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Time of Creation

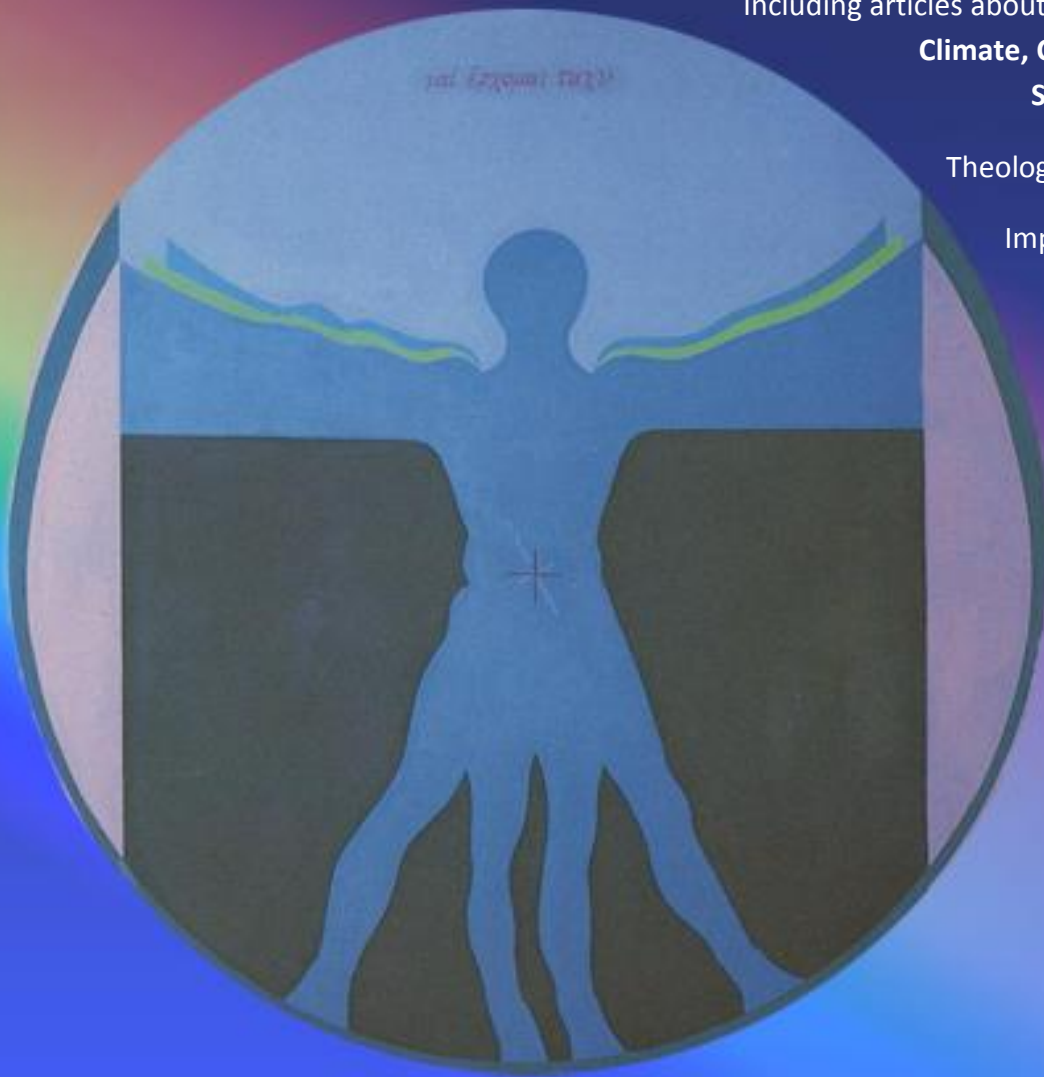
Dossier for the Time of Creation

Including articles about the main topics
**Climate, Children, Water,
Soil / Agriculture**

Theological background

Impulses for liturgy

European
Car Free Day
September 22



European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN)

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Titelbild: Ja, ich komme bald (offb. 22.20), from Josef Fink, Kapelle (chapel) of Bildungshauses Mariatrost

The Becoming of ‚Creation Time’ from conference to conference

At the time when the First Ecumenical Assembly of Basel has addressed the inseparable trinity of the Conciliar Process for “*Peace-Justice-integrity of Creation*” it was 5 to 12. Even though this trinity was picked up by Earth Summit in Rio (1992), the ranking of the words led to criticism, especially since the security and fair distribution of the blessings of Creation are seen as the premise for peace, meaning a sustainable life style and applied Creation Responsibility need to be considered in the first place.

The recommendations for action of the Second Ecumenical Assembly of Graz (1997) stated this fact more clearly, aiming at a change of behaviour in the churches as a main dimension of clerical life:

Future of Mankind:

(B45) History teaches that the Christian churches must begin with themselves in meeting the need to change our thinking.

5.1. We recommend that the churches consider and promote the preservation of creation as part of church life at all levels. One way would be to observe a common Creation Day, such as the Ecumenical Patriarchate celebrates each year.

Rationale: The seriousness of the ecological dilemma for the future of the human race means that the churches' consciousness of it must be raised. Commitment to preservation of the creation is not a side issue among many others, but an essential dimension of all church work.

5.2. We recommend that the churches encourage the development of lifestyles guided by the principles of sustainability and social justice, and that they support all efforts towards an economy which meets the same criteria.

Rationale: Ecological responsibility must guide personal as well as political and economic actions. The criterion of sustainability gives continued weight to saving energy and to discovery and use of renewable forms of energy. Christians, supported by their congregations and their church, should strive for a lifestyle which sets an example of freeing oneself from the pressure to consume and of valuing a true quality of life.

In the meantime it is 1 to 12! Wars for resources and famines have become a sad reality. Tides of ecological refugees from countries where the basics of life have become scarce are starting to reach Europe.

Creation Time – An impulse for the working year in the churches

May this DOSSIER for the conception of CREATION TIME be an impulse and a working aid, and may it fill the time from September 1st to October 4th (or the second Sunday in October) - which has been officially confirmed by the Third Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu last year – with power and with life.

In Memoriam Prof. Lukas VISCHER, President of the ECEN
Isolde Schönstein, Leader of the Coalition „Time of Creation“ of the ECEN - internationally

"I live and you will live also"

(John 14, 19)

Lukas Vischer died on the 11th of March 2008 in Geneva. He was the most sensitive uniter of the churches of our time. His death is a great loss for ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung.



Prof. Dr. Lukas Vischer (1926-2008)
image: Pastor Christoph Knoch, Gümliigen

Lukas Vischer was a passionate fighter for the future of life on Earth and for a Church that is visibly united in the faithful fulfilment of

its Christian mission.

Vischer was sent to the Second Vatican Council in 1961, leading to the installation of a common working group with the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Lukas Vischer was the first chairman of this group.

Co-founder of the ECEN

By founding the EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK (ECEN) he managed to unite representatives of the Churches in order to cooperate actively according to the Conciliar Process of *Peace-Justice-integrity of Creation* and to participate in a sustainable Europe. As president of the ECEN, Vischer considered himself a servant to the organisation, in all parts of Europe.

Within the WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC), Lukas Vischer positioned his encouragement for God's suffering Creation at the Conciliar Process for *Peace-Justice-integrity of Creation*, which the assembly in Vancouver approved of in 1983, leading to a further summit in Seoul. So it is largely because of Lukas Vischer that the WCC has already addressed the problem of Climate Change more than 15 years ago.

In 1986, he took part in the installation of the Ecumenical working group Church and Envi-

ronment in Switzerland (today: [oeku: Kirche und Umwelt, www.oeku.ch](http://www.oeku.ch)), which is serving church institutions and parishes. CREATION TIME has been addressed by the group since 1993.

His vast knowledge, his keen mind and his deep and loyal faith have characterized the world wide networking with representatives of all Christian traditions. Especially the initiative of CREATION TIME which has been called into being by Lukas Vischer is beginning to be acknowledged and celebrated all over the world.

Publications

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Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present, 2003. ISBN 0802805205

Commemorating Witnesses and Martyrs of the Past: A Reformed Perspective, 2006. ISBN 2825414824

Listening to Creation Groaning, John Knox Series.No16;

Spirituality, Creation and the Ecology of the Eucharist, John Knox Series No 18;

Witnessing in the Midst of a Suffering Creation, John Knox Series No 19.

Time for God's Creation, ECEN's Appeal to the Churches in Europe, which helped to make Creation time a main recommendation of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly. This was but the latest of a series of dossiers he edited and wrote for ECEN on energy, water and the annual themes for Creation Time.

At his death he was in the process of helping to organise a fourth John Knox consultation on *Peace on the Earth is Peace with the Earth* in the context of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation.

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Climate





Why climate change is more than another global problem

By Prof. Dr. Helga Kromp-Kolb, Center for Global Change and Sustainability, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna

Basics

The basic needs of man - as well as of other earthly beings - include energy and matter, whereby energy is absorbed both directly as solar energy (light and heat) and via food (biomass). The demand for matter is widely diverse, but water and carbon in the form of plant and animal biomass are quite fundamental. As social beings, people also need immaterial things, such as affection or relationships with other people.

In addition to the necessity to satisfy their basic needs, humans have developed additional needs to lead their lifestyle. While little has changed in the basic needs per person over the millennia, the lifestyle-related additional consumption has changed dramatically, especially in the last 200 years. In order to enjoy this lifestyle, man has intervened in an ever-increasing frequency in the natural ecosystem. This is particularly evident in the anthropogenic climate change. Man-made global warming, affecting the overall climate, especially precipitation, threatens even the satisfaction of basic needs. This makes climate change not only a socio-political, but also an existential and highly ethical problem!

At the same time, the full extent of interactions between humans and complex ecosystems and their consequences is only slowly beginning to unfold – through a combination of new scientific findings and observations in the natural, social and economic sciences and ever-increasing changes.

The climate change

The climate of planet Earth is essentially determined by the distance of the earth from the sun and thus by the intensity of the solar radiation reaching it. Due to its composition, the Earth's atmosphere causes a strong moderation of the climate: instead of an average temperature of -18°C , an equilibrium temperature of about $+15^{\circ}\text{C}$ was established on Earth. Two gases are responsible for this natural greenhouse effect: water vapor and carbon dioxide. Due to changes in land use, i.e. the clearing of forests and the plowing of the land, but above all by the burning of fossil fuels - coal, oil and gas - the carbon dioxide concentration has increased dramatically in the last one hundred years or so. While its concentration varied between 180 and 280 ppm during the past approximately 600,000 years, it now exceeds 400 ppm, i.e. it has increased by more than 30%.

That did not remain without consequences for the temperature. Over the last 150 years, it has risen by slightly above 1°C on a global average, in some regions, e.g. in Alaska or in the mountains much stronger. In the Alpine region, the increase since the end of the so-called small ice age has already been over 2°C , with part of the rise in temperature attributable to a natural recovery from the last cold period. However, the increase in recent decades has been due to the increased greenhouse effect, i. attributed the increased concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, especially carbon dioxide.



Altered temperature conditions cause a host of other changes: in alpine space, e.g. a retreat of glaciers, a decrease in the duration of the snow cover, and an increase in precipitation in the winter months, as well as an increase in the severity of precipitation observed in summer. On a global scale, the melting of land-bound glaciers adds to the heat-induced rise in sea level and the loss of often fertile land. The earlier melting of the snowpack means greater dryness of the soil in the summer months, the heavy rainfall can lead to increased erosion, mudslides and landslides - this has an impact on the yield in agriculture. Increased winter precipitation at higher temperatures may be associated with a higher flood risk due to the higher snow line. Both dryness and high water pose problems to thermal power plants and other industrial plants that need water for cooling. Large power plants have to stop operation due to insufficient water supply - at a time when electricity is urgently needed for cooling purposes. Even these few examples show that climate change intervenes in many areas of life and is not a change in the natural environment that is insignificant for human life.

If greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase at a comparable rate, a further rise in temperature will have to be expected in the future. At the end of this century, the global mean temperature could be up to 5 ° C higher than in the period from 1961 to 1990.

However, self-reinforcing processes could already start much earlier, so-called feedback processes, which - once they have developed a certain dynamic - can hardly be slowed down any further. For example, the warming of the oceans result in increased evaporation and therefore higher water vapor concentrations in the atmosphere. But water vapor is a greenhouse gas, and, like carbon dioxide, has a warming effect - which closes the circle. Conditions beyond which such processes can no longer be stopped are called tilting points of the climate. Even situations in which the social consequences of climate change are no longer manageable - for example, when the weakening of the Gulf Stream causes temperatures in Europe to fall by around 5 ° C within a decade - are among the tilting points. In order not to exceed tilting points, the temperature increase must remain below 2 ° C by the end of this century, or even better below 1.5 ° C - the declared goal of the Paris Agreement of 2015, which came into force in 2016 under international law.

