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Climate Change Theology

Edward P. Echlin

Abstract

Reputable reports about climate change are grim. Unless radical mitigation and adaptation is implemented immediately the future of the present planetary biosystem, including humanity, is bleak. As Christians we have considerable resources in our living tradition to guide our own lives and to assist the whole earth community. Genesis, the historical books, wisdom, and the psalms all teach respect for climate as God's gift. Human hubris or idolatry results in climate nemesis. God creates the earth with its climate through his Word. In Jesus God lives in the earth community, experiencing and walking within the restraints of climate in first century Galilee. Jesus' baptism, his lifestyle, especially his teaching and meals, his passion, death, and resurrection are all climate related. Jesus, in modern parlance lived and died sustainably. We are Jesus risen as sustainable community today.

Keywords

climate, eco-theology, ethics, sanctuary, extinction

In October, 2007, the United Nations UNEP published its fourth 'Global Environment Outlook' (GEO (4)) since *Our Common Future* in 1987. Under the three categories of population increase, biodiversity loss, and climate change, the Outlook noted deterioration in all three categories. Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director said, 'we will shortly be in trouble, if indeed we are not already'. The International Energy Agency predicts that if present trends continue, warming of about 3°C (5.4°F) to 6°C (10.8°F) will occur this century. This means that much of earth will be uninhabitable. The eminent zoologist E.O Wilson, a former Baptist, recently called humans 'the great meteorite of our time', a 'geophysical force', a 'serial extinguisher of species'. Wilson argues that science and religion are 'the two great powers' today – which should collaborate to heal and conserve the earth. I would add that, among others, human greed, now reflected in desperate denial of human induced climate change and

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the response required, is another great power, what theology dares to call original sin.

In a meeting with UK Catholics engaged in earthcare, Bishop Christopher Toohey of Catholic Earthcare Australia said 'We are the first generation of Christians to evangelise when people are destroying the earth'. In this unprecedented context we offer the considerable healing resources of the Catholic living tradition. As we reinhabit our tradition, let us proceed with the creative and perceptive power of imagination, Wordsworth's 'reason in its most exalted mood'. Imagination, as S. T. Coleridge noted, discovers 'the inner goings on'. What the New Testament writers presuppose is often more important than what they describe. Here in this towery city (Oxford), there is the discipline of 'reception history', which notices how God's word has been received in history. We, with our ancestors, hearers of God's word, especially those conscious of climate as God's gift, contribute insights 'in front of' the text. Our reception is part of the disclosure; with imagination we 'mind the gaps', contemplate the tacit, the implicit, the echoes, and the presuppositions of the first Christian writers.

Notice the reception of Psalms 147 and 148 which include climate in our prayers. The first Palestinian monasteries gathered daily to pray these psalms. It was the beginning of Lauds. These same earth and climate inclusive prayers were chanted daily by the early Franciscans, and are still prayed at gatherings of valiant forerunners of a Christian ecology. We are indebted to the primordial transmitters of our passion narratives which recall Our Lord's entrance to Jerusalem seated on a humble animal so 'received' in Christian history that the donkey's descendants are included in annual commemorations of Our Lord's last hours. Significantly, Zechariah, in a passage close to that about the king on the donkey, prays beautifully for the gift of seasonal rains and crops (Zch. 9.9, 10.1). This close juxtaposition is similar to Jesus' reply to the Baptist's inquiry about his identity. The scriptural passage which Jesus associates with his healing miracles also includes life giving water and the flowering of the wilderness (Is. 35.1–2, 6–7).

Jesus' journey through the Caesarea Philippi region, and his reported initial structuring of his community there, have something to teach us about the inherent connection of the Church and our leaders with water and climate. Caesarea Philippi, as its earlier name Panias suggests, was the site of the ancient fertility shrine to Pan, the site of the life giving Jordan upon which that biosystem of the fertile crescent depends. The Jordan itself is replenished by the springs, snows and glaciers of Hermon. Snow and ice, mist and dew, are important for soil fertility and life. 'Drought and heat snatch away the snow water', laments Job with words resonant for our own time especially for those who depend on the world's great glacier fed rivers (Jb. 24.19). Jesus' commissioning of Peter in that riverine

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fertility, and his later confirmation of Peter's leadership on the shores of the lake, relate Church leadership to fresh water (Mt. 16.16; Jn. 21.17). The Bishop of Rome is also bishop of the Tiber, while Bishop Toohey is also bishop of the five rivers of the Murray Darling basin. Here in Oxford, the churchyard of St Mary and St John is a wildlife sanctuary, with a local Blenheim apple tree to which children return baptismal water.

