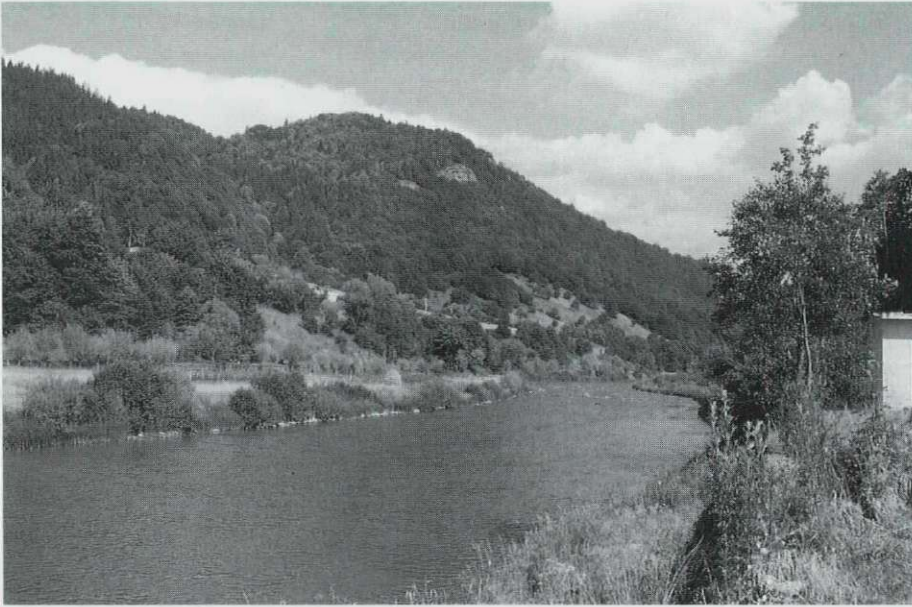
want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grieves (1 Tim. 6, 9-10).

What a relief to our world if we could come to the same acknowledgement as the apostle (1. Tim. 6, 6-8): *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we have brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.* This is the picture of a Christian counter-culture in the consumer society. What a difficult road for me, consumer-man!

Is it possible for us as Norwegians to get out of this dilemma: safeguard our own nature and on the other hand reduce our consumption in such a way that our greed is not destroying the nature and resources of other people far away. I believe this is a dilemma confronting other European nations as well! ■

B. Bue

Bishop of Stavanger Diocese
Eiganesvn. 113
N-4009 Stavanger



The Mures river, example of a sustainable development project

Romanian churches at work

Lucian Gavrilă and István Sidó

The Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania - AIDRom - promotes co-operation between Orthodox, Reformed, Lutheran, Synodo-Presbyterial and Armenian Orthodox Churches. Since its beginning in 1991, AIDRom has an ecological programme. The main aim of this programme is to raise public awareness of ecological problems within the Churches and society, and to encourage co-operation between theologians and ecologists, remembering man's responsibility for the rich diversity of God's Creation. AIDRom works on processing projects prepared and forwarded by Churches, Church groups or NGOs, which are then implemented under AIDRom supervision.

Eco-theology

Ecological theology forms part of the programme. The interconnections between the Bible and different aspects of daily life are presented, pointing out the needs of sustainable development. Teaching ecology in the theological seminaries and institutes on the one hand and developing the theological dimensions of all ecological knowledge and actions on the other are the core of the programme. These are realized by seminaries, ecumenical workshops and publications.

Practical protection

"Nature protection in practice" is the most popular field of action for NGOs. In these activities and campaigns the Churches are also involved. Every year "Earth Day" is celebrated in April, and on 1 September "The Day of God's Creation Salvation Day" declared by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Dimitrios I. Some concrete examples follow:

Saving an endemic fish species

Action to save an endemic fish species, *Romanichthys valsanicola*, which is in danger of extinction. Several specimens of this species were captured and transferred to Germany, where they were bred in order to bring them back to Romania.

Ecological reconstruction of a church

The ecological reconstruction of a special church site represented the objective of one complex AIDRom project over the last three years. The Niculitel Basilica was discovered by chance in 1968. The roof of an underground basilica appeared at the light and inside the relics of four Christian martyrs, dating back to 350 AD, were found. AIDRom financially supported and directed this project; a channel was built to collect the spring waters and to redirect them, avoiding interaction with the basilica, a surrounding park with specific trees and architecture will be established around the basilica and a permanent exhibition presenting the history of Christianity in this region will be organised inside the large modern building which protects the original basilica.

Towards a sustainable river gorge

Preservation of the natural heritage and education of the local population is well represented in the project entitled "Sustainable development in landscape preservation of the Mures river gorge". The Rhododendron NGO from Tirgu Mures initiated and achieved landscape preservation over 6 350 hectares. The main aim and achievements in this area are the following:

- preparation of a scientific document which was accepted by the relevant authorities;
- permanent local environmental education programmes in local schools;
- follow-up of botanical and forestry research;

- implementation of environmental-friendly farming on a small scale.

696 species of plants have been inventoried in this area. Some of the endemic plants are *Dentaria glandulosa*, *Symphitum cordatum*, *Pulmonaria rubra*, *Ranunculus carpaticus*, *Leuchanthemum waldsteinii*, *Aconitum moldavicum*. The priests and monks of different denominations in this area understand the intentions and aims of the NGOs. They preach and explain the importance of preserving this part of Creation for present and future generations.

Organic farming

Another programme concerns organic farming connected to church sites. The Romanian monasteries used to preserve and apply these methods even during the communist era. Projects are developed to stimulate the use of these methods and they can be easily learned from the monasteries, spread into the neighbouring area and steadily applied all over the country.