To meet the obligations of the Paris Climate Agreement, global greenhouse gas emissions must be dramatically reduced, and quickly. This means profound changes in the economic, social and possibly also political systems, which can now be shaped. If this does not happen, climate change and its consequences will overwhelm people.

How not to face the challenge

Mankind can only meet such a challenge successfully if states take measures. A small group of well-known people in the USA tries to prevent such steering measures for political reasons. It is the same group of people which vehemently opposed state interference in the case of stratospheric ozone depletion, acid rain and smoking. Doubts were always raised about the scientific results that linked cause and effect. In the case of the climate, it was initially denied that there was a change in climate - hence these people were referred to as climate skeptics or deniers. In view of the overwhelming evidence, this argument was no longer upheld and it was argued that the causes were unclear or, in isolated cases, that the effects of warming were even favorable. In the wake of this politically motivated group, there are a variety of other deniers with different motives. The deniers rely on largely refuted arguments, and ultimately do nothing other than to maintain doubt, and thus to prevent or politically complicate actions. The deniers do not introduce any other plausible theory in common science that could explain the currently observed aspects of climate change similarly. Interestingly, no one demands



such a theory of them. With President Donald Trump, these circles have found a new figure-head. The main financial pillars of these groupings were and still are mainly corporations that expect economic damage for themselves from emission-reducing measures: these are companies from the oil and coal industry or from the automotive industry.

However, economic interests are not only defended indirectly through the financing of climate deniers, but they also repeatedly show themselves in political power struggles. The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who celebrates herself as a "Climate Chancellor", has repeatedly thwarted European environmental and climate protection measures in favor of the German automotive industry. She has politically or economically pressured member states that wanted to support these measures not to do so.

A few years ago, Jim Hansen, the USA's top climate researcher at NASA, wrote to world leaders that the fact that they have access to the relevant scientific institutions in their country entails the responsibility for themselves to inform about climate change. Many media must also be accused of hindering climate policy. Increasing the circulation of a newspaper by raising a popular but long overdue dispute has been very costly due to the possibly caused delay of serious climate protection measures. How will hesitant politicians, purely success-oriented journalists and editors-in-chief justify their behavior towards the younger generation as well as their own children and grandchildren when the consequences of climate change become obvious and the measures become unaffordable or ineffective? Ignorance will not be an excuse that can be justified!

As Greg Craven impressively demonstrates in his YouTube appearances, it is the order of the day to take climate protection measures - even if you cannot make a decision whether science is "right" or not. The harm that would be done if science, e.g. represented by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), was wrong and climate protection measures were unnecessarily taken, is small. The economy could suffer in the short term, but the measures would in any case also lead to energy savings, air quality improvements and additional jobs. On the other hand, if the IPCC is right and no action is taken, the damage to the economy and society is immeasurable. In the choice between a small and an immeasurable damage, the decision one should take is obvious from pure risk considerations.

The real problem with hesitant decision-makers and the public should not be the undeniable scientific uncertainties, but the fear of the consequences that must be drawn as soon as one recognizes climate change. These consequences affect politics, the economy and one's own life. A simple assessment of the situation shows that Austria's adherence to the Paris Climate Agreement requires an ethically acceptable cutback of current emissions, with no CO₂ emissions in Austria by 2030 at the latest. Only with a rapid reduction of current emissions can the emissions buffer that Austria has been granted be extended over a longer period of time, e.g. give the steel industry the necessary time for the changeover. A policy geared to this goal is likely to interfere with the lives of many people. To give an example, every second household in Austria currently uses fossil fuels for heating, and mobility is based more than 80% on fossil fuels. It would take courageous but feasible investment programs to prevent these emissions; despite desirable employment and health aspects as well as structural improvements, they have not yet been implemented.

In addition to trying not to face up to the challenge and paying lip service to climate change, there is another dangerous impasse: to believe that the problem could be solved by the same means that caused it. As a rule, this then means a plea for more and newer technologies, for more economic growth to enable people in emerging and developing countries to enjoy a



higher standard of living. Particularly attractive are the even faster and seemingly easier ways out, which the so-called Geo-Engineering offers. One such suggestion is, for example, to introduce fine sulphate aerosols into the stratosphere to diffuse solar radiation and thereby cool the earth. Every two years, 1-2 million tons of fine sulfur particles would have to be released, which would then slowly diffuse back to the earth - producing acidic precipitation. Another approach strongly promoted by the EU is the so-called sequestration, or "Carbon Capture and Storage". There carbon dioxide is to be chemically extracted from waste gases or the atmosphere and stored in disused natural gas or crude oil deposits, in coal mines or aquifers, or in the ocean. In addition to questions of capacity and many technological issues, terrestrial storage also poses environmental issues, and ocean storage increases acidification, with consequences for the marine biosphere that cannot yet be predicted. Geoengineering approaches should therefore not be pursued or implemented without significantly more technological assessment than is currently available. Above all, it is always important to ask if there are not safer and better solutions.

To face the challenge

In both geoengineering and technological and economy-oriented approaches, one major factor is overlooked: climate change is only the most visible symptom of a deeper problem.

Human interventions have not only caused dramatic changes in the climate sector, but also in the world's nitrogen balance and have led to a loss of numerous species. These changes have exceeded the ability of the natural ecosystem to recover. Other areas, such as the phosphorus balance, the water balance, or the acidification of the oceans are approaching this limit. These are the consequences of a development that turns out to be a mistake altogether. In their report to the Club of Rome, Meadows and co-authors in 1972 showed that unbridled exponential growth in a limited system overshoots and then collapses. In a review of the statements made at the time, it has recently been shown that the development since then has essentially followed the reference scenario of 1972, which leads to collapse. The competitive and growth-oriented social and economic system, combined with the still abundant cheap energy available, has led to a consumption of resources that significantly exceeds the capacity of the global ecosystem. The Western way of life is not "globalizable". Its thorough revision is therefore imperative for securing the survival of humanity in the long run, in the short term it is necessary for reasons of justice and as an important precondition for peace.

It is therefore essential to find sustainable solutions that, with their contribution to climate protection, also reduce overall resource consumption. The consumption of energy, of land and space, of so-called "green" water, of rare metals and soils, has to be reconsidered. Although technological innovation is important and indispensable, it is becoming increasingly clear that technological solutions will not be enough. Clearly they fall short because they at best postpone the problems, but cannot solve the fundamental problem of too high resource consumption of an ever-growing number of people. The necessary changes are more profound and require a rethink, which will make us move away from a resource-wasting lifestyle towards more quality of life without any further destruction of nature. The question must also be asked how many people our ecosystem can sustain in the long run.

It is no longer only the natural sciences, not even the economists, but the social sciences which have to provide solutions: How does a society get from understanding to action? How does it overcome structural and psychological obstacles that conflict with the need for such profound changes? How can politicians - as it was recently stated by a European politician - take the necessary measures without jeopardizing their re-election? Basically, in a democracy,

there seems to be only one way out: the pressure of civil society. Only society enables the elected politicians to set rules for the economy that make a sustainable use of nature a prerequisite for economic success. This is the conclusion reached by sociologists as well as former business managers and politicians.

Regarding all this, the otherwise disappointing Climate Conference in Copenhagen 2009 can be considered a success. For the first time, civil society has pulled together in all areas - environment, social affairs, economy, finance, justice and democracy. It has recognized that its diverse concerns are inextricably interwoven and that poverty reduction and climate protection go hand in hand. It was also stated that a reform of the financial system or commercial law is inevitable. This makes us hopeful. It is important to ensure that civil society enjoys the freedom that should be self-evident in democracies, but which is increasingly threatened in many countries with reference to the fight against criminal organizations and terror.

An essential ally in rethinking efforts could be religious communities. The qualities required in the new lifestyle - sufficiency, reverence for all life, compassion and solidarity, responsibility, etc. - are considered virtues in virtually all religions. It would therefore only require reflection on one's own values. Also religions have always emphasized longer-term thinking: "Good" action is - although usually not rewarded immediately - nevertheless demanded. In addition to rethinking values, longer-term thinking is one of the recipes which helped civilizations threatened by extinction to survive. Many religious communities have another advantage over politicians: their representatives do not have to face election every few years. Increasingly, religious communities comment on these existential questions for humanity: The encyclical *Laudato Si!* by Pope Francis and the Islamic Manifesto on Global Climate Change, both published in 2015, are good examples of this. The implementation of the demands contained therein could serve as a measure of the seriousness of one's faith.

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Children





Children in a world shaped by grown-ups

By Kathrin Schreiber

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defines the fundamental rights of children. These include the right to protection against economic exploitation and dangerous work, any form of sexual exploitation and abuse and any form of physical or psychological violence. Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to achieve these goals:

"My sister-in-law made me marry Robert. She said he was a good-looking man and had money. After we had married, Robert told me that we should go to Italy because there are more possibilities there. [...] After a week in Italy, Robert wanted me to work on the street. I said no. Then he tortured me. He left me in a bathtub with cold water. Then he tied me with belts naked to a bed and hit me. He gave me nothing to eat.

I was a slave to him. I do not consider him my husband. I was forced to work on the street. I did not want to do that. He often did not allow me to sleep. Sometimes I had to work through for 24 hours. He got rich at my expense and I did not get anything. "

- Sylvia, Albanian girl, forced to marry and prostitute herself in Italy at the age of 14. (Profiting from abuse, 2001. The United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF])

The fate of Sylvia from Albania is a terrible one. Unfortunately, she is not an isolated case. All over the world, children have to live and grow up in inhumane conditions, mostly due to the greed for profit or the neglect of adults.

To illustrate the extent of the atrocities that children experience around the world every day, here are some facts and figures that should call us to action.

Violence against children

According to UNICEF, violence against children includes physical and mental abuse and injury, refusal of treatment, exploitation and sexual abuse.

- Research suggests that 20 percent of women and 5 to 10 percent of all men worldwide were exposed to sexual abuse during their childhood.
- In the Caribbean, 96 percent of child carers who were interviewed believe that corporal punishment is a sign that parents adequately care for the proper education of children.

All following data has been taken from the UNICEF CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION SHEETS.

Domestic violence

- About 50 percent of Austrian parents use beatings as a means of education for their children.
- Contrary to popular assumption, the risk of becoming a victim of violence is many times greater for women and children at home than on the street.
- Approx. 90 percent of all acts of violence are perpetrated in the family and by acquaintances.

Children in armed conflicts and armed groups

- It is estimated that up to 90 percent of humans who have died in armed conflicts since 1990 have been civilian casualties. 80 percent of these victims were children and women.
- According to recent estimates, there are more than 250,000 children currently working as child soldiers.



- In Somalia, since the collapse of the government in 1991, an estimated 200,000 children have carried weapons or worked in a militia.

Child labor

- In 2004 218 million children were employed in various jobs. Here domestic child labor is not taken into account.
- 126 million children between 5 and 17 have to do the most dangerous work.

Commercial sexual exploitation

- According to ILO2 global estimates, around 12.3 million people are victims of forced labor and 1.39 million are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation and 40 to 50 percent of them are children.
- 28,000 to 30,000 children under the age of 18, half of whom are estimated to be between 10 and 14, are being forced into prostitution in South Africa.

Female genital mutilation / circumcision

Female Genital Mutilation / Cutting (FGM / C):

FGM / C stands for all procedures that involve the partial or complete removal of external genitalia or other injuries of female genitalia for cultural or other reasons.

- An estimated 130 million women and girls are victims of genital mutilation and circumcision.
- FGM / C is generally performed on girls between 4 and 14. However, it is also practiced with infants, women that are going to be married and sometimes with pregnant women or women after birth.

(International Labor Organization (International Labor Organization, Special Organization of the UN)

Child trafficking

Child trafficking affects children all over the world, not only in developing countries, but also in industrialized countries. Trafficked children are used for a wide range of inhumane activities: prostitution, begging, work under the most adverse circumstances or as soldiers in armed conflicts. But also for forced marriages or illegal adoption they are traded worldwide.

- The opaqueness of the complex problem and the lack of data make it difficult to give an estimate of children falling victim to trafficking. According to the latest estimates, 1.2 million children worldwide are traded every year.
- In East Asia and the Pacific, child trafficking is mostly about prostitution, although some children are recruited for agricultural and industrial work.
- In Europe, children are mainly traded from east to west. This is a sign of the demand for cheap labor and extremely young prostitutes.

These are just a few examples of the dreadful conditions to which children in our world are exposed. Besides we should not forget the children who grow up without parents and those who are forced to marry or who are directly or indirectly affected by HIV / AIDS and its effects and others who are in conflict with the law.

**What can be done about it?**

According to UNICEF recommendations, to provide a sheltered environment for children to grow up eight essential measures have to be taken: these are increasing the commitment and ability of governments to protect children, the enforcement of adequate laws, combating harmful attitudes and customs, encouragement of open discussions on the topic of child protection (media, civil society), the development of "life skills", knowledge and participation, strengthening family and community ties, providing essential support for prevention, recovery and reintegration (health care system, education and protection) and establishing monitoring and reporting of laws and projects.

What can I do about it?