We receive insights about Jesus and climate when imaginatively we 'indwell' the words of scripture, in the shadow of the vine, beneath the olives, listening for the echo. The word for crib or manger, for example, is closely associated with domestic animals who, unlike the foraging wild ass of the desert, know their owner and their manger with its reliable warmth, water, and sustenance (Is. 1.3). We can learn from the wisdom of the animals. Domestic animals, especially since the thirteenth century, are in the reception history of the birth of Jesus, as we testify in our Christmas cribs. Another word with associations is *tekton*, or craftsman. Jesus, says Mark, was a *tekton*, the son of the *tekton*, adds Matthew. Craftsmen's families supplemented incomes by partial self-sufficient food growing in fields, in lower Galilee 'where the sycamores grow'. In the chalk and marl of the fertile Nazareth ridge Jesus observed the fascinating world of seeds which later he deployed so memorably in his parables. We can contemplate him with his family and neighbours, selecting, saving, sowing and observing family heirloom seeds. There was sharing of seeds in Nazareth and elsewhere in what today we call participatory plant breeding.

The Old Testament and Climate

To discover and formulate 'the ethics of climate change' in the Christian tradition, we should contemplate our whole deep and varied tradition, not confining ourselves to any one writer, school of thought, or historical period. In very relevant words of the late Henri de Lubac, 'It is undoubtedly fatal for theology to leave outside of its grasp any part of the riches conveyed century after century by the single yet multiform tradition of the Church. The theologian too must avoid, as a trap, the temptation to enclose all of his theological thought in his own system. No great theologian has ever done this.'

Within these perennial riches the Genesis stories have a special place. They are – dare I say, almost surprisingly – rich with wisdom and symbols that still speak powerfully to our own endangered species in our ecocidal time. In the first, but not oldest, Genesis poetic story we notice that we share the sixth day with wild and domestic animals including reptiles. In other words, 'we's kin' (as locals used to say when I studied theology in Appalachia) with the other members of our biotic community. But with a significant

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difference. While as kin with other earth creatures we are 'one from among your brothers', we alone are in our shared Creator's 'image'. Stewards, co-creators, and, especially kin, we may be, but with a dignified, demanding difference. We have responsibilities under God, for good climate, weather, and fertile soil. Notice for example, the prayer for the king in Psalm 72: responsible rule under God secures soil fertility, sweet rain, and reliable weather. The words used in the first chapter of Genesis for our sacral responsibilities are, of course, notoriously strong and sometimes used as an excuse for climate damaging exploitation by Christians and others who look to the Bible for guidance. Old Testament scholar John Eaton explains, 'It is the language of ancient kingship, and in the ideals of the ancient world kingship was holy; it was God's way of maintaining goodness and care on earth. The king was promised victorious power in the strongest terms because God meant that goodness should prevail. But the king's task was above all to defend the needy and to mirror God's creative love. He was to be a good shepherd, ready to die for his flock.'

As God's image, servant shepherd kings, we remain fellow creatures with our sister and brother creatures within the sanctuary of the earth, a reality conveniently forgotten by all who regard earth and its climate as 'resources', for 'economic growth', and 'progress'. 'One from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother' (Dt. 17.15). As priestly royal servant shepherds we feed our flock, holding our lambs in our arms, gathering them to our bosom, and gently guiding those with young. In the apocalypse the 'elders' place their crowns at God's throne, acknowledging, as in the inclusio of Psalm 8, that ultimate dominium is God's, the earth sanctuary garden is His (Ps. 8.1 & 9; Rv. 4.11). The key to sustainability, in our overpopulated, climate damaged and biodiversity shrinking earth, is living sustainably locally, with all the discipline these words demand. In the mind-blowing words of W.H. Auden, 'When kings were local, people knelt.'