The contribution of AIDRom to all these activities relating to ecology, nature conservation, environment protection and the activity of the Churches in Romania has been a major one, as this is the only ecumenical platform existing nowadays in Romania. ■

L. Gavrilă and I. Sidó
AIDRom Ecological Section
PO Box 41
Of. Postal 48, Sector 2
RO-Bucharest

Christian belief and climate change

Lukas Vischer

Today humanity must contend with a strange paradox. Despite universal recognition that the grand design for modern society cannot be pursued indefinitely because it would threaten our very existence on earth, awareness of this peril apparently is not - or not yet - sufficiently acute to prompt a revision of this blueprint. What a contrast between individual and group attitudes! As individuals, people do everything to protect themselves and put off the hour of their death but, as a group, they are very reluctant to do what needs to be done.

The imminence of climatic change

The risk of climatic change provides a good example of this attitude. Researchers make it perfectly clear that human activity is making climatic change imminent. If such change is to remain within tolerable limits, then the time for radical measures is now. The Second World Climate Conference organised in Geneva in 1990 talked of a world-wide reduction of 1% to 2% annually in gases responsible for the greenhouse effect, but today this demand is rarely heard any more. At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the industrialised countries committed themselves to reducing carbon dioxide emissions to the 1990 level by the year 2000. Yet it is already clear that most of the states will not keep their promise; on the contrary, they are to blame for a considerable increase in these emissions.



B. Boisson

Reaction and role of the Churches

What do the Churches have to say about this paradox? Judging by their teaching and their actions, they do not have a ready-made answer; this reflects their uncertainty on the subject. But the Gospel contains elements that may prove useful. Let us cite three of them:

A new awareness of the dangers

The Bible speaks of the need for critical introspection. It urges us to interpret the signs of the times and to modify our behaviour accordingly. A passage in the Book of Luke is of unexpected relevance in this regard: *And he [ie Jesus] said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?* (12, 54-56). We know and we don't know. We know a great deal. We know for example what weather is forecast for tomorrow. Perhaps we also know how to use our knowledge for our short-sighted interests. And yet we remain deaf to the moral requirements of our age.

That is the first task of the Churches: to point out, despite all opposition, those who seek to skirt the issue and use a smoke-screen to conceal just how great the danger has become.

North-South solidarity

The risk of climatic change puts the demand for social justice in a new perspective. The industrialised countries, which account for 20% of humanity, are responsible for 75% of all dangerous emissions. The countries of the South, which are home to 80% of the world population, will be the first victims of climatic change. The style of life in the energy-guzzling North thus appears as a new form of exploitation. Not only do the industrialised countries consume most of the resources, but their activities also cause destruction and a deterioration in the quality of life in other parts of the world. For the sake of justice, gas emissions in the industrialised countries, which are to blame for the greenhouse effect, must be reduced immediately and radically. This is the only way to arrive at an overall solution.

The Churches must continue to draw attention to the need for solidarity in this area.

Our true calling

Of course, this new approach also has a spiritual dimension. Any grand design for society is founded on certain ideological assumptions. A change of approach is only possible if these



B. Irrmann

In the past, miners used to take a canary with them into the mine. If there was a dangerous gas, the bird would die long before the miners perceived the danger. Will the industrialized nations let the South play the canary?

assumptions are shaken to their roots. What is our reason for being? The current blueprint for society stresses above all the dynamic and productive capacities of human beings, although the Scriptures do not speak in these terms. The ultimate purpose of our existence is not to amass material goods, but to seek communion with God and our fellow creatures. From this point of view, the existence that human beings, as those in charge of the planet, lead today is a caricature.

The Churches are duty-bound to serve as a forum for an exchange of views on the true calling of humanity.

Virtually all Christian Churches are beginning to speak out on these issues. The World Council of Churches has been closely following climatic change for several years. Slowly but surely, the idea is gaining ground that change is inevitable, because the Christian creed cannot coexist for long with a vision of destruction. ■

L. Vischer
World Council of Churches
39 chemin de Grange-Canal
CH-1208 Geneva

1. World Council of Churches, *Sign of Peril, Test of Faith, Accelerated Climate Change*, Geneva 1994.

Christian churches get involved

The Kehl-Strasbourg Ecumenical Group

Edouard Vogelweith

The relationship between nature and religion has sometimes been a difficult one. Either nature has been considered sacred or deified, whence pantheism, or it has been regarded as evil, whence Catharism, or, divested of any religious vision, it has become an object left to the mercy of mankind. The biblical approach, as set out at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, puts forward another interpretation: that nature is Creation, the good work of a God who is not part of it. It is governed by its own laws and entrusted to the intelligence and skill of mankind. Mankind plays a key role in Creation and is at the same time able to step back and act upon it. According to the Bible, there is a dichotomy between nature and culture rather than between nature and religion. Culture is understood here in two senses as both the capacity to understand and wonder - *and God saw that it was good* - and also the capacity to act - *replenish the earth and subdue and have dominion over...every living thing that moveth upon the Earth Genesis 1,28*). Culture encompasses freedom and responsibility. This brings us to the crux of the problem: has mankind always made good use of culture?

This is a question currently being debated by the Christian Churches. Their ethical reflection is no longer restricted to relationships between people but also extends to our relations with the environment and the biosphere, since they are aware that the human race's very survival is intimately bound up with them. They therefore urge their followers to give thanks to God for his Creation, for its fruits and its beauty, to confess how they have neglected and harmed God's work and to express their determination to mend their ways and set to work positively. It is against this background that the Kehl-Strasbourg Transfrontier Ecumenical Group was set up almost ten years ago.