The instructions above are aimed primarily at governments and NGOs. The question that arises because of the terrible situation of children is: What can I do?

The first and most important thing is not to look away when children are victims. It is important to draw attention to the problems of the children. We grown-ups have a louder and stronger voice that we must use for the children of this world. We have to uncover what goes wrong and draw the consequences for our own actions.

This takes us to another important point: our consumption behavior. We living in the "privileged, western" world have to be careful that no children have to suffer from our buying habits.

Children are our future and we must protect them and the world in which they are going to live. Without protection children are more exposed to oppression, exploitation, violence and unfair treatment than we adults. That is why it is important to fight for the welfare of children, and not just our own, so that they can grow up in a protective environment and help shape the world of to



Water





Water – the most important resource of mankind?

An excerpt of a survey by Dr. Lukas Vischer (ECEN)

Water supply for two thirds of all mankind will be in danger by 2025!

'1,1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water, 2,5 billion have no access to proper sanitation and 5 million die annually from water related diseases. By 2025, two-thirds of the world's population will live in countries with moderate or severe water shortage.'

The Statement of UN –Secretary-General Dr. Kofi Annan on World Water Day 2002 shows the incredible dimensions of the dangers of water scarcity.

Water is the prerequisite of life. If current developments continue unabated, ever larger parts of humankind will be in peril. The magnitude of the issue is such that it provokes a feeling of helplessness. Are solutions available? Is it possible at all to cope with the threat?

New challenges for Christian – We must recognize the dimension of the threat to God's gift

For Christians, water carries a deep spiritual meaning in that it is a gift of God and at the same time the basic condition for life. This finds expression both in worship and in the theological and liturgical traditions of all churches. Water as such plays the role of a symbol in Christian celebrations and rituals. In many ways the Christian tradition highlights its vital importance and its sacredness. As we revive this tradition we will constantly be reminded of the dangers both of reducing its availability and of polluting its quality.

Water use – water overuse

There have always been countries where water was abundant and countries where water was scarce. In the United States, for instance, 65 per cent of all water withdrawals on an annual basis feed industry and power plants, while 27 per cent serve agriculture and 8 per cent is used by municipalities for drinking water, sanitation and other

domestic purposes (World Bank 2001). By contrast, in Asia, only 8 per cent of all water withdrawals are used by industry while 86 per cent serve agriculture.

A diminishing resource

The availability of fresh water has considerably diminished during the last few decades, especially in Africa and Asia. In fact, 505 million people in 31 countries are experiencing water stress or water scarcity. If present trends continue, the figure could easily rise to between 2.4 and 3.2 billion people by 2025, thereby affecting human health, economic development, food production and natural ecosystems.

What are the reasons for this deterioration?

Two developments interact. On the one hand, human water withdrawals are steadily increasing; on the other hand, owing to various factors, the availability of freshwater in many parts of the world is steadily decreasing.

Globally, water withdrawals continue to increase. For example, between 1900 and 1975 water withdrawals in the United States rose ten times while the population only increased by a factor of four. Generally, humans today use 54 % of all accessible renewable fresh water contained in rivers, lakes and shallow underground aquifers. With population growth this percentage may reach 70 % in 2025. If global water withdrawals continue to rise at the present rhythm, humans could be expropriating over 90 per cent of all available fresh water within 30 years.

The main reasons for increased water withdrawals are *industrial production, intensive agriculture, the Lifestyle of the consumer society and Population growth.*

Among the reasons for the decreasing availability of water, the following are of particular importance:

- **Climate change** – As climatic conditions change, the hydrological cycle will inevitably be affected. In Northern latitudes and in snowmelt driven river basins floods may become more frequent. Increase in temperature will lead to increases in evapotranspiration – water evapo-



rated from the surface and from plants. Consequently, even in areas with increased precipitation, higher evapotranspiration rates may lead to a reduction of water supplies. The frequency and severity of droughts could increase in some areas as a result of changes in the total rainfall, more frequent dry spells and increased water use by crops and vegetation. While in the past climatologists were cautious in their conclusions, there is now increasing unanimity that climate change, induced by human activity is already occurring.

- **Deforestation** is a second factor of disturbance. As forests are cut, the hydrological circle changes; the soil no longer holds back the water; springs disappear; erosion increases. This is particularly true for mountainous areas: water descends more rapidly to the plains, increasing the risk of floods.

- **Waste and pollution** diminish the amount of available water. Human waste, domestic and industrial, continues to flow into water or at least requires water to be diluted. The sediments of erosion and fertilizers used in agriculture pollute rivers, lakes and groundwater reserves. Often, the effects of pollution are practically irreversible or regeneration demands important technical and financial means.

- Through **poor management** huge amounts of water are lost. Water is not naturally available at the time and place where it is most required. Wells and reservoirs are needed. Tubes need to be built for the distribution of water in distant places. Changing conditions, e.g. through climate change, require the constant adaptation of the infrastructure. Rapidly growing urban centres raise special problems of management.

The impact of water stress

It is important to underline that the increasing strain on water resources occurs in the context of a general ecological crisis. The real threat consists in the fact that a wide range of ecological issues demand attention at the same time. Water issues can therefore not be addressed in isolation from the whole crisis. Measures need to take into account the total picture. It is no exaggeration to say that the water issue is omnipresent. Whatever ecological problem is taken into consideration, connections to the theme of water appear; and, correspondingly, every ecological problem has a dimension related to water.

Measures

What measures can mitigate the water crisis? A wide range of measures are capable of increasing the availability of water. Its effectiveness use can be improved, for example,

- by increasing the storage of water
- by reducing water consumption in industry through improved technologies
- by developing more efficient methods of water use in agriculture and by slowing down the expansion of agricultural irrigation.
- by improving installations of water capture and distribution
- by reducing water pollution and increasing the recycling of polluted water
- by systematically building up sanitation systems

Overall, it is essential to treat water as a scarce resource and to limit its consumption wherever possible. Even where water is available in abundance, wastage needs to be resisted. The quantity of water consumed in industrial countries needs to be further reduced.

There are not only 'direct' measures such as these. To address the water crisis effectively, wider issues also need to be addressed, such as:

- **Global warming** (in order to mitigate the impact of climate change and to protect the functioning of the hydrological cycle).
- **Energy production and energy consumption.** Compared with energy obtained from fossil fuel or nuclear fission, that gained from hydraulic power is often considered to be 'clean'. In fact, all forms of energy production carry risks. A high price needs to be paid for the construction of dams (territorial claims, evacuation of people, impact on hydrological circle, etc). Energy saving is also recommended for the sake of water protection.
- The **protection of forests and reforestation**, especially in mountainous areas. These not only act as sinks of CO₂ but also protect indispensable water resources.

The water crisis requires a concerted response. It involves all levels of society – from the local community to the national and international levels. In order to assure the participation of people, local action is called for. But as a rule, the problems go beyond the capacities of the local community. Co-operation with other communities is required. In many cases, solutions can only be found through international co-ordination. Moreover, it is essential to develop collaboration within a certain geographical area which does not necessarily coincide with national borderlines. Coalitions within river basins must also be estab-



lished. To guide concerted approaches of this kind an international framework is indispensable. Financial needs are enormous. Effective measures can only be taken if both national governments and the international community consider the water crisis to be of high priority and agree to treat it as such when establishing their budgets. Clearly, it also requires international solidarity. Large sums need to be made available to poorer countries to finance the cost of the necessary measures.

The Churches' Response

The issue is of crucial importance for the witness of the churches. When the survival of living creatures is at stake, they have no other choice than to respond and call for responsible approaches to the issue.

a) Awareness Building

Churches should underline the unique role that water has for all living creatures. Christians regard water as a gift of the Creator. Water is the symbol of life and of God's grace. Water represents, therefore, more than a means. Christians praise God for his gifts. Water deserves respect and care. Churches must learn to value water as a life giving force.

It is self-evident that God's gift is meant to give life to all creation. According to the second creation story, water flows out from God's paradise over the whole world. The gift of paradise is for all; and Jesus tells us that God sends rain on both the just and the unjust. Water is to be considered as a common good.

The first task of Christians is, therefore, for them to remind themselves and the world around them of the true value of water. Water qualifies as a theme of preaching and meditation. It deserves to have a place in worship. Saint Francis rightly called water our 'sister' – not an object but a life-giving co-creature.

Awareness building must at the same time include a sustained reflection on the present situation. Why do we speak of a 'water crisis'? What are its root causes? Christians need to resist consistently either the tendency to overlook the crisis

or to belittle its impact and urgency. The issues need to be faced in their full complexity and with all their ramifications.

b) Participation in Public Debate and Action

As water is essential for life, the churches have an obligation to engage themselves in the present debate on the appropriate management of water resources. Since fundamental ethical choices are involved it is imperative to have full participation in the public debate and to resist solutions which contradict Christian convictions.

Participation is called for at all levels – local, national, regional and international.

Ways need to be found to share in the elaboration of an international agreement on water use capable of guiding states in their approach to water issues.

To this effect churches should work together with NGO's that specialise in water issues and seek to profit from their experience and expertise.

In many areas, solutions can only be developed on a regional basis. As churches, by their very nature, transcend national boundaries, they will seek to participate in efforts of regional collaboration.

A primary concern will be to promote people's participation in water management.

c) Life Styles

To be credible, the churches need to promote – both at the personal and the community level – a life style that conveys a sense of respect and responsibility towards the gift of water.

Christians should resist excessive water consumption and avoid unnecessary pollution.

They ought to participate – for the sake of water availability – in all 'indirect' measures that foster an increase in the availability of water.

The right of access to water should be recognized and promoted as a fundamental human right that must be enforced by all possible legal means. Water connects us with all creation. For this reason also, its protection and careful handling is an absolute necessity for the maintenance of life and the well-being of future generations on our planet.

Related information:

ECEN Dossier: Water – Source of Life

<http://www.ecen.org/cms/uploads/water04.pdf>

ECEN documents on water

<http://www.ecen.org/cms/index.php?page=water>



Agriculture





The long history of agriculture – in short

DI Dr. Josef Hoppichler

Soil – the basis for higher life forms

Water and soil are central elements of life on earth. It was a long way from the primordial soup with its first micro-organisms about 3,8 bn years ago to the first superior cells about 2 bn years ago to the complex ecosystems with plants, animals and human beings of today. Yet it is the soil with its biological and chemical structure which made possible the evolution of plants and is thus the basis of further life. The development of life and its differentiation into ecosystems is determined by cycles of composition and decomposition in the higher layers of the soil, with physical, chemical and biological processes fitting into each other.

There are more creatures in a handful of earth than there are humans on this planet. In the first 30 centimetres of a square metre of fertile soil you can find about 100 trillion bacteria, 1 bn fungi, 500 m. protozoa, 10 m. nematodes and 100 to 200 earthworms. You can find also a lot of ants, mites, collembola, woodlice, larvae and snails. The ongoing reconstruction of organic material is admirable, in regard to quantity as well as in regard to quality. On one hectare of soil 1 m earthworms excrete 115 t of dung per year, this can be ten times more than the yield of dry matter of plants above ground.

The soil is living, and we live on this soil.

Humans have practised agriculture and animal husbandry for 12.000 years

More than one million years ago, humans were hunters and gatherers. It was only 12,000 years ago that humans changed this passive situation, where they were embedded in the structures of nature. They decid-

ed to design their habitat in an active way and settled down. A lot of theories try to explain why humans left “paradise” in order to cultivate plants and to raise cattle, but none is conclusive. Overpopulation and lack of food, conflicts, laziness and hazard, the change of religious norms and consequential deliberate cults and cultivation – maybe a little bit of everything.

At the end of this process, humans identified about 3,000 species out of 400,000 species of plants as edible. They domesticated 250 of them, but today 90 % of consumption is based on 20 species, and 50% on three crops: wheat, rice, maize.

The food plants have been changed from wild forms to semi-wild form to the currently cultivated varieties. This happened as peasants bred annual plants from perennial plants, large seeds from small ones, non-straying ears from straying ears, equally maturing varieties from unequal maturing varieties, or tasty cereals and vegetables from bitter plants.

This process is an enormous cultural achievement, which took place nearly at the same time all over the world. It happened most intensively in the so-called ‘centres of origin and diversity’ of food and agriculture. These are specific geographic areas, which are also named “Vavilov centers” after the Russian geneticist Nikolai I. Vavilov. They are in the Middle East (main breeding area for grain, peas, lentils, grapes, apples, pears), in North and East Africa (rice, millet, coffee, oil-palm), India (peas, sugar cane, cotton), Southeast Asia (bananas, rice), China (soy beans, cabbage, onions), Central America (corn, tomatoes), and South America (potatoes, beans). Only a small part of the cultivated varieties originate from Europe directly, like sugar beets, oats, olives and



partially also the common grapevine. In connection with gardening and the cultivation of plants, humans were also breeding all sorts of animals. However, the origins of agricultural animals could also be found in the Middle East or in the steppes of Central Asia.