Orthodox Christians, who ground their faith and theology in the liturgy – *lex orandi statuat legem credendi* (the law of prayer determines the law of belief) – emphasise the priestly responsibilities of God's human creatures. In the words of Orthodox theologian Alexander Schemann, 'The basic definition of human beings is that we are priests. We stand at the centre of the world and unify it with an act of blessing God, of both receiving the world from God and offering it to God.' As priests we recognise that like Eve and Adam, soil creatures from soil, *adamah*, we are within the community we serve. As royal priests we are inherently humble, of the same root as humus. I still remember how struck I was, as a young student, at the ordination card of an already acknowledged biblical scholar. The text he chose

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was rarely, if ever, used – at least by priests! – in those days, 'He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people' (Hb. 5.2–3).

The Eden story, as wise as it is ancient, reminds us that, in this garden earth which is not our own possession, the primary economy is the earth's economy, within which all other economies are dependent and derivative. Earth's economy neither 'grows', nor makes 'progress', it is finite, limited and fragile. When earth's economy produces food and drink, it needs replenishment with compost, its economy is circular, not linear, 'out the pipe's end' like a plastic package-landfill-into-the-atmosphere-and-rivers economy. The Adam in the ancient story is the lady or man with the hoe, the one sustainable herbicide which turns weeds into green manure, with which we can 'guard and keep' the garden (Gn. 2.15). The hoe co-operates with the soil community enabling us to sow seeds and nurture seedlings, which, in turn, nurture and help us.

When we break the circle and go linear, we 'experience good and evil', we become addicted to fossil fuel, air conditioning, ever more runways and air transport. The climate suffers and life for all earth's living creatures becomes difficult. When climate rebels against human hubris, the hoe struggles against thorns and thistles, the soil is less friable, drought withers the garden. We sweat to feed ourselves, and the annual 'hunger gap' lengthens. I suggest that the Eden story of the human stumble and frailty is just that, a story about the inherent frailty of our humanity. Organic gardeners know the truth of the ancient Genesis story. When humans abuse the atmosphere with CO_2 and its equivalents, melting the glaciers, and degrading soil and sea, gardening becomes difficult, even with rain water harvesting and 'climate change crops', of which I myself now reluctantly grow a few.

Today many people, including those who know climate tragedies in Asia and Africa, find the flood and ark myth existentially compelling, perhaps even more than in the deep time in which it originated. Notice again our inseparable relationship with animals, with whom we share the ark. The ancient rabbis commented endearingly on Noah and the dove. Noah, they noted, was caring, regretting to see his feathery companion depart, yet hoping she would find a welcoming dry habitat and, like a child leaving home, flourish in her new life. In the story's conclusion God promises not to destroy earth again with a flood. But he does not say he will preserve his human creatures from self and earth destruction as, according to recent IPCC, UNEP, and IEA reports, humans are doing, even as waters rise and glaciers melt. The flood story concludes with the rainbow covenant with God, with other sensate creatures as our covenant partners. Henceforth, humans and other animals are permitted to eat meat, but with deference and

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respect. *Pace* some vegetarians neither we nor our fellow animal creatures 'fell' into carnivorism. Within the evolving earth we and other sensate creatures respectfully prey upon and consume flesh. But always in the Judaeo-Christian and Moslem traditions there is hope of a peaceable future wherein people and other sensate creatures will live in harmony without hurting each other (Is. 11.1–9). The author of Job may even hint that the covenant extends beyond sensate creatures. 'At destruction and famine you shall laugh, and shall not fear the beasts of the earth. For you shall be in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you' (Jb 5.22–23).