A political and economic event

It all started in 1987 when the *Land* of Baden-Württemberg floated a proposal to build an incinerator for toxic waste on the German bank of the Rhine, not far from Kehl. A *Bürgerinitiative* (literally, citizens' initiative) was formed to protest and argued that the Strasbourg-Kehl area was already polluted and therefore that no additional source of pollution should be added. In 1988, the members of the *Bürgerinitiative* asked the Churches in Kehl for help. The Churches took the matter seriously and encouraged their communities to adopt a responsible attitude. Then in 1989, these Churches called on their sister Churches across the Rhine in Strasbourg, both Catholic and Protestant, to join them in discussing the

issue and taking joint action. The Transfrontier Group was born.

Churches working together

Meanwhile, another event took place - this time involving many Churches - which generated fresh enthusiasm: the first European Ecumenical Assembly was held in Basle, at Pentecost 1989. For the first time, official delegates from all European Churches met to think and pray together, even though the Iron Curtain still divided Europe. Their theme was "Justice, peace and the integrity of Creation" and as J.-P. Ribaut points out in a pamphlet produced by the Group "Thoughts on reconciliation with Creation" the Final Declaration of this genuinely historic event contained, among other things, numerous references to poor management of natural resources and degradation caused by mankind to God's Creation and suggested courses of action. The Transfrontier Group felt that it had a duty to continue the work begun by the Assembly in Basle. It fixed as its principal aim the promotion of environmental awareness among Christians in the Rhine area, particularly in the towns of Kehl and Strasbourg.

Courses of action

Catholic priests and Protestant pastors from both sides of the Rhine met to discuss, with the help of a biologist and a theologian, the

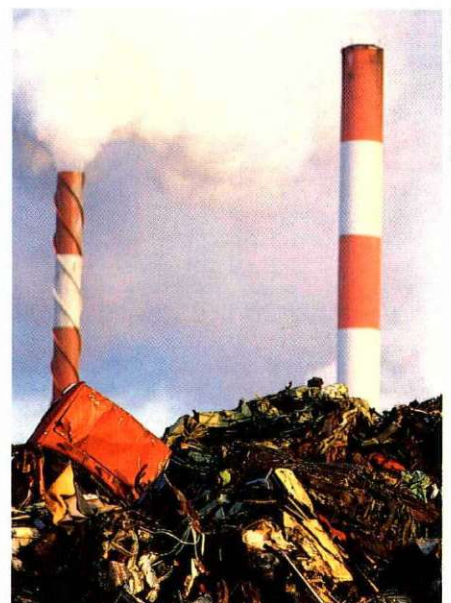
state of the Rhine environment. This initial experience of working together encouraged those involved to take a fresh look at Creation, the gift of God, and at Christians' responsibility in its management. A subsequent step was to bring together doctors from Strasbourg and Kehl to discuss the impact of pollution on human health. A year later, to give its approach a more practical edge, the Group suggested carrying out a study on our lifestyles, waste and employment. It was aimed at both "ordinary" people and the local elected representatives who run our towns. The concept of sustainable development was to underpin the study.

A critical mind might ask us what we have achieved. It is probably rather difficult to assess the Transfrontier Group's achievements at the moment. For, since its membership includes Germans and French as well as Swiss, English, Scottish and Italian people living in the region (and we should add that an Anglican priest takes part and an Orthodox contribution has been requested), a variety of political, social, religious and ecclesiastical traditions meet and confront one another. So questions arise such as should we specifically target decision-makers or should we leave members to act as they think best, with the organisation of their choice? For the time being, this question remains unresolved. What matters most, however, is that Christians from different Churches and different countries should meet regularly and act rather as beacons, alerting their communities to the issues.

The Transfrontier Ecumenical Group is involved in the protection of the Rhine environment



J.-L. Klein/M.-L. Hubert/Bios



G. Stampfler/Pluricel

Prospects for the future

The second European Ecumenical Assembly is being prepared and will be held in Graz (Austria) from 23 to 29 June 1997. The Churches invite Europeans, tormented by tragic questions following the collapse of communist regimes, to open their hearts to "Reconciliation, gift of God, source of new life". One of the many workshops planned will concentrate on "Reconciliation with nature", looking at the European contribution to sustainable development. "If we destroy nature, we destroy ourselves. But are we prepared to change our lifestyle when it comes to establishing economic priorities, or when we consider our methods of production, our patterns of consumption and our energy use? A change in these factors could make sustainable development into a reality".

The Kehl-Strasbourg Transfrontier Ecumenical Group sees in this new Assembly a call to continue its work. In its own way, it is playing a part in sowing the seeds of the Europe and Church of tomorrow: a Church which ceaselessly reveals the splendour of God's gift in a reconciled Europe which assumes its world-wide responsibilities for the benefit both of the whole person and of all people. ■

E. Vogelweith

Catholic priest, Strasbourg-Bischheim
Member of the Kehl-Strasbourg Transfrontier Ecumenical Group
2 rue Laurent
F-67800 Bischheim

Declaration

In the name of this mission and their faith and in the name of the lessons learned from the European Ecumenical Assembly in Basle (May 1989), the (Catholic) *Commission pastorale de Strasbourg* and the (Protestant) *Conseil protestant de Strasbourg* affirm their solidarity with opponents of the planned toxic waste incinerator at Kehl and have unanimously adopted the declaration below:

As our society currently continues to produce huge quantities of waste, ways of disposing of it or storing it appropriately clearly have to be found.