In the course of time and through systematic cultivation of plants and animals, large parts of the earth were transformed into cultural landscapes, new forms of social life were established and the spiritual and religious conceptions of humans also changed.

Agriculture in ancient times, the Middle Ages and modern times

All so-called 'civilized' cultures were based on flourishing and prospering agriculture and in the long run on the overproduction of agricultural or nomadic societies. Most of the ancient myths including also the origins of the Jewish and Christian religions are related to the agricultural activities of peasants and farmers. A lot of the ancient knowledge had its roots in agricultural problems. The Romans even mystified themselves as a farming people coming from a small agricultural community at the shores of Tiber. Saturn, the God of farmers, and Ceres, the Goddess of sowing and reaping, were quite important figures in the mystical world of the Romans. Although the Romans were mad about country life, they founded the Roman Empire on war and expansion. Farmers were converted into soldiers and only in the course of time veterans were encouraged to change to agrarian colonists again, but mainly outside the Italian peninsula. Therefore the Romans are rather doubtful models of the Christian-occidental culture. They were already in practising the dichotomy, forging ploughshares into swords and swords into ploughshares.

The ascent of Europe and thus the leadership of the Occident in relation to the other advanced cultures were not obvious for a

long time. The Middle Ages experienced a strong expansion of agriculture and new colonization, which led among other things to a massive deforestation all over Europe. The beginning of Europe was already an ecological disaster, which was mitigated by the three-field crop rotation system, especially by letting the soil rest during the third year. Although the Europeans took over new ploughing techniques from China (mouldboard plough) and improved the horse collar, which brought about a slight intensification in farming, the yields were still not high enough to speed up the development of Europe and to make it the leader of a global development.

Modern times, the beginning of which is characterized by the discovery of America, brought two new high-yielding plant species to Europe: potatoes and corn. In the course of time, these two varieties made it possible for the Europeans to create those necessary surpluses which are essential for urban and industrial development. At the same time the surpluses were also a driving engine for further colonization of America, Asia and Africa. Thus these two new agricultural plants, which were the product of an enormous cultural achievement of the Indians of America, were the basis for the industrial flourishing of Europe. The Europeans never thanked for this present, they just took it for granted.

However, the appropriation of the agrarian culture of the Indians through the Europeans became clearly visible by a disaster in the middle of 19th Century. The potato, meanwhile a kind of replacement of bread for poor peasants, country inhabitants and industrial workers, was struck by *Phytophthora infestans* or potato blight. This oomycete almost instantly destroyed the primary food source for many Irish people. The potato blight therefore was a main contributing factor for the Great Irish Famine. But also in continental Europe, especially in Alpine and mountainous regions, many people were hit by harvest losses and tried to escape famine by emigration to



America. There they found fertile farm land, and it just took some years and the so-called colonial goods returned in large quantities: sugar, coffee, tobacco, rice, cocoa, spices, tea; and at the end of the 19th Century already grain from the USA and beef from Argentina. The global agricultural commodity market was born.

Self-sufficiency of agriculture as a buffer for industrial problems and for the insanity of war

Rural over-population and an unequal distribution of natural resources among the rural population also caused the countryside to form a highly welcome resource reservoir for the growing industry. It supplied cheap labour and in answer to the cyclic crises in the industry, subsistence could cushion the worst problems of industrialization.

Parallel to the industrial revolution agriculture was also discovered as an object of industrial organization which could be subjected to modern labour division. The great land owners founded agricultural clubs and consequently agricultural universities. Models were the technical knowledge of engineering, and thus the technical sciences. But social conditions in Europe were not yet suitable for reorganization and industrialization, because property rights on land were still with the feudal landlords. First the farmers had to be "released".

Afterwards for a long time European agriculture was still an economic sector which was limited by its own natural conditions, in spite of a more intensive system of crop rotation and despite some successes through systematic breeding, which was already based on the discoveries of Gregor Mendel. Also the application of simple new mechanical techniques didn't change very much. Agriculture remained adapted to the limits of the local natural resources as well as to the natural yield capacity of the soils. Actually it was still embodied in the inherent cycles of nature. Farmers al-

ready produced for markets, but on-farm and in rural areas subsistence was still in the centre of rural life and thus determined the living conditions of country people.

The temporal delay of detachment from tradition and the lagging of agriculture in comparison with other economic sectors were surely also caused by the two world wars. Agriculture was by its organization of self-sufficiency also a kind of buffer for rural people against the destructions of war. At the same time it even had to be forced to supply the urban centres. It was the reservoir of last resort for the insanity of war. Especially in Germany and Austria during the Second World War, agricultural communities were ideologically abused in their conception of traditional farming. And this abuse found its expression in the inexpressible key words of "blood and soil".

Modern agriculture is being industrialized

After the Second World War and after overcoming the subsequent food scarcity the industrialization of the agriculture begins. Manual labour and the traction power of horses and oxen are replaced by mechanization. Now tractors and increasingly combines shape the new picture of agriculture. The yield capacity of the soil is enormously increased by chemical fertilizers and the manual work in the fields and the caretaking for plants is replaced by chemicals, mostly pesticides. The connection between animal production and crop production gradually disappears. The field parcels become larger and the pooling of land becomes famous. The farms themselves begin to specialize; the former natural diversity shrinks and the variety in landscapes is eliminated. Now soils can also be ploughed deeper and the decomposition processes in the soil can be accelerated.

With the help of science high-yield varieties and fast-growing animals are bred, the



missing stability is being compensated by chemistry and pharmacy. Animal husbandry can even be organized factory-like, so that later the term “factory farming” is coined. The yields grow higher and higher, and the surpluses grow more and more. The administration of surpluses and their disposal on the world agricultural commodity market become a central political element in Europe, even in global politics. The agricultural agreement within the World Trade Organization (WTO) is now a crucial point of international negotiations.

However, with the industrialization of agriculture a multiplicity of problems is generated. Groundwater is polluted with chemicals and thus areas for restoring the aquifers have to be designated. Special features in the landscapes are eliminated, the fields are “cleaned” and thus the loss of biodiversity is accelerated. Consequently experts begin to talk about the loss of biodiversity as a global problem and they see agriculture as a main cause. Pesticides do not only cause damage of ‘target organisms’ but have various side effects and the agro-chemicals and their metabolites can sometimes be found in food and feed. Farm animals are no longer cultural entities or subjects in the special interaction between humans and animals, but they are mechanistically redefined as producing machines and objects of economic efficiency. Factory farming can even be operated by imported feeds only, and becomes independent of land use. Thus intensive animal farming via the world agricultural commodity market is intensifying and contributing to the problems of hunger and environmental degradation in Third World countries. To increase the yield in specialized animal farming, antibiotics and pesticides are used to speed up growth and to mitigate the spread of diseases exacerbated by crowded living conditions. Especially the overuse of veterinary products and their residues cause strong concern among consumers.

The processes of industrialization enormously changed the socio-economic sphere of farming. Suddenly agriculture was no longer functioning out of its own resources, but became (and was made) dependent on an ever more complex agricultural industry of inputs and outputs. Now agriculture per se is a small part of a large agribusiness. All agricultural activities have been adjusted to the necessities of the commodity markets and the rationality of linear economic thinking is now in conflict with the diversity of the ecological requirements. Smallholder farms, in particular in disadvantaged areas, are not competitive any longer and have to be abandoned. In some areas of Central Europe more than two thirds of the agricultural enterprises have disappeared within the last 50 years. “Farm abandonment” but also land abandonment and structural change are now a main feature of modern agriculture. Farming has arrived in the industrial age, and there is no more job of security. Subsidies for farmers and direct payments seem to cushion this problem only for the time being.

Genetic engineering and modern biotechnology - the ongoing industrialization of life

This already highly industrialized agriculture is now being confronted with the possibilities of genetic engineering. New genetic techniques can even more deeply intervene in the processes of life and thus the consequences will be a further acceleration of the known tendencies of industrialization at all levels. There will be even more dissociation from the formerly self-organizing agro-ecological processes. New technical inventions in modern biotechnology make it possible to redefine the function of the soil as an open wide-ranging bioreactor. This bioreactor has to be optimally controlled and managed according to the current state of science and technology, exactly the same as a modern biotech factory.



Therefore agriculture will continue to detach itself from the soil and its natural conditions. Biological limits are pushed further and further and as a consequence the compensation costs of the side effects will rise steeply. The global decline of pollinators, including many species of butterflies and also the honey bees, seems to be the first sign of a new quality of environmental problems. No longer are the natural processes able to contribute stability and thus security for humans, but humans themselves have to contribute stability to the natural processes, with the costs of these sustaining activities increasing disproportionately.

Agriculture as a main supplier of energy

Since the fossil energy resources on which the industrial world depends are limited, we are all intensively looking for alternatives. Besides some technical approaches with energy from the wind and the sun, the use of renewables is also being discussed. Especially in America and Europe projects have been initiated to use agriculture and its surpluses to generate energy. In some places grain is already burnt in specially adapted incinerators and officially it is said that they are running on special “energy grain” only. Oil seeds are refined to diesel, and grain, corn and sugar beets are fermented to ethanol. A simpler strategy is to produce out of plant biomass (e.g. from maize) methane by anaerobic fermentation. Many people in the countryside are now talking about “bio-diesel”, “bio-ethanol” and “bio-gas” or “bio-fuels”. These strategies with agricultural biomass are even being globally discussed and within the context of market liberalization these products and their raw materials are already being traded globally.

However, the biomass strategy begs a lot of critical questions in relation to the future development of agriculture. Will the soils be able to sustain this further industrializa-

tion? Won't this exacerbate the environmental problems? Aren't the farmers driven to invest in a new mass commodity market and won't there be ruinous competition at the global level afterwards? Isn't the input of energy in modern intensive agriculture higher than the output of energy stored in the products? Have the energy and environmental balances been calculated, and if so, have they been calculated correctly? Aren't the conditions of free world commodity markets accelerating the deforestation of the rainforests and thus contributing to global climate change? Why can we talk about free global trade as the best solution for future development, but at the same time lock out people and deny them a free labour market? Isn't there something wrong with free trade theories if applied to food and nature resources? Why should we burn grain or ferment it into ethanol to fuel our cars, when more than 850 million humans are still suffering from hunger and undernourishment?

The point is clear: It is not the overpopulation of the earth that is the problem. The problem is that an ever larger number of humans would like to drive heavy cars and enjoy the amenities of industrial society using agriculture as a resource base. But the natural system has not got the capacity to satisfy the voraciousness of the western civilization.

Alternatives: organic farming, GMO-free agriculture and sustainable regional development

The industrialization of agriculture and its inherent side effects have been accompanied by growing criticism since the 70's. The consequence was also that people were looking out for alternatives. Driven by increasing problems and within self-organizing groups, innovative farmers started to develop alternative forms of ag-



riculture. They went back to various systems of organic farming which had already been developed within civil reform movements in the first half of the 20th Century. Renouncement of the yield-increasing chemical fertilizers and the simultaneous systematic propagation of soil fertility were central elements. As far as possible, they wanted to close the biological cycles and reconnect the related on-farm activities. This was done by using crop rotation, crop residues, animal manures and mechanical cultivation to maintain soil productivity, supply plant nutrients, and control weeds, insects and other pests. At the same time, careful ploughing and tilling methods were developed and by use of state-of-the-art ecological research new integrated plant protecting tools were invented. Thus a sustainable branch of agriculture was initiated, keeping ecological footprints as small as possible.

Initially only a few farmers were involved in organic agriculture, but today in some European countries organic farmers already represent more than 10 % of their professional group. In 1998 the organic area out of the total Utilised Agricultural Area was only 1.8 % in EU-15, but seven years later more than 4 % was managed organically in the 25 countries of the EU. (Austria has the highest share of organic area over total Utilised Agricultural Area, posting 11% in 2005). Some Member States breed considerable numbers of organic livestock, especially sheep and cattle. In the EU-25 already more than 6 million hectares are cultivated by organic methods and thus organic agriculture is effectively contributing to a sustainable Europe.

Beyond that, many European farmers – with both organic and conventional backgrounds - rejected the release and use of genetically modified organisms (GMO). On the basis of this broad movement, many regions in Europe have declared themselves GMO-free regions - small and large regions, even whole countries. Therefore from this side the pressure on agricul-

ture to expose itself to further ecological risks is also reduced.

Last but not least there are great hopes to revive the former very diverse economies in rural regions. The different natural resources and the traditional richness of the regions of Europe should increasingly be used in a decentralized way and thus become a central value for European societies again. New products and services on the basis of old and new techniques may be developed and the traditional local markets may be re-initiated. The cultural richness of Europe can only be preserved through sustainable strategies which fit into each other from the small-scale one to the wider one. If in discussions on the global agricultural commodity markets people talk about the necessity of food sovereignty, then this should also affect Europe and the organization of its agriculture.

Especially in connection with agriculture, new sustainable paths could be encouraged by the various traditions in processing food as well as the various traditions in culinary arts, dining and drinking. Many consumers consciously try to influence the various production chains through demanding food and other natural products which have been produced organically and traded fair.