That we are in a cosmic covenant with God, with fellow earth creatures as partners, implies love and responsibility for them, protecting them from human induced climate damage. Even our choice of food makes a considerable difference to our fellow creatures – and to the climate. Lord Peter Melchett of the Soil Association, and a Norfolk livestock farmer, says, 'It can't be overstated how important the carbon footprint of food is. Farmers and food together have a huge impact. But the great thing about food is that what we eat is down to you and I. It is an area where individuals have real power when they act collectively on a small scale.' In 2005 the UN adopted the 'Responsibility to Protect (R2P)' people in other countries when governments fail to do so. Recently, a Vatican Foreign Secretary Pietro Parolin, despite the presence of climate sceptic Renato Martino at the Vatican, suggested that R2P applies also to 'climate genocide'. Parolin's words merit serious consideration. What for example are the principles for a 'just intervention' when states are committing 'climate genocide' against their own citizens and our other covenant partners? At a minimum we can intervene personally by refusing their exports. A significant part of our carbon footprint, for example, derives from goods produced (and transported) for us in China, where, according to the OECD, 300 million people drink contaminated water, and if emissions are not mitigated there will be 600,000 pollution related deaths a year.

The Joseph story complements the flood story by relating climate to *scarcity* of water. Droughts merging with floods, as the IPCC insists, are intrinsic to climate change. Since beginning this paper I received a letter from an Oxfordshire farmer, 'For us farmers climate change is becoming a challenge not only because of temperature rise but also longer periods of drought and intense rainfall. At the moment the livestock sector is in deep crisis. Please keep praying for these farmers faced with extinction.' In the Joseph story we notice God's providence even in climate catastrophe. The story prompts us to learn from, and prepare for, our own annual 'hunger-gap' each late winter. All of us should sow or plant some late winter fruit and vegetables. The annual hunger gap previews the genuine – and

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human induced – hunger that will accompany climate change unless people cease denial immediately and mitigate the damage already begun. We can learn from the Joseph sequence the importance of seeds. 'Here is seed for you to sow the land. At harvest you shall give one fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths shall be yours as seed for the land and for food' (Gn. 47.23–24). Joseph and the seeds of Egypt are a type of Jesus' own familiarity with seeds and his seed metaphors which have made seeds part of our heritage. Paul is the first Christian writer to employ seeds as a metaphor for morals, 'He who supplies seed to the sower and bread to the poor will supply and multiply your sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness' (2 Cr. 9.10). Heirloom seeds, their selection, saving, sowing and harvesting are literally seminal to life. The grain Joseph distributed to the Egyptians and to his brothers was both food and seeds for selecting and saving and sowing. I am 'guardian' for a seed in our national Heritage Seed Library, an 'Emerald' lettuce given to the national collection by Carmelite Sister Barbara of Ware. Climate change makes seed germination, plant growing, and seed harvesting difficult, even impossible. In 2007, for example, parts of the southern UK experienced July dryness in April, the crucial month for seeds and seedlings, and April rains in July, an inversion which made food production difficult. Terminator, and zombie seeds, and various attempts to patent seeds by profit driven companies, add to the difficulties, are near blasphemous, and an unscrupulous exploitation of small farmers and growers throughout the earth.

The Wilderness Tradition

Our deep tradition includes wilderness and biodiversity. We are water, biodiversity, and 'open spaces' people. Abraham and Moses, our common ancestors, encountered our Creator in wilderness. Our covenants, cosmic, Abrahamic, Sinai, and the new covenant, are all wilderness related. Jesus' public ministry, in all four canonical gospels, begins with the Baptist's community in a wilderness especially related to living water. Since the second century, baptism in living water has been a Christian ideal, even when, in cities, 'living water' is harvested rain. Our whole wilderness tradition is a contribution we bring to the earth community at this time. We need the wilderness wisdom of the Baptist's community, the ascetics, the Thoreaus and John Muirs of past and present, if our species is to survive in dignity much longer. Wilderness is the inner sanctuary of Earth's biodiversity, including rivers, seas and littorals. Wilderness includes carbon sinks, oxygen, glaciers, aquifers, springs, wetlands, woodlands, heath, minerals, wildlife, and the 'iron and copper' of the promised land.