Rarely is the building of an incineration plant, especially one which burns toxic waste, welcome to the local population, so all plans must be examined as objectively as possible.

In this context, the choice of Kehl is highly surprising, and even inadmissible.

It is a proven fact that the geographical location of the Rhine valley, and of the Kehl-Strasbourg area in particular, is such that current levels of air pollution are frequently unacceptable. Wind strength, speed and direction, fog and inversion give rise to a dramatic stagnation of pollutants, with all their negative effects on human health, soil quality, and so on.

It is true that the promoters of the project will probably do their utmost in terms of both safety and pollution. Is that enough? We think not, on the grounds of:

- the current unacceptable state of air quality in the area;
- the inevitable uncertainty about emissions, which will in any case have some environmental impact;
- the ever-present risk of accidents affecting both the plant itself and the 200 000 tonnes or so of solid and liquid wastes and sludge to be delivered each year;
- the unlikely location of the plant in a conurbation with a population of 500 000, all directly concerned and under threat.

This project cannot therefore be accepted.

Commission pastorale de Strasbourg
Conseil protestant de Strasbourg
Strasbourg, 14 October 1991

N.B. The Catholic and Protestant Churches of Kehl adopted a similar position.

COTE's contribution

Christoph Grupp

Churches have largely accepted their role in safeguarding the Creation. However, in Switzerland, no official body exists specifically to achieve this goal. This gap is filled by the *Communauté Oecuménique de Travail Eglise et Environnement* (Ecumenical Community for Church and Environment Work - COTE).

Approaches to the Creation

It seems incomprehensible that a responsible relationship with the Creation should not automatically be part of fundamental Christian attitudes; after all, the Bible begins with an account of the Creation; the detailed provisions in Leviticus (Third Book of the Pentateuch) offer ample guidance as to how to deal with human and other creatures; in the New Testament, Jesus continually makes comparisons, in particular in his parables,

which are deeply rooted in the Creation's basic principles.

The dominance of agriculture in Jewish society in biblical times meant that right from the start this society had another approach to the Creation, because it was constantly confronted with nature which was all-powerful, and with frequently hostile elements. Yet it also had a sense of great humility towards the Creation, which was regarded primarily as contact with the work of God.

Different attitudes

Today we live in a society which, as a whole, believes itself to be above the unjust vagaries of nature. The "civilised" industrialised world has at least mastered phenomena such as floods, storms, fires and bad harvests. It should therefore be possible to start living in harmony with nature, which is really the Creation. Yet, there are constant reminders

that for many people the fight against the elements is far from over and their goal is still to subjugate this primitive force. People from the west of Switzerland, and particularly from the mountainous areas of the Jura and the Valais, have a very ancient conception of nature so that, in these areas, calling upon people to "subjugate the land" has much more resonance than encouraging them to "farm and protect it".

These two basic attitudes, namely living in harmony with nature and taming and using it, are very familiar to everyone involved in promoting the protection of the environment.

These considerations determine the general social framework within which COTE has to operate. The Swiss ecclesiastical hierarchy also has to be taken into account. COTE was founded ten years ago by church groups as a private law association. However, social change and a growing lack of interest in environmental issues have increasingly led the

"Mother Church" to turn its back on its offspring, whereas the reasons for safeguarding the Creation should be one of the cornerstones of Christian testimony. As a result, within COTE, basic theological and ethical work to enhance understanding of the Creation is increasingly losing ground to the dissemination of practical advice on having a more responsible lifestyle.

Practical action

One of the areas in which COTE is active is energy-saving schemes at parish level. Convinced that safeguarding the Creation must necessarily be a part of our daily lives, COTE has for several years organised energy-saving courses for sextons. These courses, which are increasingly attended by highly motivated female sextons, were begun in 1993 to mark the "Age of the Creation" project, designed to raise the awareness of Churches in September and October, the traditional period of harvest festivals. The first course in 1993, entitled "More energy", looked at more responsible use of energy; in 1994 "The Age of the Creation" debated the "Animals and us"; in 1995 the theme was "Give our children a future", and in 1996 "Our daily bread - how do we make it today?" was the starting point for a discussion on the use of genetic engineering to produce food.

While these environmental issues are widely recognised today, they are no longer in the headlines. Therefore, the Church has an extremely important mission to fulfil in precisely this area. We must do everything in our power to protect the Creation. In this context, COTE has also circulated a petition in Switzerland on climatic change, drafted by the World Council of Churches. In collaboration with many ecclesiastical and ecological organisations, it launched this petition in June 1996, calling on Parliament and the Federal Council as well as the governments of all industrialised countries to implement the measures for protecting the climate decided in Rio in 1992. The theme selected for "The Age of the Creation 1997" is "Climate and

energy". It will provide an opportunity not only to carry on the work and to verify the assumptions made in 1993 but also to describe Switzerland's numerous energy-related initiatives.

The need for persuasion

The circulation of the petition on climatic change has highlighted interesting opportunities for cooperation with church and environmental protection groups. At the same time, COTE has also come up against its own limits: cantonal churches and their members do not regard COTE as an official representative of their interests, even though the Federation of Protestant Churches of Switzerland, the Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops, the Catholic Christian Church of Switzerland and many other denominations support its work. Moreover, environmental protection organisations have been generous in their support and have shown a certain amount of interest in contributions shaped by ethical considerations. Nevertheless, we will need all our powers of persuasion to ensure that the Church is accepted as a partner on questions of environmental policy and inevitably in the future we will repeat the "sins" of the past in respect of the theology of the Creation. ■

C. Grupp
Biologist, Environmental Delegate
Communauté Oecuménique de Travail Eglise
et Environnement
BP 7449
CH-3001 Bern

An overview of the COTE

The Communauté Oecuménique de Travail Eglise et Environnement (COTE) was founded ten years ago at a time when the Church was incorporating environmental issues into its thinking and activities.