Generally the discourse on agriculture is connected with crucial cultural questions. The reason for this is that culture does not find its expression in how extremely we are able to use technologies on nature, but in how we deal with the limitations of our human existence. And surely the small layers of living soil are one of the main limitations of human life and thus we have to exercise our responsibility. In short: agriculture has only got a future if it meets its social and ecological responsibility. All of us can contribute to it.

Text: Dr. Josef Hoppichler (Federal Institute for Less-Favoured and Mountainous Areas, Vienna)



A Time of Creation

Prof. Dr. Lukas Vischer

Introduction

At the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, 1997, one of the resolutions adopted was the following: "We recommend that the churches consider and promote the preservation of creation as part of church life at all levels. One way would be to observe a common Creation Day, such as the Ecumenical Patriarchate celebrates each year. Rationale: The seriousness of the ecological dilemma for the future of the human race means that the churches' consciousness of it must be raised. Commitment to preservation of the creation is not an issue among many others, but an essential dimension of all church life."¹

This recommendation is a delayed response to a suggestion which was made by the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I as much as ten years ago. In a message released on 1 September 1989, we read: "Therefore we invite, through this our Patriarchal Message, *the entire Christian world* to offer together with the Mother Church of Christ, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, every year on this day prayers and supplications to the Maker of all, both as thanksgiving for the great gift of creation and as petitions for its protection and salvation. At the same time we paternally urge on the one hand the faithful in the world to admonish themselves and their children to respect and protect the natural environment, and on the other hand all those who are entrusted with the responsibility of governing the nations to act without delay, taking all necessary measures for the protection and preservation of natural creation."²

How can the recommendation from Graz be implemented in the life of the churches? How can the responsibility for God's creation find a place in worship, and especially in the church year? What room is there for the Ecumenical Patriarch's proposal?

1. God as Creator in the church year

It is obvious that God the Creator does not occupy any central place in the church year as we have it. The great festivals of the Christian calendar are about God's "mighty acts" in Jesus Christ: the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and Christ's birth as a human being. In the course of the year Christendom celebrates the foundational events of the revelation of God in Christ. However, there is no day and time when we remember God as the Creator. The church year is concentrated almost entirely on the second and third sections of the Christian creed.

Is this state of affairs acceptable in view of the ecological crisis? Is it not time to reconsider the sequence of the church year? Certainly belief in "God the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth" is presupposed in any church celebration. How could we celebrate Epiphany or Trinity Sunday without also thinking of God as Creator? But is this information sufficient? In view of the criticism that the Judeo-Christian tradition has substantially contributed to present-day destructive ways of treating nature, there are more and more calls for a reform of the church year. For, even though it can be demonstrated that this criticism is based on a biased interpretation of the biblical texts, the absence of God the Creator in the succession of Christian festivals is something to be considered. If it is true that worship rather than the church's teaching has the most influence on the consciousness of believers, then our belief in the Creator of heaven and earth must be given expression as such. The whole of the creed must be expressed in worship.

2. The revelation of God in history

The succession of Christian festivals is embedded in the changing seasons of the year. Every year the cycle ends and begins anew. To this extent the rhythm of nature provides the framework for the church year. However, the content of the festivals is not the rhythm of nature; in-



stead they commemorate the events connected with God's revelation in Christ. The circling year recalls the turning point in history brought about by Jesus.

This tendency can already be seen in Israel's traditions. The great festivals celebrated in Israel were originally rooted in the cycle of nature. The Passover originated in the nomadic period, as a spring festival at which the firstborn lambs were sacrificed. Three other feasts have their origins in the Canaanite context and had to do with the cultivation of the land: a) the festival of Mazzoth, the Unleavened Bread, was celebrated at the time of the barley harvest; b) the festival of the wheat harvest, Shabuoth, celebrated seven weeks after the Feast of Mazzoth, was also called the festival of Weeks; and c) the festival of Booths or Tabernacles, Sukkoth, was the feast of the wine and fruit harvest, and could also be called simply *the* Festival. The original meaning of these festivals is especially recognisable in the customs which were observed. At the Feast of Mazzoth a first sheaf of grain was offered, and at the Feast of Weeks the first loaves of bread. The use of branches at the Feast of Tabernacles goes back to a grape-harvest festival celebrated in vineyards and orchards.

All these festivals were given new meanings in Israel. At Passover the Exodus from Egypt was remembered. The Feasts of Mazzoth and Tabernacles also served to recall this history. The use of unleavened bread was now explained as a recollection that the Israelites, forced by the Egyptians to leave in a hurry, had no time to let that morning's bread dough rise and thus had to bake it as unleavened cakes the first time they camped (Exodus 12:34,39). The Feast of Tabernacles was to be celebrated according to Yahweh's commandment "so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 23:39-43). The Feast of Weeks was seen in later years as the festival recalling the revelation of the Law on Sinai.

This does not mean that Israel was thereby forgetting its relation to the creation. The Sabbath, which was observed every seven days, was fundamental to the consciousness of Israel. Whatever was the origin of this day of rest, in the course of Israel's history it was brought into relation to God's work of creation. "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and consecrated it."

(Exodus 20:11) The Sabbath was a day of rest not only for people and cattle, but also for the earth. The extension of the Sabbath rhythm to sabbatical and jubilee years makes this especially clear. In the seventh year there was to be a sabbath of complete rest for the land; neither sowing nor harvesting was allowed (Leviticus 25:4). But even as festivals were given new meaning in the light of historical experience, their roots in the cycle of nature was not entirely lost. How could gifts of first fruits be offered without thinking of the Creator?

The giving of historical meaning to festivals continued in the Christian church. From now on, the decisive event for all others was the resurrection of Christ. In the Christian communities it became the custom to gather on the evening of the first day of the week, that is, on the day of Christ's resurrection, to celebrate the breaking of the bread. Gradually, this Day of Resurrection, the Lord's Day or Day of the Sun, absorbed the Sabbath tradition. The Sabbath, for Christians, was moved from Saturday to Sunday. But this also changed its meaning. The central content of this day was now the celebration of Jesus' victory over death. The congregation gathered to celebrate the Lord's presence in the Word, prayer and supper and to await his second coming. The reference to the creation was pushed into the background. Certainly there was a reference to the creation in the Lord's Supper, since the bread and wine can be seen as God's gifts. However, the primary meaning of sharing the supper was the communion with the crucified and risen Christ.

The Jewish festivals were to some extent no longer observed, or were replaced by Christian festivals. The reference to the creation which was still present in them was thereby lost.

3. The gradual development of the church year

The church year as we know it today is the result of a long and complicated development. It was not put together all at one time. Thus it is not a construction which is consistent in every way, but rather reflects the ideas and viewpoints of various historical periods. "Differing orders and spheres of time, tied to rival calendars and their cycles which overlap, have resulted overall in a highly complex construct of dates, observances, feasts and festival periods - a bewildering, artfully layered architectonic structure."³ The divisions among the churches have led to differing ways of



shaping the church year. Each confessional tradition has its own peculiarities. First it was East and West which went separate ways, but the divisions which appeared with the Reformation in the 16th century also had particular consequences in this regard. Thus it cannot be taken for granted that the various confessions will be able to agree on the ordering of the church year.

Various cycles determine the basic pattern of the construct. The first cycle is the sequence of *Sundays*. As it was for Israel, for the church too the unit of seven days is decisive, and forms the basis of the church year.

Second in importance is the *Easter* cycle. Easter, the Feast of the Resurrection, was the first Christian festival to be celebrated annually. Around Easter, other festivals developed at various points in time: before Easter, Lent, Palm Sunday and Holy Week, especially Good Friday; after Easter, the Easter season with Ascension and Whit Sunday (Pentecost); around the year 1000, Trinity Sunday was added as a festival which sums them all up. Since Easter is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, its date varies, and with it all the dates of the Easter cycle.

The third cycle, that of *Christmas*, is distinguished by two feast days, those of the birth of Christ and of Epiphany on 6th January. In contrast to Easter, Christmas is fixed on a particular date in the solar calendar, and therefore is not a movable feast and does not fall on a Sunday in every year. Since the Christmas and Easter cycles are based on different systems of reckoning, the length of the period between them varies from year to year. The number of Sundays between Epiphany and the beginning of Lent, and also the number of Sundays between Pentecost and the beginning of Advent, are different from one year to the next. Other festivals are scattered throughout the year, some loosely connected with the great cycles, others, such as the Feast of the Transfiguration (6th August), having no immediately visible connection with them. A few festivals such as Reformation Sunday are memorials, others, like New Year, are fixed in the civil calendar.

The fourth cycle is that of the *saints' days*. Early in the history of the church the custom was already being established of remembering our "cloud of witnesses" on certain days of the year. The lists of the saints are not the same for all churches; they are different in East and West. In the churches of the Reformation, the calendar of

saints lost much of its meaning when the veneration of the saints was condemned. The saints' days became merely memorials or were forgotten altogether.

4. A changing order

Solidly as these fundamental cycles are rooted in the life of the church, the church year is not an order which has been concluded for all time. Construction is still going on, with each century making its contribution. Festivals whose position at one time seemed unshakeable have ended up in the background, and new ones have been added. Excesses which have developed are swept away by radical reforms, most radically at the time of the Reformation. Gentler reforms, such as those of the Second Vatican Council, seek to eliminate inconsistencies and to make the ordering more understandable.

Thus the endeavour to include a time in the church year especially to honour the creation and its Creator is legitimate.⁴ Why should the church not see to it that, in the face of the ecological crisis, its confession of God as Creator finds a clearer expression in its liturgical life? Individual churches have already taken steps in this direction. In numerous churches, especially in rural areas, there are harvest festival traditions: today one finds here and there attempts being made to revive these traditions. In the Roman Catholic Church the day of Saint Francis of Assisi on 4th October is being given an increasing role. In ever-widening circles the need is being felt for God's creation and its preservation to be an explicit theme in worship.

5. The Ecumenical Patriarch's proposal

There is particular significance in the Ecumenical Patriarch's proposal to celebrate

1 September as a day of "thanksgiving for the great gift of creation and petitions for its protection and salvation". What is behind the choice of this date?

For the Orthodox churches, 1 September begins the church year. This regulation has a long tradition, going back to the way time was reckoned in the Byzantine Empire. It was based on indictions, which are periods of a certain number of years. Official documents always gave the indiction and the year within the indiction. This system of dating was introduced under the Emperor Diocletian in the years 297-98, and was declared obliga-



tory under the Emperor Justinian I in 462-63.⁵ The year began on 23 September, which was changed to 1 September in the second half of the 5th century. An indiction was at first five years long, later changed to 15 years. At the end of each indiction the next began. The church also used this system of reckoning time. The beginning of each year, and especially of a new indiction, was ceremoniously observed. In Constantinople, the Patriarch announced the new year of the indiction. After celebrating the liturgy in the basilica of Hagia Sophia, the Patriarch and the members of the Holy Synod gathered in a great hall. Following prayers and liturgical hymn-singing, the Patriarch named the new year and granted absolution to all. He then confirmed, by signing the official document, the beginning of the new year.⁶

With the end of the Byzantine Empire this tradition lost its practical significance. However, the church preserved the date, and the Orthodox churches today still celebrate 1 September as the beginning of the new year, even though it does not carry any weight in the life of the church. The year is not structured according to its beginning on 1 September.⁷ This festival is one of the relics left over from calendars used in the past. The Ecumenical Patriarch in his Message scarcely goes into the traditional meaning of this day at all; he merely mentions it, without further explanation.

Thus the Patriarch's proposal is to be seen as an endeavour to give a new content to a festival which has largely lost its ancient meaning. The church year is to begin with reflection on God the Creator, the gift of creation and our responsibility before God and towards our fellow-creatures.

6. What new points of departure are possible?

How can we increase our praise of God as Creator in worship? What new points of departure are possible within the framework of the church year?

Sunday is without doubt the most important element. It was not right to allow the relation of the Sabbath, or Sunday, to the creation to be pushed into the background. There is no doubt that the central meaning of Sunday is Christ's resurrection and victory over death; Sunday is a sort of "little Easter". But this newer content need not be

understood as irreconcilable with the Old Testament meaning of the Sabbath as day of rest, analogous to God's rest on the seventh day of creation. God's new world is the fulfilment of the creation. As God's creatures, we praise the Creator who called this world into being and preserves it, is concerned for all creatures and gives them their food in due season, and puts an end to death with the in-breaking of the promised reign of God. Sunday reminds us of our responsibility towards other persons and all other creatures. It puts limits to our blind busyness, and makes us take a step back and realise again who we are, before God and the entire creation. Sunday is a criticism of human self-realization which shuts off the access to God's new world.

But is there not also room in the church year for certain "days of creation" or, perhaps even more appropriately, a special time to remember God as Creator? Would it not be meaningful to celebrate 1 September, or Harvest Festival, or 4 October as this time? A certain uneasiness appears almost instinctively. In recent decades a great many new Sundays have been introduced into the churches to remind us of particular ethical obligations - days for refugees, for persons with disabilities, Human Rights Day and so on in this vein. One could almost say that a second, ethically-oriented church year has developed. Should this series of days have Ecological Responsibility Sunday added to it?