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Jesus lived, thought and prayed in the wilderness tradition throughout his life, from Nazareth and the Jordan, to his last free hours on Olivet. In this symbiosis with wilderness, he was followed by the early ascetics, the Celtic saints, religious houses, monasteries, theological colleges and retreat and conference centres, with the 'silence' that makes audible God's voice in biodiverse voices. The 'Green Sisters' of North America regard the land entrusted to them as sanctuaries for the whole earth community, which is what all land, no matter how limited, entrusted to followers of Jesus should be. I occasionally think something irreplaceable vanished from Jesuit training when Jesuit scholastics left the alternative wilderness of fields and sheep near Heythrop Hall and the limestone hills of West Baden. Wilderness fellow creatures were a companionable part of the training somehow, in a way the lush square of Kensington Gore and the parks and waterfront of Chicago cannot be. Our temples or places of worship include living gardens around them, indeed some are called God's acre or living churchyards, which they are or should be. Edwin Lutyens had it right in the small garden he designed behind Campion Hall, Oxford, with its living pond, holm oak, and 'the glassy pear tree which leaves and blooms, they touch the descending blue.' (Gerard Manley Hopkins S.J., 'Spring')

Friaries and monasteries, and various testimonies of religious, in their different ways, illustrate the partial self-sufficiency to which all of us can aspire. Abbot Isidore of Thebes (d. 450) for example, describes his early monastery soil as a 'well watered garden, and the fruits and trees of paradise, provided in abundance all that was necessary, so that the resident monks never had to leave the precincts'. In the twelfth century Bernard's Clairvaux included 'within the precincts a wide level area containing an orchard of many different fruit trees, like a little wood'. The 'little wood' reminds us that a few fruit trees well managed include biodiversity and are a sanctuary for life within the threatened earth community. At Fountains Abbey, our own 'daughter' of Clairvaux, near Ripon, there was an orchard near the springs or 'fountains' on 'kitchen bank' south of the river Skell within view of the infirmary as was the Cistercian custom. When Tom Lincoln moved his young family from Kentucky to Indiana, one of the first things he did was to plant some apple trees near his log cabin. When studying in Indiana I visited the site where young Abraham Lincoln spent his teens. The foundations of the cabin were still there. I wandered through the scrub around the cabin and found several scrawny apple seedlings. In touching their leaves I touched history. The Lincolns, like the early Cistercians, knew and lived partial self-sufficiency in symbiosis with that part of earth entrusted to them. The 'Green Sisters' movement does the same in our time.

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The Immaculate Conception

We noticed the tacit in our tradition, that what the New Testament writers presuppose is sometimes more important than what they describe. The Immaculate Conception is the preparation of the cosmos through deep time and history for the conception and birth of the future Mother of God. Through the primal flaring forth, the whole 14 billion year universe unfolding, the nearly four billion years of evolution on planet earth, through the climatic conditions of Jewish history, the desert years and settlement in Canaan, exile and return, through the vicissitudes in which Jewish identity was maintained, there eventuated the right climate and conditions for the conception of a girl in Palestine. 'All fair art thou, my beloved, there is no stain in thee' (Song of Songs, 4.7). Apocryphal writings describe parents Joachim and Ann whom subsequent devotions, churches, shrines, and stained glass celebrate. In a painting by Velasquez we behold a young girl, apparently modelled by the artist's sister Joanna, star crowned, encircled by planets, with the moon beneath her feet, and, far below, planet earth, including 'a garden locked, a fountain sealed', with equable climate. The girl is destined to become 'Mary of the Cosmos', the name of an icon 'written' by Sister Bernadette Bostwick of the Sisters of St Joseph of LaGrange.

The Nazareth Years

The chalk and marl Nazareth ridge of lower Galilee, 'where the sycamores grow', nourished the body, the mind, and imaginative powers of Jesus – thereby influencing ourselves. Much of our earth appreciation and spirituality are nourished, through and in Jesus, by the same Nazareth ridge. As he matured and worked in family fields, Jesus 'the son of the craftsman', noticed the changing seasons, the symbiosis of climate and crops, seed varieties, their saving, exchange, and sowing, harvest and soil preparation, sheep, fowl, manure, and wildlife, life from death. Saved seeds in my study, away from light, moisture, and soil, remain alone and potential. But when sown into prepared soil, they die and rise to new life. Seeds unsown too long, like the old soldier, eventually wither and fade away. We gain insights from the parables of the sower, the mustard bush, and the tares among the wheat. Walking through vineyards one notices that vines, as Jesus said, require hard pruning (Jn. 15.2). Allotment holders and family growers know the details of their own field like no other, 'There is an undying difference in the corner of a field', said Monaghan farmer Patrick Kavanagh. There is mega-wisdom in the ancient Jewish custom, 'Remove not the ancient landmark. Enter not the field of the fatherless.' Suffering and environmental damage increase when such

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customs are ignored, 'Men remove landmarks. They seize flocks and pasture them. They drive away the ass of the fatherless, and steal the widow's ox' (Jb 24.2–3).