COTE now has approximately 200 group and 700 individual members. The association's office has established a team currently comprising four people - two environmental delegates and two secretaries.

In all four linguistic regions of Switzerland, COTE endeavours to prepare and disseminate information on the Creation, aimed mainly at its members, who use the publications in question in religious services and in educational courses for adults or young people.

It also maintains close contacts with environmental protection organisations and the competent official authorities. Co-operation with religious and lay media is vital for the association. COTE's main project is "The Age of the Creation".

Give our children a future, campaign "The Age of the Creation 1995"



H. Trachsel/COTE



H. Trachsel/COTE

Projects of the Francis of Assisi Academy

Ralf Klemens Stappen

European Nature Conservation Year (ENCY 95) provided the starting point for the Altmühltal project in the diocese of Eichstätt in Bavaria. This project, a good example of the Churches' new ecological concerns, was selected as a national project in 1995 by the German National Organising Committee for ENCY 95, under the patronage of the President of the Federal Republic, Mr Roman Herzog. It has, accordingly, been supported by the Federal Foundation for the Environment since 1995.

Promoting sustainable development

The project comprises 25 different sub-projects and aims to launch the international programme Agenda 21, adopted at the Rio Conference. What this means in practice is promoting sustainable development at local and regional levels (local Agenda 21). The Francis of Assisi Academy for the Protection of the Earth, which runs the project, is an ecumenical organisation working at European level, founded by members of the Catholic University of Eichstätt as a specifically Christian contribution to ENCY 95.

The co-ordination team is made up exclusively of young Christians, including students from the university. It has a particularly wide range of partners, including the Council of the Diocese of Eichstätt, the Association of University Students, the Information Centre of the Altmühltal Nature Reserve, the Bavarian branch of the Naturschutz organisation, the Catholic Organisation for Women, Catholic Rural Youth, Kolping Youth and other local organisations. The participation of so many Christian organisations makes the project one of the largest environmental schemes supported by the Churches in Europe.

There are over ten partners, each of whom is responsible for one aspect of the project (sustainable agriculture, protecting the climate, the university of tomorrow, sustainable tourism, environmental education, nature protection in quarries and in the parishes of the diocese). At a practical level, a general assessment of the state of the environment has been made (with the help of a hundred or so parishes) and a wide-ranging environmental training programme with more than 50 separate activities has been carried out.

Other initiatives

In addition to the project's ten main areas, its numerous initiatives include a half-hour film on the Altmühltal Project, three public conferences on the environment at the University of Eichstätt (with a total of 25 papers), an exhibition of photos of the environment, a major programme for protecting the climate, a large regional forum on the environment looking at the idea of a "Viable Germany", the preparation of innovative courses on the environment, two workshops on, respectively, the local Agenda 21 and climatic protection for mayors and local officials, a fair/exhibition on ecology and a European colloquy as part of ENCY 95.

Conference of African Bishops, Msgr Hilary Senoo. The purpose of the colloquy was to prepare the second European Ecumenical Assembly, to be held in Graz in June 1997 with 700 delegates from churches all over Europe.

Worthwhile follow-up

This project generated considerable impetus at regional, national and European levels. The approach behind the project was therefore incorporated into the appeal by the second German Ecumenical Assembly (Erfurt, June 1996) to all German churches and parishes to implement local Agenda 21 and work to promote sustainable development. Innovative follow-up projects are now being drawn up, notably in co-operation with the Neumarkt area, where local Agenda 21 needs to be implemented in the long term with the help of the local population. Experience gained through the project will be presented to a special session of the United Nations General Assembly (Earth Summit), to be held in June 1997 in New York, and to the second European Ecumenical Assembly.

R K Stappen

Project leader and Executive Secretary of the Franz von Assisi Organisation Francis of Assisi Academy for the Protection of the Earth-Europe
Ostenstrasse 26-28
D-85072 Eichstätt

A significant colloquy

This Colloquy, entitled "Christendom and a viable Europe - debate on new ecological concerns", held as recently as October 1996 in the episcopal and university town of Eichstätt, attracted a great deal of interest throughout Europe. The fact that almost all the environmental delegates from churches all over Europe attended made this event the most important Christian conference on the European environment in 1996.

The following staff of the Francis of Assisi Academy presented papers: Federal Minister K Töpfer; the President of Pax Christi France, René Coste; Professor Lukas Vischer, Representative of the *Communauté Oecuménique de Travail Eglise et Environnement de Suisse* (COTE); the Head of the Council of Europe's Environment Conservation and Management Division, Jean-Pierre Ribaut; the Bishop Björn Bue of the Norwegian Church and Tini Brugge, from the environmental project of the Franciscan Co-operative of the Netherlands. Other participants who gave papers included: the Holy See's representative at the Council of Europe, Msgr Michael-Aidan Courtney, Maria Buitenkamp, Delegate of Friends of the Earth Europe and the Secretary General of the

The "Altmühltal" project team



Francis of Assisi Academy



WWF/Wildlife Fund Thailand

"Ordaining" trees is one way Buddhist monks in Thailand are helping to save the country's forests

A Buddhist monk's combat

A novel conservation initiative led by a Buddhist monk in northern Thailand is working to stem the environmental damage being caused by illegal logging and development projects designed to stamp out the opium trade. The Dhammaat Foundation, led by Ajahn Pongsak, the abbot of the local Meditation Centre, is helping villagers irrigate their arid lowlands and reforest highlands which have been devastated by logging, unsustainable farming methods by hill tribes and crop substitution promoted by the aid agencies.