But this is not a matter of adding another Sunday. It is a matter of giving clearer expression to a fundamental part of the Christian confession of faith. What we need to do is to show, as the Second European Ecumenical Assembly said, that "Commitment to preservation of the creation is not an issue among many others, but an essential dimension of all church life."

This might be reason enough to have, instead of one day, a season of creation. It could begin on 1 September, or the first Sunday after 1 September, and last until 4 October, or the first Sunday after 4 October. This would be a way of bringing together the days belonging to different traditions. This is also the season of harvest celebrations in many parts of the world. Such a season of creation would fit without strain into the existing church year. Before the observances of the great events in the history of salvation begin, from the birth of Christ to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we would be reminded of God as the source of all life. And after following through the succession of God's mighty deeds, we would be led



back again to the God whose hands encircle all times.

A possible difficulty might be that this season comes at different times of the year in the northern and southern hemispheres. When Europe is harvesting, spring is coming to Argentina, South Africa and Australia. But is a day for the Creator dependent upon the seasons? It could be connected with the springing to life of nature just as well as with its fading. Just as Christmas is

not necessarily tied to winter, nor Easter to spring, praise for the Creator does not have to be connected with a particular season. It will only mean that meditations in different places will bring out different aspects.

7. Alpha and Omega

A time for creation in the church year! It would have the advantage of bringing faith in God as Creator into relation with the whole creed. The talk of ecological responsibility today easily gives the impression that this is a new task, a political one. It is still not clear to many Christians that we are talking about an imperative of the Christian faith. The way the gifts of the creation are treated today amounts to a denial of God. Whenever this responsibility is isolated from the entirety of the faith, it is faith which is being played down.

A time for creation prepares the ground for a deeper understanding of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. The structure of the creed is replicated

in the church year. God as Creator of heaven and earth is the pre-condition and the background for everything that follows. In becoming a human being God enters into the creation, and through the resurrection makes new life break forth, and pours out the gift of the Spirit upon humankind and the whole creation. The time for creation would make possible a deeper understanding of the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The time for creation is both the beginning and the end of the church year. In reflecting upon the Creator, our attention is directed to God's new creation. God's creation cannot ultimately be fully understood without its fulfilment in Christ. Over the horizon of this creation, from the beginning, shines the light of God's reign. In the time for creation we celebrate both the origin and the fulfilment - Alpha and Omega.

Above all, the time for creation reminds us that we too are creatures, among many others. It gives us an occasion to think about the way we have used God's gifts, and how we will do so in future. It gives the church an occasion to put a new, more responsible lifestyle into practice. The Ecumenical Patriarch's message says with great urgency: "We must attempt to return to a proper relationship with the Creator and the creation. This may well mean that just as a shepherd will, in times of greatest hazard, lay down his life for his flock, so human beings may need to forego a part of their wants and needs in order that the survival of the natural world can be assured. This is a new situation - a new challenge. It calls for humanity to bear some of the pain of creation as well as to enjoy and celebrate it. It calls first and foremost for repentance - but of an order not previously understood by many." If a time for creation contributes to this conversion, it has fulfilled its task.

Bieritz, eds., Leipzig und Göttingen 1995, p. 453

⁴. Ibid., p. 487

⁵. *Corpus Iuris civilis*, Nov. 47,2

⁶. V. Grumel, *Indiction*, in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York 1967, vol. 7, pp. 466-468.

⁷. "The idea of the year as a unit and as a real time within which the church dwells for the purpose of its fulfilment is so weak that the Byzantine list of months begins with September, a month which in our present calendar has no special liturgical 'significance' whatever." Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, London 1966, p. 136

Notes

¹. *Reconciliation, Gift of God and Source of New Life*, Documents of the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, 1997. CEC and CCEE, Graz, 1998, p. 57

². Message of His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios on the Day of the Protection of the Environment, in: *Orthodoxy and the Ecological Crisis*, 1990.

³. Karl-Heinz Bieritz, in *Handbuch der Liturgik*, Hans-Christoph Lauber and Karl-Heinz

To Celebrate the Creator and the Creation! - Theological Reflections on Introducing a Creation Day in the Church Calendar

Pastor Klaus Hoof

Crisis of understanding the human self and the world

Today's environmental crisis is not a crisis of the creation but of humanity! Creation is not endangered – it is marvelously adaptable – the future of humanity is at stake. Ultimately, this human crisis is a crisis of the understanding of the human self and the world, and the „surrender of God“ (Gottvergessenheit).

Assuming this analysis is correct, then more is required – particularly from the churches – apart from a dedicated and active engagement for the integrity of creation: Based on their very beliefs the churches have the task to articulate the crisis of understanding the human self and the world and to contribute to the healing of this crisis.

An indispensable part of this contribution consists in regularly celebrating and bringing into our present life circumstances the salvation of the cosmos and of humanity as is being contained in the profession of faith to God the creator and sustainer of the world. Salvation wants to be celebrated. It wants to be experienced, appropriated and validated anew. Its celebration needs cultic-ritual forms and patterns. This way it assumes a place in the life of the individual and the community and can effect the understanding of the human self and the world.

Trinitarian challenges for a new human self-understanding that can be celebrated

Biblical creation theology cannot get far without re-discovering the Trinitarian God. Thus the ecological guidelines of the Evangelische Landeskirche in Württemberg emphasize: „The responsibility for the created world is a consequence of the profession of faith to the Trinitarian God.“ But what does this mean?

A fundamental aspect of the traditional teaching on the Trinity in the early church states: Father, Son and Holy Spirit live with one another, for one another, and in one another. They live a vivid relationship in the highest degree of perfect communion and love among and between themselves. This Trinitarian vision of God reveals an image of the human being apart from the concept of the human being as image and likeness of

God. Humans live their being as images of God when they live vital and life supporting relationships, when they live community: in community with God and fellow humans, in community with all creation.

This cannot simply be approached and discussed theologically. Relationships must be shaped and lived. Where in the church is this understood to be a task for the liturgy?

It will not remain without consequences for the church and Christians whether they deal with these questions regularly or not. Will not a church that does not in ever new ways reassure herself of these tenets of faith lose her sensitivity and competence for these issues and her authority to give a credible witness?

The NT is very clear: God, the Father creates through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit: on this basis Paul can say: “For everything comes from him, has been made by him and has to return to him.“ (Rom 11:36). All things and all life forms are created by God, given form by God and exist in God. God can be seen, heard, tasted, smelled, and experienced in the world. This is the real mystery of the incarnation of God.

This mystery of a healing presence of God in creation cannot ultimately not be understood, it wants to be experienced, felt, and celebrated. Only by the experience that in all that is and exists and lives, God's life giving Spirit and will is present allows to develop a respect of all that is and lives. That this can be experienced ritually is one of the basic spiritual and liturgical tasks of Christianity.

A Critical Look at the Liturgical Year

„I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth“ – when in the liturgical year do we regularly celebrate and bring back into our presence this experience of our faith? Theologically it is clear: Professing God as the creator must be assumed and inclusively reflected when we celebrate our salvation in Christ and the coming and working of the Holy Spirit. But it is striking that this profession of faith to God as creator has not been made the direct objective of celebra-

tion and reflection of any feast in the course of the liturgical year.

Traditionally, this first article of the creed plays an important role in harvest feasts and thanksgiving celebrations. But the harvest feast has its own particular purpose: the core of the harvest feast is the gratitude for the life giving gifts of God. The profession of faith to God the creator of heaven and earth, however, includes more than the importance of such gratitude for the fruits, and food, daily bread, clothing, work and livelihood.

The question remains: When in the church year do we commemorate and celebrate the fundamental themes of us humans being creatures and the cosmos as creation? The questions of human relationship to heaven and earth, to light and water, to sun and moon and stars, to plants and animals; questions regarding the human body and human identity as male or female, the human beings' trust or forlornness in this cosmos; the questions of a wise and prudent living within the given order of creation or necessary transgressions of such orders, questions of shaping the future of the world and the standards to follow in doing so – where and when do we commemorate, celebrate and reflect these central themes? Also the questions and issues that deal with understanding the world in the widest sense need such a place, like for example the question of the origin of life and the cosmos, questions regarding the direction of history and life, or whether they move in eternal cycles

Ecumenical Reflections

In the Orthodox churches there has been an increase in theological works dealing with a theology of creation and the integrity of creation over the last several years. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople in 1989 has declared 1 September as the „Day of Creation“ and invites us every year anew to celebrate this day accordingly. Since in the Orthodox Tradition the church year starts on 1 September, there is a very clear sign of appreciation and valuation of the Christian creation faith and the first article of the creed in the Orthodox churches.

The Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz in 1997 calls on the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Catholic Bishops Conferences (CCEE) to: „die Bewahrung der Schöpfung als Teil des kirchlichen Lebens (auf allen Stufen) zu betrachten und zu fördern....Ein Beispiel: KEK und CCEE fordern ihre Mitgliedskirchen und Bischofskonferenzen auf, einen Tag der Schöpfung einzuführen, wie er vom ökumenischen Patriar-

chat gefeiert wird“ (Handlungsempfehlungen 5.1).

In Germany the Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche (EmK) celebrates a 'Day of God's Good Creation' since 1986. The EmK has a working group to prepare aid materials for the celebration of that day in the communities.

In Switzerland, the 4 weeks before the harvest thanksgiving feast are observed as creation time according to a proposal of the Ecumenical Working Group Church and Environment (OeKU). The observation of this creation time should help the communities to prevent the harvest thanksgiving feast to regress into a purely folkloristic commemoration of times past

To Celebrate Salvation! – We need a „Day of Creation“ in the Church Year

Christianity can make an important contribution to a human self-understanding that is crucial to the future of humanity. Based on its faith in God the creator and sustainer of the cosmos and of all life, Christianity knows of the human participation in all creation events. In the course of the church year, the churches should create a fixed space in which they can live this faith and listen to the biblical traditions dealing with it. It is a rewarding challenge to the communities and the theologians, to create rituals and liturgical elements that can help people experience and celebrate their interrelatedness with all of God's good creation.

1. A Feast, that lets people experience community with God and fellow human beings and with the whole created order,
2. that lets people celebrate God as creator and themselves as creatures,
3. that makes them open their eyes, ears and all senses for God's creation,
4. that allows them to discover anew the mysteries of life, that gives shape to salvation that is grounded in the creative and sustaining work of God and allows the faithful to appropriate it in a constantly new way, that is what is missing in the course of the liturgical year!

Many church groups and circles create liturgies and action days with Integrity of Creation as their theme. To canonically introduce a 'Day of Creation' into the liturgical calendar of the ecclesiastical year would give a better theological grounding, new focus, and broader basis to such activities. That would have consequences in two directions: Internally, within the churches themselves,



in which competence and common understanding would grow in relation to such issues, and externally, in society in which Christian convictions about responsibility for creation would be present

more strongly and professionally! Both would be desirable for the sake of a clear Christian witness to its creation faith.



Celebrating God and God's precious Creation

P. Georg Ziselsberger SVD

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven (Ecclesiastes 3,1)

The church understands itself as constantly regenerating – *ecclesia semper reformanda!* Especially the current ecological crisis calls for the churches to start a life style change!

As Christians, did we strive enough to extend and deepen our faith, to a faith that respects God's beloved Creation?

As Christians, have we been open enough to a renewing of faith that helps us perceive our responsibility for Creation in our community? Did we express our Christian hope in a sustainable way in our culture?

In recent decades, many clerical documents have been published regarding the Christian Creation Responsibility! However, the enthusiasm, to realize those beautiful words practically, is not very strong. Regarding this fact, it seems helpful to recall the invitation of the former Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I which he addressed to all Christians. He suggested to introduce September 1st as a day to celebrate God's Creation. Since the foundation of the European Christian Environmental Network in 1998 the working group "Creation Day – Time of Creation" is working on the introduction of a liturgical Creation Time which lasts from September 1st (Creation Day) to the feast of Francis of Assisi on October 4th – or to the second Sunday in October – as an official part of the church year.

Theologically, celebrating Creation Time offers opportunities to connect Christians closely to the Christian cult. In the Apostles Creed we vocalize our faith in "God, the father, the Creator of heaven and Earth".

However, the liturgical year does not offer an opportunity to celebrate God as the Creator.

The large church feasts are dedicated to the second divine person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. An even bigger feast, Pentecost, is dedicated to the third divine person, the Holy Spirit. The way it is now, the liturgical year hardly promotes a meaningful Christian faith in Creation.

The traditional theological dictum "*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*" expresses the mutual relationship between faith and mass. The way we celebrate church services has impacts on our faith and our Christian lives. How and what we pray expresses what we believe. From that point of view, if we look at our current liturgical feasts, we can legitimately ask, if we Christians seriously believe in God the Creator and that God's Creation is good, and that we humans as Christians are called to protect this Creation.