From Jewish scriptures, archaeology, Josephus, Cato, Virgil, Pliny, the Mishna, and other sources we know that Jesus and his family were familiar with wheat and barley, olives, figs, pomegranates, grapes, pears, dates, apples, onions, garlic, cucurbitas, lettuce, carrots, legumes, brassica, oil and vinegar, wine and water, pork, beef, mutton, dried and salted fish, cheese, and goat's milk. As in today's allotment cultures, and in the transition town movement, family growers learned from older indigenous growers' hereditary wisdom.

Baptism and Wilderness

Jesus' lifelong affinity with wilderness began as a boy on the Nazareth ridge, and perdured until his last days. Many of his memorable metaphors drew from an imagination nourished in the Galilee countryside, from Jewish scriptures and synagogue readings, and from deep wilderness. Jesus left home and its vicinity as through the centuries young men have continued to do, because he had a mission to accomplish in the years given him, God's will to follow, a rainbow to pursue, God's kingdom to proclaim. His parents and family were included in the departure too – life begins with a walking away, and love is proved in the letting go.

After a time with John's wilderness community, and his own baptism by John in the Jordan, Jesus moved to the fishing village and small port, Capernaum on the lake. That was his base during his public ministry. Capernaum soil is basaltic, fertile like the different fertility of Nazareth soil, especially suitable for grain and fruit. Even today the site is close to vineyards and orchards. The hill behind Capernaum, possibly the 'mount' of the sermon, is covered with citrus and other fruit. Wild wheat and grain flourish in the hinterland, and around Corazin which the Talmud described as a cereal growing area. In rainy season, clouds, rain and storms can be seen spreading across the lake. One October morning, at the end of the long dry season I sat on the rocky shore near the Orthodox priory. Suddenly from the hills behind Migdal to the southwest the first early rain swept across the lake and Capernaum. I remained where I was realizing that this was the 'early rain' which Jesus experienced at Capernaum, and which nourished his imagination and his preaching. As I was leaving, an Orthodox monk who apparently had been watching from the priory, came over and said, 'You Anglos are very strange. You sit in the rain.' How could one do otherwise? It was the same early rain which enabled seed sowing when Jesus was at Capernaum.

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We need to receive and reinhabit our water tradition. We are water people, all water is the cosmic Jordan. Jesus expelled evil from the sea, reconciling us to the seas which now need our help as they are polluted, mined, battered and scraped by earth and sea illiterate men. The choice of Capernaum for a base, and then Caesarea Philippi for the primordial structuring of the Jesus movement, relates Church ministry to water, to the glaciers, snow and dew of Hermon, and the life giving Jordan which rises near Caesarea Philippi and the shrine of the nature god. The Nazareth springs, the ministry at the lake 'by the sea, across the Jordan' as Matthew noted (Mt. 4.15), Cana, the woman at Jacob's well, Bethesda pool, the sweat and tears of Gethsemane, the open side and blood and water on Calvary, the appearances and breakfast at the lake, the confirmation of church leadership on the shore – as the third century North African Tertullian said, 'Christ is never without water'.

Nor are we. We can harvest and conserve water in living churchyards, ponds, back gardens, and rain butts. The Monroe IHM 'Green Sisters' collect grey water in an underground cistern and pump it back into the mother house for re-use. We can baptize in 'living water' harvested at churches, and children, like those at St Mary and St John's at Oxford, can return baptismal water to tree or plant in the churchyard. Living churchyards and garden wildlife spaces are rain porous, they conserve water and share it with life. As water people we can refrain from importing 'virtual water' in food, as Nicholas Grey of Wells for India reminds us, and from sea and air miles that damage climate.