The development projects, subsidised by a variety of western agencies and international organisations, have introduced cabbages, potatoes, carnations and chrysanthemums as substitutes in an effort to eradicate opium. But to reap the same income from cabbage as from opium, five times as much land needs to be cleared. (...)

Severe deforestation throughout the country in the past few years prompted the Thai government to act. With its tough environmental legislation and network of protected areas, Thailand should stand as a shining example of conservation policy. But with limited funds, conflicts of interest and other priorities, stamping out the opium trade, laws are often ignored. A logging ban is now in force, but the remaining forest is being decimated by illegal loggers, who have explicit instructions to stop felling when approached by outsiders.

Ajahn Pongsak believes one solution to the deforestation problem would be the relocation in the valley below of the Hmong hill tribes. (...) The Hmong, who are cash economy farmers, have expressed willingness to resettle in the valley provided they can make a good living there. (...) But the Mae Soi valley is not the area's most hospitable environment. (...)

Sustainable resource management

In response to valley farmers' repeated complaints about food shortages due to poor crop yields in the impoverished soil, Ajahn Pongsak decided to help. He had been watching the disappearance of the forest with deep

concern, and felt sustained resource management was required. So he addressed both the hill tribe and valley farmers, communicating through the Buddhist principle of *Silatham* - harmony or the balance of nature.

The serene, smiling monk believes his conservation work is inseparable from Buddhist teachings.

"The balance of nature is achieved and regulated by the functions of the forest. Hence the survival of the forest is essential to the survival of *Silatham* and our environment. It is all interdependent. When we protect the forest, we protect the world. When we destroy the forest, we destroy that balance, causing drastic changes in global weather and soil conditions, which in turn causes severe hardships to the people.

Deprivation causes unrest, naturally. If you have nothing to eat, you may resort to crime. Thus the forest is the creator of environmental *Silatham*, ensuring a healthy harmony in people's lives both physically and mentally.

What is the value of forests? Many of us look at a tree and see only its value in terms of how much we can sell it for. But a forest is much more than that.

From the forests we get the four necessities of life - food, shelter, clothing, medicine. They balance the air we breathe; they help to regulate the rainfall; they regulate extremes of climate so that we are not too hot and not too cold. And from the roots of the trees, rivers emerge and water the lands below."

Fired with a greater understanding of their role as protectors and managers of their environment, the valley farmers began self-help programmes promoting the sensible management of resources.

The Dhammaat Foundation was set up to promote these principles and subsequently to provide funds for the necessary infrastructure. The villagers, in turn, formed the Association for the Conservation of the Watershed Forests and the Development of Mae Soi, thus managing and controlling their own environment. (...)

Four major goals

The Mae Soi conservation project has four major goals: watershed protection, reforestation, irrigation and community development (including land allotment, education and economic aid such as the setting up of rice banks and interest-free loans). (...)

After four years of arduous work, results are beginning to show. Natural regeneration of the forest is taking place, and wildlife - reduced to mice and bats four years ago - is returning. Barking deer, civets, hares, macaques and jackals are back, and a black panther was recently spotted.

An access road was built, as well as dams to provide water reservoirs. Rice banks were established in the villages, providing rice on easy financial terms when the harvest is poor.

But much work remains to be done, and funds are nearly exhausted. More land must be levelled to accommodate landless families, and many kilometres of feeder canals must be dug. Still, the project remains a unique example of co-operation: grassroots initiative and labour, assisted by NGO and government joint planning and management. ■

Leyla Alyanak

Extract from *The New Road*, issue No. 12, Jan-Feb 1990

Environmental journalist based in Africa, former editor of *The New Road*, the world's first major magazine on conservation and religion
E-mail address: 101330.3213@compuserve.com

At the Council of Europe



The Centre Naturopo is 30 years old

In 1997, the Centre Naturopo will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary: more than a quarter of a century spent promoting nature and seeking to improve the management of our natural heritage. Let us look back over its achievements.

A pioneer

The Council of Europe was one of the first to argue, in the 1960s, that harmonious human development was only possible within a protected natural environment. In 1962, it set up the Standing Committee of Experts for the conservation of nature and landscape - the first intergovernmental co-operation body in Europe. From then on, it played a key role in nature conservation both by drawing up conservation policies and by establishing nature protection instruments. Nevertheless, the Organisation needed someone to speak on its behalf to alert interested circles to the dangers, to raise the environmental awareness of governments and of the public in general and to encourage new environmental protection initiatives. This is why it set up the Centre Naturopo in 1967.

An international body

In addition to its Secretariat, based in the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg, the Centre Naturopo's strength lies in its network of National Agencies covering the Council of Europe's forty member States and including correspondents in many other countries. Its remit is to inform decision-makers and the general public about environmental questions and to raise their awareness of nature protection.

Successful campaigns

The Centre Naturopo has organised two major awareness-raising campaigns. The first was

European Conservation Year in 1970 and the second was European Nature Conservation Year in 1995. In between, numerous other campaigns were also organised to draw public attention to specific subjects, such as fresh water, soil, wetlands, farming and wildlife etc. Each of these campaigns was strikingly successful and gave the Centre the opportunity to expand its already extensive contacts with NGOs, local and regional authorities and research institutes.