From an historical-theological point of view, the liturgical year has gone through a long and complex process of evolution. Even today, its development has not been completed. The last large reconstruction happened at the Second Vatican Council. The church year represents an incarnation of the cultures. At critical points in Christian history, the church has installed feasts that helped people pass these difficult times. Today, we live at the verge of an ecological and socio-cultural change.

Celebrating Creation Day and the Time of Creation offers a perfect opportunity to live according to a meaningful and ecological Creation Theology, which needs to be realized in our daily lives as well. The time period from September 1st, where we celebrate Creation Day, until the feast of Francis of Assisi, who has become the patron saint of the ecological movement and of ecologists, because of his love for Creation, on October 4, is the perfect opportunity to use special liturgies, educational events and pastoral programs for Christian Ethics of Creation and Creation Spirituality.

Celebrating God the Creator and God's precious Creation is an urgent appeal to install a special time in the liturgical year that is dedicated to environmental issues. *There is a time for everything, according to Ecclesiastes.* Now it is time for an institution in the church that helps us manage the difficult phase from our current ecologically destructive life style to a sustainable way of life.

The Ecological View of Creation of Vladimir Solov'ev

Prof. Dr. Andrej Danilov

During the last few years the ecological problematic has become one of the most important and most widely discussed topics in theology. A new field of inquiry in theology has been born: Christian ecology. It seems that just a few decades ago, theologians did not deal with this issues at all. But even ecology is a rather new discipline. However, this perception must be corrected. The conception of a Christian ecology begins to be articulated during the last quarter of the 19th century at the interface of orthodox anthropology and a religious philosophical doctrine about the „all-unity.“

For the first time the conception of a Christian ecology was articulated in the works of the great Russian thinker Vladimier Solov'ev (1853-1900). The conceptual approach of this philosopher to the problem of a necessary mutuality between humans and nature precedes the intentions of the contemporary ecological thinking by a century.

Summary of Solov'ev's conception of an environmental awareness in the following points:

1. Natural material reality and the spiritual are essentially different realities; however they exist and develop in organic unity. Nature, the creation, participates in the divine processes of the Transfiguration, the Resurrection and the Ascension. Humanity together with created nature "groans and suffers the pangs of birth" (Romans 8:22-23).
2. Subjugating and conquering nature are the only two phases of development of the relationship of humans with nature. The present attitude related to the consumption and exploitation of nature, her destruction for the sake of artificially fashioned purposes has to be transcended for the sake of the survival and development of humans. We need to restore the true rights of the material nature. Humans ought to develop respect for nature and the subhuman world has to be included in the moral solidarity. Nature does not only

serve instrumental or functional purposes (utility) but has inherent values and the rights of matter. She is no mere means to achieve an end, rather a specially privileged member of the aim and goal of human existence. Material nature is an integral part of the human person. Material nature is entitled to being transformed into its potential spiritual nature.

3. Humans have the duty to learn to see and understand the inherent value of nature, to care for her, and cultivate her for her own sake. Nature needs humans for her completion, humanization and spiritualization.
4. Love of the creator is being realized through his creation (nature). Not only humans are neighbours to other human beings but also the natural environment.
5. The Catholicity of the church reflects the all-unity of being of which the material nature is an integral part. The growth of the human being spiritually and ecclesiastically is predicated on the spiritualization of nature. Das Wachstum des Menschen in der Spiritualität und der Kirchlichkeit setzt auch die Vergeistigung der Natur voraus. One of the examples given is the sacrament of the eucharist when bread and wine – fruits of the synergy of humans and nature - are being filled by the Holy Spirit and consecrated into the divine eucharistic gifts.
6. The church ought to teach people solidarity with nature and respect of creation. She ought to participate actively in the formation of a new and ecological life style. Responsibility for creation is the maxim of Christian life.

Solov'ev directly links the ecological to the feminist issue, "The immoral exploitation of the Earth", he writes, "cannot stop as long as the immoral exploitation of women continues". These are the two sides of the relationship with the *one* house: the outer and the inner.

Excerpt from a talk given on the occasion of the conference "Culture of Life", the complete text is available at the ARGE SVA.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Second European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA2), Graz, Austria - 23 to 29 June 1997

A new practice of ecological responsibility now and with regard to coming generations

5.1. We recommend that the churches consider and promote the preservation of creation as part of church life at all levels. One way would be to observe a common Creation Day, such as the Ecumenical Patriarchate celebrates each year.

Rationale: The seriousness of the ecological dilemma for the future of the human race means that the churches' consciousness of it must be raised. Commitment to preservation of the creation is not a side issue among many others, but an essential dimension of all church work.

5.2. We recommend that the churches encourage the development of lifestyles guided by the principles of sustainability and social justice, and that they support all efforts towards an economy which meets the same criteria.

Rationale: Ecological responsibility must guide personal as well as political and economic actions. The criterion of sustainability gives continued weight to saving energy and to discovery and use of renewable forms of energy. Christians, supported by their congregations and their church, should strive for a lifestyle which sets an example of freeing oneself from the pressure to consume and of valuing a true quality of life.

5.3. We recommend that the churches join the Agenda 21 Process and connect it to the ecumenical or conciliar process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

Rationale: Agenda 21 offers an internationally agreed basis for action which has important aspects in common with the conciliar process for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. It can be especially helpful in stimulating and organising cooperation with those holding social and political power at the local level.

5.4. We recommend that CEC and CCEE create a network of persons with environmental responsibilities and recognise them as partners in church activities.

Rationale: If the preservation of creation is to be anchored within church life in a politically effective way, it needs to be substantiated by professional competence. The CEC member churches and the CCEE Bishops' Conferences should appoint their own officers for environmental issues, and create a network for them in the form of a suitable organisation with which they cooperate as a partner.

- CCEE: Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae (Rat Europäischer Bischofskonferenzen)
- CEC: Conference of European ChurchesE-CEN:
- ECEN, EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK is the fruit of EEA2 Graz 1997, works in issue specific Coalitions on European and international levels



Creation Time officially acknowledged by the Third Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu

ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung, represented by Isolde M. Schönstein achieved the introduction of Creation Time in the final documents of the Third Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, resulting in recommendations for action that are now binding for the churches.

“Recommendation Ten: We recommend that the period from September 1st to October 4th be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change.“

Excerpt from the final document of the III. EEA

In various discussions with official representatives of the churches, like the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, renowned organizations and delegates emphasized the importance and urgency of the introduction of Creation Time as an impulse and drive for the entire clerical year. (One third of humankind belongs to Christian Churches)

On other continents, this initiative has already been implemented successfully.

Having had its beginnings at the basis of the church, the movement is currently recognized by official declarations of the Bishop’s Conference of the Philippines and of Italy. In the context of synodal decisions it has been recognized by Protestant Churches, the Orthodox Church of Belarus and many more.

In close cooperation with the late ecumenical Professor Dr. Lukas Vischer, president of the ECEN, Isolde M. Schönstein developed the concept of Creation Time for the Christian Churches in order to adapt Creation Time as a time for reflection and for environmental projects. Annual dossiers for this purpose are published by *ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung*.

Each week of Creation Time is dedicated to a special main topic, like Climate/Energy, Soil/Agriculture, Water and “the children of this world”. Furthermore, the dossier contains an excerpt of the theological background for a Time of Creation, as well as pastoral and liturgical impulses.

The Consultation of Theologians which has been summoned by Prof. Vischer with representatives of all Christian traditions answers the questions of our time quite clearly. A documentation is available at the ECEN and at *ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung*. Furthermore, there is a guide book for Creation Time, published by Isolde Schönstein and Lukas Vischer, available in 3 languages.



Successful realizations of the recommendations for action

At the level of the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN)

1. In response to a recommendation from the Graz Assembly the *European Christian Environmental Network* (ECEN) was founded in 1998 at the Orthodox Academy of Vilemov. One year later, at its second Assembly in Loccum, it suggested to the churches to observe a time of creation extending from September 1 to the second Sunday of October (see above). The European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) considered the promotion of this Creation Time as one of its priorities. A special ECEN working group was formed for this purpose. The group made contact with churches and church associations in various countries and sought to stimulate new initiatives. It has regularly reported on its efforts to the ECEN assemblies.

2. The Conference of European Churches took a special interest in the proposal and has consistently contributed to its promotion. Under its auspices, a workshop on the implications of the proposal for the liturgical life of the churches was held in Geneva (December 2000). Every year the Conference of European Churches shares with its member churches liturgical material – texts, prayers and hymns – for use during Creation Time. Every year a new aspect of the ecological crisis is addressed. So far the following themes have been chosen: 2002 Energy, 2003 Our responsibility towards future generations, 2004 Preserving Water, Land and Air, and 2005 Rhythm of Creation and Rhythm of Life. In 2006 it offered a series of meditations on Biblical passages. All these texts are available on the ECEN website: www.ecen.org

3. On behalf of the ECEN Working Group, *ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung* (Austria) has put together and published every year dossiers containing explanatory articles on Creation Time and suggestions for its celebration. It has also regularly published study material on pressing ecological themes such as water, food etc.

4. Under the auspices of ECEN two international consultations have taken place – the first in 2004 on Creation Theology resulting in a publication

under the title 'Listening to Creation Groaning' (John Knox Series 16, Geneva) and the second in 2006 on Creation Spirituality, with special attention to the relationship of the Eucharist to Creation

5. In 1999 the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) launched a series of six consultations on ecological themes, involving environmental officers of the bishops' conferences. The second consultation at Bad Honnef (May 2000) recommended the "observation of a day of Creation in the period from September 1 to Harvest Feast".

At the national level

The proposal of the Ecumenical Patriarch was endorsed in March 1992 by a meeting of all Orthodox Primates in Istanbul. The Ecumenical Patriarch issues every year a message emphasising various aspects of our responsibility towards creation.

September 1 is regularly celebrated in many Orthodox churches. A good example is provided by Belarus. The Orthodox Church of Belarus has officially adopted the proposals both of a Creation Day and a Creation Time. The Day of Creation is celebrated, according to the Orthodox calendar, on September 14. Every year environmental activities are organised in the period from September 1 to October 4. The centre of activities is the Saints' Methodius and Cyrill Christian Educational Centre in Minsk, a founding member of the European Christian Environmental Network and from the beginning engaged in the promotion of Creation Time. In 2005 teachers and students of the Centre organized a special event in the park of Loshitsa, a unique reserve close to the city, comprising more than 120 hectares of land. The event had a double purpose – cleaning up the park and praying for the preservation of creation. The Te Deum was celebrated by Father Vladimir Gerasimenko in an ancient building, now abandoned with no water, electricity, heating – a symbolical reminder of the 'ecological decline' of the planet. The group visited a nearby church, also in ruins, and placed two crosses near to it. (Information provided by Andrej V. Danilov)



The proposal of a Creation Time is being met in more and more countries with a positive response. The degree of reception differs, of course, from place to place. In some countries the proposal has been formally adopted by decision-making bodies of the churches, in others church associations and centres have made it their own and offer programmes and activities to the churches. A few examples may illustrate the situation.

Austria. In Austria the proposal of the Creation Day was first introduced in 1995 by the ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung, an ecumenical environmental association of Roman Catholic background. Responding to the proposal of the Ecumenical Patriarch, ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung began to observe September 1 as an 'Action Day' for Christians: how do we translate ecological concerns into our personal lives and the life of the churches? ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung provided checklists, 'mirrors' of daily behaviour, theological and liturgical texts, personal counselling, celebrations and exhibitions. "Our aim was to transmit knowledge, to promote a sense of responsibility and to establish cooperation between the churches and the Agenda 21 process. Each Day was concluded by an ecumenical liturgical celebration." In 1997 ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung presented the proposal to the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, and eventually adopted the proposal of a Creation Time from September 1 to October 4 as a common platform for the ecological witness of all churches. In the following years a wealth of activities took place during Creation Time, e.g. manifestations in the streets, presentation of sustainable solutions (alternative energy, alternative vehicles, products of fair trade), symposia on relevant environmental themes, exhibitions, concerts, encounters with representatives of science, NGOs, churches and politics, media briefings, liturgical celebrations, blessing of bicycles, blessing of animals (especially on Saint Francis Day). Every year ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung produces material on general themes but also on specific issues such as mobility (car-free day on September 22), ecotourism or animal protection (September 4). Reports reaching ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung indicate that Creation Day is increasingly celebrated by local churches as the launching day for Creation Time. It is interesting to note that harvest festivals are placed into a new context. At the national level September 1 has become the focus for environmental activities not only for the churches but also for environmental NGOs, development agencies and committed persons in economics and politics. At the celebration in 2005 a message from the President of Austria, Dr. Heinz

Fischer, was received. (Information provided by Isolde Schönstein, Vienna)

Czech Republic. Since 2002 the proposal of Creation Time has been promoted by the Environmental Section of the Czech Christian Academy in collaboration with the Ecumenical Council of Churches and the Saint John under the Rock College. Every year a new theme, e.g. water transport, climate change, globalisation, forests, is introduced by an information campaign and illustrated through a children's art exhibition. During Creation Time events take place mainly around Saint Francis Day which coincides with the beginning of the university term. (Information provided by Ilona Muzátková)

France. On January 10, 2000 the Bishops' Conference of France published a statement entitled 'The respect of creation'. It led to an increased awareness among Christians of the environmental crisis. Roman Catholic church movements and services, e.g. Pax Christi, CMR (Christians in rural areas), MRJC (the Rural Christian Youth movement) started organising encounters and working sessions, publishing articles etc. CCFD (the French Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development) and Caritas began to devote more attention to the ecological dimension of their activities. Pax Christi is developing an ecumenical network of regional groups under the title 'Peace, Environment and Life Styles'. It is an ambitious project with the goal of engaging Christians in working for a better environment. For several years the idea of a day of creation in the period from September 1 to October 4 is promoted in France and is slowly gaining ground. Events during this period normally involve several churches. Since 2003 an Ecumenical Forum on Creation takes place annually in Bordeaux with the participation of Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Reformed, Evangelical, Baptist and Adventist Christians. (Information provided by Jean-Pierre Ribaut, Bordeaux) In 2006, pastors from different Protestant churches launched an appeal to introduce Creation Time in France and to devote the first Sunday in October to the Christian response to the ecological crisis.