From his years at Nazareth, and then Capernaum on the lake, Jesus learned to appreciate water and climate. 'The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes' (Jn. 3.8). Rain, he observed, falls impartially on just and unjust (Mt. 5.45). His closest disciples were from 'the valley' of the lake which was less tied to a peasant economy than was Nazareth.

Jesus' alternative lifestyle

Jesus lived in a Sabbatical and Jubilee ethos. Jesus' lifestyle was grounded in trust in God as Father and Lord. Fathers, in a patriarchal society, provide life's necessities. As Lord God is Creator of all that is. 'I praise thee Father, Lord of heaven and earth' (Mt. 11.25; Is. 42.5). As in permaculture and organic growing, Jesus and his close disciples worked within the restraints and adapted to their local climate, they were climate symbiotic. Jesus had neither food, clothing, nor shelter anxiety because of his trust in God as Father and Lord of heaven and earth, who provides for human needs when humans live

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within earth's restraints, 'He will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and grain, the produce of the ground, will be rich and plenteous' (Is. 30.23; cf. 55.10). At Nazareth, Capernaum and throughout Galilee and Judea, among rural people food production distribution, sharing and consumption was local, dependent on the local climate. Ruminants, as part of the local community, 'farmed' hinterland hedges and fedges (food hedges), contributing free food. Herds and flocks were often communal. Hence the shepherd rejoiced twice over the found lost sheep, once when he found it, and again with the village when he returned with the good news (Lk. 15.3–7). Our contribution, as Jesus' disciples, is never to damage the climate, to walk our talk by healing, preserving and protecting the climate entrusted to us.

Jesus' lifestyle was alternative to the insidious infinite resource illusion which, through 'economic growth' and 'development' is destroying the earth. A good example is the remark attributed to a former prime minister that we could abolish the 'farming industry' in the UK, and import all our food. All recent governments have thought we could construct houses indefinitely on prime agricultural and greenbelt land and even grow agrofuels for cars, whereby cars and HGVs compete with people for our limited precious soil fertility. Optimum Population Trust more sensibly and realistically described the complacent response to recent projections of population growth, including net inward migrations into this crowded island, as 'sleep-walking to catastrophe'. No amount of import dependent 'free-fair trade' will permit people to function unsustainably indefinitely. Lord Melchett said recently, 'All of us must eat less meat'. Melchett's own animals are extensively and humanely reared, like those in Jesus' lifetime. He referred to the massive demands on soil for feed for livestock, combined with the CO_2 equivalent emissions from intensively reared farm animals.

The Meals and Eucharist

Jesus' indoor and outdoor meals – like our own communal meals as Christians – remind us of Jesus 'real presence' beyond the Eucharistic elements. The meals symbolised the universalism of the kingdom for which he was prepared to die. 'Men will come from east and west and sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom' (Mt. 8.11; Lk. 13.29). Jesus' meals – like our own common meals – are parables of the kingdom. Jesus' meals resembled Hellenic and Jewish symposia including 'pot luck' sharing, a serious discourse, and conversation. Participants celebrated climate, which secures harvest and food, as God's gifts (Pss. 104; 144; 147–8). Bread, as Lester Brown reminds us, does not fall like rain from heaven but depends on wheat and

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grain and therefore reliable climate and seasons. Vines too depend on rain and ripening autumn sun, and in their turn provide warmth as well as food and drink. Even annual prunings feed the hearth fire, and their ashes then return to the soil. We should share meals more often, signifying and hastening the kingdom, and in our local sharing offering an alternative to globalised agribusiness. In the medieval church congregations shared meals in the nave after the eucharist. Bread was baked by rote, brought to the altar before Mass, and the week's bakers were mentioned in the intercessions. Most of us have seen pictures of the Ravenna mosaic with Empress Theodora and her court carrying bread to the altar.

The Last Supper especially symbolised Christ's own body and blood offered in sacrifice reconciling the world. Our eucharists represent Jesus' offering. In our other shared meals, we gather 'in his name' and include friends of other faiths, we symbolise Jesus' reconciling presence. At our eucharists, and in our communal meals, we should use local bread and wine, organic when possible. In our meals, especially at the eucharist, we are a reconciling presence, a 'carbon neutral' Christ as community today.