Disseminating information: a vital activity

Since its foundation, the Centre has published the illustrated, theme-based magazine *Naturopa* which appears three times a year in four languages. The series of articles *Environmental Features* and the monthly bulletin *Naturopa-Newsletter*, published in ten languages, are also good examples of the Centre's publishing activities over the years.

Moreover, a great deal of material is produced in association with the various events organised by the Centre: booklets, reports on colloquies, posters, video cassettes, calendars and stickers are all means whereby the Centre tries to draw the public's attention to nature protection.

A documentation centre accessible to everyone

The Centre Naturopo's library manages a documentation and information collection comprising over 5 000 books and 250 reviews, which is accessible both to environmental experts and specialists and to the general public. A bi-monthly bibliographical bulletin lists the Centre's latest acquisitions and theme-based bibliographies are regularly published on topical issues.

The "Strategy" creates a new role for the Centre

Today, the Centre Naturopo is focusing its efforts on the implementation of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy. More practically, it coordinates Action Theme 3 (raising awareness and support with policy-makers and the public) with the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

Publications: an overview

Biodiversity Questions ... and answers

The Centre Naturopo has just published an information brochure on biodiversity, which is intended to be a simple and reader-friendly *aide-memoire*. This brochure answers key questions on biodiversity: it explains what this term covers, highlights the values it rep-

resents and the threats it faces today and, in particular, suggests ways of protecting and promoting it at international, national, regional and individual levels.

The "Strategy" Bulletin

A new bulletin devoted to information on the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy has been created by the Centre Naturopo. This eight-page bulletin replaces *Naturopa-Newsletter*. It will be published six times a year, in five languages and will be distributed to all the Strategy's international and national participants and partners to inform them on how its implementation is progressing. ■

Goodbye Hayo

Mr. Hayo H. Hoekstra retired at the end of 1996. He had joined the Council of Europe's Directorate of Environment and Local Authorities in 1969 to prepare the first major nature conservation campaign. Later, he became Director of the Centre Naturopo, the Centre for information and documentation on the European environment. Surrounded by a small team of specialists, he made the Centre a flourishing concern and initiated many other awareness-raising campaigns. By developing a network of National Agencies in all the Organisation's member States and of correspondents in non-member States, he contributed to greater awareness of environmental problems in Europe.

Everyone in the National Agencies and his colleagues in the Council of Europe's Secretariat thank him most warmly for his contribution to nature conservation in Europe and wish him a happy retirement.

Ferdinando Albanese
Director of Environment and Local Authorities

National Agencies of the Centre Naturopa

ALBANIA

Environmental Protection and Preservation Committee
Ministry of Health and Environmental Protection
Rruga "Bajram Curri"
AL-TIRANA
Fax 355-42 652 29

ANDORRA

M. Casimir ARAJOL FARRAS
Ministeri de Relacions Exteriors
c/Prat de la Creu 92-94
AND-ANDORRA LA VELLA
Fax 376-86 95 59

AUSTRIA

Dr Wolfgang TRAUSSNIG
Verbindungsstelle der Bundesländer beim
Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung
Schenkenstrasse 4
A-1014 WIEN
Fax 43-1 535 60 79

BELGIUM

Flemish region: De Heer S. TYS
Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap
AMINAL-Dienst Natuurbehoud
Belliardstraat 14-16-18
B-1040 BRUSSEL
Walloon region: M. Jacques STEIN
Ministère de la Région Wallonne
DGRNE - Service de la Conservation de la Nature
Avenue Prince de Liège 15
B-5100 JAMBES (Namur)
Fax 32-81 32 12 63
Brussels region: Mme NAULAERS
Institut Bruxellois pour la gestion de l'environnement
Gulledelle 100
B-1200 BRUXELLES

BULGARIA

Division des Relations Internationales
Ministère de l'Environnement
67 rue W Gladstone
BG-1000 SOFIA
Fax 359-2 52 16 34

CROATIA

Mr Miho MILJANIĆ
Department for Nature Conservation
Ministry of Civil Engineering and Environmental Protection
Ilica 44
HR-10000 ZAGREB
Fax 385-1 43 15 15

CYPRUS

Mr Antonis L. ANTONIOU
Environmental Service
Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
CY-NICOSIA
Fax 357-2 36 39 45

CZECH REPUBLIC

Dr Bohumil KUCERA
Agency for Nature and Landscape Conservation
4-6 Kalíšnická
CZ-130 00 PRAGUE 3
Fax 42-2 27 24 60

DENMARK

Ms Lotte BARFOD
National Forest and Nature Agency
Ministry of the Environment
Haraldsgade 53
DK-2100 COPENHAGEN Ø
Fax 45-39 27 98 99

ESTONIA

Mr Kalju KUKK
Ministry of the Environment
24 Toompuiestee
EE-0100 TALLINN
Fax 372-62 62 801

FINLAND

Ms Anna-Maria MAUNU
Ministry of the Environment
P O Box 399
SF-00121 HELSINKI
Fax 358-0 1991 9453

FRANCE

Mme Sylvie PAU
Direction de la Nature et des Paysages
Ministère de l'Environnement
20 avenue de Ségur
F-75302 PARIS 07 SP
Fax 33-1 42 19 19 92

GERMANY

Mrs Helga INDEN-HEINRICH
Deutscher Naturschutzring eV
Am Michaelshof 8-10
Postfach 20 04 25
D-53134 BONN
Fax 49-228 35 90 96