The Cosmic Cross

Jesus' final hours on earth from the meals at Bethany and Jerusalem, through the agony in the alternative wilderness of Gethsemane to Golgotha, were earth and climate inclusive. The apocalyptic signs in the synoptics, eight in Matthew 27, are climate related. 'Were you there when the sun refused to shine?' tremulously asks the American spiritual. A third century hymn salutes the cosmic cross, 'Immortal plant, it places itself at the centre of heaven and earth, firm support of the universe, bond of all things, support of the whole inhabited world, cosmic bond embracing the entire atmosphere with immeasurable hands'. The Poitiers *Pange Lingua*, says, 'Earth, sea, stars, the entire world is cleansed'. Similarly, in cosmic sympathy, the Ruthwell 'Dream of the Rood' comments on Matthew's gospel, 'Clouds of darkness swept across his shining splendour. All creation wept.' Jesus' open side, with the 'woman' and 'son' beneath the cross, recall the Eden story, the sacrificial lamb, and the reconciliation of 'all things' as in the Johannine and Pauline hymns. John adds, 'In the place where he was crucified there was a garden' (Jn. 19.41). Significantly, the north gate of Jerusalem, near Golgotha, was called 'the garden gate'. Intimations of new creation permeate the crucifixion and death, just as the cross overshadows the synoptic infancy stories.

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Cosmic Resurrection

Jesus was buried in the garden in a new tomb. Wrapped in linen, he was anointed with myrrh of the balsam family which grows in Arabia and Somaliland, and with aloes of the mideast lily family. The gospels testify that Jesus arose from the dead, that the tomb was empty, that he appeared to many who had known him. Raymond Brown said in Dublin that his own Christian ecology began with the resurrection. Jesus risen, he said, is the beginning of the earth's future. 'The earth', he added, 'shares our destiny. Therefore we should take care of it.' In the fourth century St Ambrose spoke like Brown, whom some compared to a modern church father, 'In Christ's resurrection the world arose. In Christ's resurrection the heavens arose. In Christ's resurrection the earth arose.' The resurrection of Jesus, and the earth community reconciled in Him, includes people across centuries and cultures. The pleroma, or fullness of God's presence in Jesus risen, includes the whole earth and the cosmos. Through her immaculate conception and the incarnation Mary is indeed 'Mary of the Cosmos'.

The resurrection is cosmic. In the dazzling imaginative art of Velasquez, a servant girl in a bodega kitchen looks through the serving hatch into the dining room at Emmaus. Something amazing is happening. Velasquez does not attempt – and fail like other artists – to depict the startled moment of recognition at the breaking of bread at the table. Rather as we look through the hatch with the maid the table scene is rather blurred. We can just make out three persons and that something extraordinary is happening. The eyes of the servant girl are wide open. When Adam and Eve stumbled, 'their eyes were opened' (Gn. 3.7). Luke wrote of Cleopas and his companion in the moment portrayed by Velasquez, 'their eyes were opened' (Lk. 24.31). Jesus risen is the new creation, the beginning, as Raymond Brown said, of the future of the earth.

Conclusion

From the primordial fireball through the whole universe story to evolving earth and our own bioregions – all things are reconciled in Jesus. The resurrection gives hope for the future of earth and its climate now declining under relentless human impact and fossil fuel addiction. Through, in and with us the whole earth community awaits new creation, radically begun in Jesus risen. All creation awaits and longs for the new advent of Jesus making 'all things new' (Rv. 21.5). Speaking to thousands of young people at Rome in 1984, and through them to all of us, Pope John Paul II said, 'We must not disrupt the Divine plan … this 'new heaven and new earth' towards which God leads history'.

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The time and shape of this 'new heaven and new earth' is mystery. No matter how old or large we discover the universe to be, Jesus risen reconciles 'to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by his blood on the cross' (Col. 1.20). Extinct species, the South Downs chalk micro-organisms, the Jurassic dinosaurs, efforts of earth healing that seem to have failed, our deceased pets and the love we shared, all will be included, and live now in God's memory. We are here to reinhabit earth sustainably, to make sacraments everywhere in the sanctuary of earth, to be the future we want to happen. Jesus risen fills us his Body with hope.

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