GREECE

Mr Donald MATTHEWS
Hellenic Society for Nature Protection
24 Nikis Street
GR-105 57 ATHENS
Fax 30-1 32 25 285

HUNGARY

Mrs Louise LAKOS
Department of European Integration and International Relations
Ministry for Environment and Regional Policy
P O Box 351
H-1394 BUDAPEST
Fax 36-1 201 28 46

ICELAND

Mr Sigurdur Á. THRÁINSSON
Ministry for the Environment
Vonarstraeti 4
ISL-150 REYKJAVIK
Fax 354-5 62 45 66
E-mail sigurdur.thrainsson@umh.stjr.is

IRELAND

Mr Seamus LYNAM
Heritage Services, Department of Arts,
Culture and the Gaeltacht
51 St Stephens Green
IRL-DUBLIN 2
Fax 353-1 66 10 747

ITALY

Dr.ssa Elena MAMMONE
Ministère des Ressources agricoles et forestières
Bureau des Relations Internationales
18 via XX Settembre
I-00187 ROME
Fax 39-6 48 84 394

LATVIA

Mr Uldis CEKULIS
Head, Public Relations and Education Division
Ministry of the Environment and Regional Development
25 Peldu Str
LV-1494 RIGA
Fax 371-7 82 04 42

LIECHTENSTEIN

Mrs Regula IMHOF
Liechtensteinsche Gesellschaft für Umweltschutz
Im Bretsch 22
FL-9494 SCHAAN
Fax 41-75 237 40 31

LITHUANIA

Dr Kestutis BALEVIČIUS
Ministry of Environmental Protection
Juožapavicius 9
LT-2600 VILNIUS
Fax 370-2 72 80 20

LUXEMBOURG

M. Jean-Paul FELTGEN
Ministère de l'Environnement
18 Montée de la Pétrusse
L-2918 LUXEMBOURG
Fax 352-40 04 10

MALTA

Mr John GRECH
Environment Protection Department
M-FLORIANA
Fax 356-24 13 78

MOLDOVA

To be nominated

NETHERLANDS

Drs Peter W. BOS
Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries
Department for Nature Management
Section for Strategy and Information
P O Box 20401
NL-2500 EK's-GRAVENHAGE
Fax 31-70 335 08 64

NORWAY

Ms Sylvi OFSTAD
Ministry of Environment
Myntgaten 2
P O Box 8013 DEP
N-0030 OSLO
Fax 47-22 24 27 72

POLAND

Mr Marcin HERBST
National Foundation for Environmental Protection
ul. Krzywickiego 9
PL-02 078 WARSAW
Fax 48-22 25 21 27

PORTUGAL

Prof. Jorge M. PALMEIRIM
Liga para a protecção da natureza
Estrada do Calhariz de Benfica, 187
P-1500 LISBON
Fax 351-1 778 32 08

ROMANIA

Mme Lucia CEUCA
Direction Relations internationales, publiques et presse
Ministère des Eaux, Forêts et de la Protection de l'Environnement
Bd Libertatii 12, Secteur 5
RO-70542 BUCAREST
Fax 40-1 410 63 94

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Dr Nina DOBRYNINA
International Co-operation Department
Ministry of Environmental Protection
B. Grusinskaya str. 4/6
123812 MOSCOW
Fax 7-095 254 82 83

SAN MARINO

M. Leonardo LONFERNINI
Directeur de l'Office agricole et forestier
Via Ovella 12
Valdragone
RSM-47031 SAN MARINO
Fax 378-88 51 15

SLOVAKIA

Mrs Jana ZACHAROVÁ
Department of Nature and Landscape Protection
Ministry of the Environment
nám. L. Štúra 1
SK-812 BRATISLAVA
Fax 42-7 516 20 31

SLOVENIA

Mr Janko ŽERJAV
Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
Zupaničeva 6
SI-1000 LJUBLJANA
Fax 386-61 22 45 48

SPAIN

Mme Carmen CASAL FORNOS
Ministerio de Medio Ambiente
Secretaría General Técnica
Centro de Documentación ambiental
Despacho BS 09
Plaza San Juan de la Cruz s/n
E-28071 MADRID

SWEDEN

Mr Ingvar BINGMAN
Head of Information Department
Swedish Environment Protection Agency
Blekkholmstrassen 36
S-106 48 STOCKHOLM
Fax 46-8 20 29 45

SWITZERLAND

M. Jürg KÄNZIG
Ligue suisse pour la protection de la nature
Wartenbergstrasse 22
CH-4052 BÄLE
Fax 41-61 317 91 66

"THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA"

Office of the National Agency "Naturopa"
Ministry of Urban Planning, Construction and Environment
Skopska Crvena Opština bb. 3/62v
91 000 SKOPJE
Fax: 389-91 145 512

TURKEY

Mr Hasan ASMAZ
Turkish Association for the Conservation of Nature
and Natural Resources
Menekse sokak 29/4
TR-06440 KIZILAY-ANKARA
Fax 90-312 417 95 52

UKRAINE

Dr Tetiana HARDASHUK
Green Ukraine
National Ecological Centre
P O Box 89/7
252025 KYIV
Fax: 38-044 269 99 25

UNITED KINGDOM

Mrs Sharon GUNN
English Nature
Northminster House
GB-PETERBOROUGH PE1 1UA
Fax 44-1733 45 51 88

In order to receive *Naturopa* or obtain further information on the Centre Naturopa or the Council of Europe, please contact the National Agency of your country (see above list).