Germany. Already in 1999 the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Württemberg decided to introduce an annual Day of Creation in all congregations without fixing a precise date. A few years later the Association of Christian Churches in Württemberg joined in this recommendation. In 2004 the Synod of the Church in the Rheinland encouraged the congregations and church districts to put to the test the idea of a creation time –



wherever possible in ecumenical collaboration with other churches. Even before that, the Association of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK) had organised a consultation on 'Creation theology and spirituality – on the way to a common creation day'. The reaction of the participants was positive, and the ACK is now preparing a recommendation on a creation day or creation time for its member churches. In 2004 the association of environmental officers of the Evangelical churches in Germany (AGU) published a guide of 62 pages under the title 'Creation Time'. It contains an introduction to creation theology and spirituality, liturgical material, meditations and suggestions for religious instruction and games.

The Synod of the Evangelical Church in Württemberg added to its 1999 decision the following explanation: "The Day of Creation is meant to remind us of the fact that we are God's creatures, to guide us into thanksgiving for the gifts of creation and especially to make us aware of our responsibility towards creation. It is essential to develop the Trinitarian dimension of this day : God the Father who created all things, God the Son who came to redeem creation and God the Holy Spirit who helps us find the right approach to creation."

On the basis of the Synod's decision the Church of Württemberg has published every year since 2000 material for the congregations. The following themes have been chosen: 2000: Fire, water, soil and air; 2001: Animals – our fellow creatures; 2002: Let the earth put forth plants, herbs and fruit trees; 2003: Sun, moon and stars; 2004: God remains faithful from generation to generation; 2005: Blessed diversity; 2006: Water – source of life. In 2002 the Church launched a 'song competition'. 180 responses were received. Obviously there is a great desire in the congregations to praise creation. The best songs were selected and included in the 2002 material. In 2006 the Day of Creation was prepared in the framework of the 'Decade to Overcome Violence'. The opening ceremony was followed by a series of happenings along the river Neckar together with confirmation classes, youth and young adults.

A helpful publication: *Ich höre das Gras wachsen* edited by Günter Banzhaf, Gottfried Mohr and Andreas Weidle, Stuttgart 1999. This gives a presentation of Creation day as part of the liturgical church calendar and offers guidance for worship services and other activities.

In 2004 the Association of Christian Churches in Baden-Württemberg visited the island of Crete and

confirmed its determination to join the Orthodox Church in observing a Creation Time. A liturgy was designed on this occasion and celebrated together. On the occasion of September 1, 2005 the President of the Synod of Württemberg referred to this visit. Addressing the participants in the opening ceremony in Bad Urach he underlined that the Day of Creation was meant to raise the level of consciousness. We are invited to perceive the wonders of creation. "For we will only preserve what we have perceived and taken to heart."

Creation Day under the motto 'Celebrating Creation' liberates participants from an exclusive attention to environmental ethics. Action flows from celebration and reflection. Generally, congregations in Germany are grateful for the material prepared for creation day. In many places the celebration leads to actions. The day is also an opportunity to establish new relationships with politicians and environment-conscious people in society. (Information provided by Hans-Hermann Böhm)

Greece (*Greek Evangelical Church*). The congregation in Volos has developed, in collaboration with its youth movement, an environmental programme collecting trash from the city and the beaches. A similar effort was made in Athens during the Olympic games of 2004. Psalm 24,1 'The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness' provides the framework for these efforts. The idea of a creation time in September/October is under discussion. It will be a means to spread activities also to other cities of the country. (Information provided by Ioanna Sahinidou)

Hungary. The Ecumenical and Diaconal Order of Jesus' Brothers and Sisters has for a long time been engaged in celebrations of Creation. A first celebration took place in 1991 involving leaders of several churches. Generally, the churches in Hungary celebrate harvest thanksgiving and consider that the celebration of the Creator can be included in this occasion. But there are congregations committed to new liturgical efforts and the engagement of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Hungary on environmental issues is of high significance. For the Order, the UN World Environment Day (June 5) is of special importance because it provides a link with initiatives of civil society. So far, celebrations have taken place primarily in connection with this date, and it seems important to maintain this tradition. We now plan to celebrate Creation by an ecumenical day of prayer on September 1. June 5 could also be considered as a 'forerunner' of Creation Time in September/October. (Information provided by Béla József Széchéy, Budapest)



Italy. In response to the recommendations of the Graz Assembly the Protestant Federation of Italy named a working group on 'globalisation and environment' (*glam*). Through this instrument the proposal of a creation time has been promoted in the Protestant churches of Italy since 1998. Many activities have taken place in this framework. Worship services have been celebrated in congregations and conferences, and other public events have been organised in various cities, in particular in Torino, Milano and Venice, more recently also in Cagliari (Sardinia). *Glam* produces every year study materials for Creation Time (Bible studies, liturgies, lessons, pastoral suggestions) on different subjects: genetically modified organisms (GMO), mobility, time, water, food. They are published by the Protestant Publishing House Claudiana. Materials made available by ECEN have proved to be very helpful. (Information provided by Antonella Visintin, Torino)

At its meeting from January 23 to 26, 2006 the Permanent Council of the Italian Bishops' Conference decided to adopt the double proposal of a Creation Day and Creation Time: **"The institution of a 'Day for the Preservation and the Defence of Creation' to be celebrated in accord with other European Churches and ecclesial communions on September 1, leaving to the local churches the development of complementary initiatives during the whole month. This choice is meant to underline the urgency of the 'ecological issue', with its ethical and social implications, and is also proposed as a concrete ecumenical sign, as recommended by the *Charta Oecumenica* jointly published by CCEE and CEC."**

Netherlands. The idea of a Creation Time in the Church calendar is supported and promoted by the Project Group on Church and Environment of the Council of Churches in the Netherlands. The proposal was recently sent for consideration and comment to the member churches of the Council. Meanwhile, some local churches have observed Creation Time through worship services, sometimes combined with events during the week. A particular initiative was taken by The Christian Ecological Network (CEN), an association of Christians and Christian NGOs, representing primarily churches of a more conservative persuasion. They actively engage themselves in the promotion of Creation Time from September 1 to October 4. CEN published a special information kit under the title 'Amazing Creation'. Before being published it was tested in 25 congregations

and later widely distributed. CEN recently won an environmental prize for their project "Creation Time 2006". The judges considered the project to be 'fresh, contemporary and practical'. (Information provided by Hans Schravessande and Peter and Magda Siebe)

Norway. Ecological issues are high on the agenda of the Church of Norway – both nationally and internationally, **The Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Norway has passed several relatively radical resolutions on environmental themes. In 2003 the Synod decided that the congregations should observe a Day of Creation in the time after Trinitatis, preferably together with other churches.** In 2005 the Church published for the first time materials for such a day. The Church of Norway is at present engaged on the revision of its liturgy. It will be important to consider in this context the proposal of a creation time. (Information provided by Hans Jürgen Schorre)

Sweden. The proposal has met with sympathy in Sweden but has so far not been accepted on a large scale. Traditionally, the major day for the environment has been Midsummer in most Swedish churches. On the day of John the Baptist readings and other texts refer to creation and there is the custom to celebrate outdoor services. In recent times, efforts have been made to turn Thanksgiving Day, normally the second Sunday of October, into a Day of Creation. The national office of the Church of Sweden has provided material for the congregations based on the ECEN material of the last three years. The focus has mainly been on climate change. One of the problems is the limited translation capacity. It is important to continue promoting the proposal. Its potential is considerable. Creation time can play a crucial role in local ecumenical work as it will be more and more recognised by the churches. (Information provided by Henrik Grape)

Switzerland. The primary advocate of the idea of Creation Time in Switzerland is the Ecumenical Association Church and Environment (*oeku*). *oeku* is an association of parishes, institutions and monasteries, and also individuals from all the church traditions represented in Switzerland. It was founded in 1986 and counts today several hundred collective and individual members. In 1993 the *oeku* proposed for the first time to observe a Creation Time from September 1 to October 4. Several special days related to the theme of Creation occur in September, e.g. the federal thanksgiving day on the third Sunday of Septem-



ber, harvest feasts and Saint Francis day. The period seemed therefore particularly suitable for promoting awareness of the ecological crisis. The initiative met with an encouraging response. The impulse of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro was still fresh. The exercise was repeated in the following years, and, after thirteen years, creation time has now become for many part of the ordinary life of the Church. Every year the *oeku* chooses a new theme and provides material for worship services, discussions and debates and also practical suggestion for congregations and individual members.

Themes addressed from 1993 to 2006 : Energy (1993), Animals – and humans (1994), Giving a future to our children (1995), Our daily bread – what about it today? (1996), Climate change – living with less energy (1997), Creation : holy diversity (1998), Tourism and transport (1999), The sun (2000), The soil (2001), The air (2002), Water (2003), Rhythm of life (2004), Hunger of life (2005), Time (2006)

Creation Time gives an opportunity to collaborate with experts and other organisations committed to the environmental cause. The theme ‘soil’ chosen for 2001 provided a link to a public campaign under the auspices of the Confederation, the cantons and communes; in many places joint activities took place. Each year about 500 copies of the material are shared with multipliers. (Information provided by Kurt Zaugg-Ott, compare www.oeku.ch)

Australia. The idea of a Creation Time was introduced in Australia for the first time in 2004. A group of persons took the initiative to launch the proposal. In 2004 forty congregations celebrated the period from September 1 to October 4. In 2005 an appeal was issued to all churches and congregations in Australia to join this period of four weeks of prayer and reflection. For centuries Christians have celebrated Christmas without a preceding Advent time. Why should the church calendar not now be enriched by a time for Creation? Four reasons speak in favour of such a time: a) God gave a creation with whom we are invited to celebrate; b) The ecological crisis requires a spiritual response; c) Observing anew the Creation leads us to recognize our responsibility for it; d) A creation time gives us the opportunity to celebrate the many links which unite us with Creation. For the years 2006 to 2008 a three year cycle of lessons, Bible studies on the lessons and liturgies for each Sunday has been established. (Information provided by Dr. Norman Habel)

Philippines. On September 1, 2003, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines issued a pastoral statement entitled ‘Celebrating Creation Day and Creation Time’. The first paragraph states: **“Today, September 1, in many parts of the world Christian churches are celebrating ‘Creation day’. They have also set aside the period from this day to October 4, or the Sunday after October 4, as Creation Time. We wish to introduce this period to our Catholic faithful and acknowledge ‘Creation’ that priceless gift of the Almighty and Loving Creator who has made us in own image and likeness ... During this special period of Creation Time we urge ... that our different liturgies celebrate the beauty and pain of our world , our connectedness to the natural world and then our on-going struggle for social justice. We also urge once again the setting up of a Care of Creation ministry at every level of Church organisation. We strongly remind our government not to pursue short-term economic gains at the expense of long-term ecological damage.”** During creation time exhibitions, e.g. on renewable energies, symposia, e.g. on Teilhard de Chardin, and liturgical celebrations have been organised. (Information provided by P. Georg Ziselsberger)

Four Lessons from this Survey:

1. In an increasing number of countries activities are taking place during the period extending from September 1 to the second Sunday of October. Some congregations concentrate on September 1 or on one special day during this period, others regard the whole period as a time devoted to the celebration of God the Creator of heaven and earth. In recent years the proposal has met with increasing interest.
2. The proposal is still new. In many countries the initiative for its promotion lies with environmental associations and persons with an ecological commitment. They regard Creation Time as an opportunity to emphasize the spiritual dimension of their commitment. For Christians care for Creation is not an ‘additional activity’ but is rooted in their faith. To give credibility to Christian witness in today’s world it is essential that more and more Churches respond to the proposal.
3. Several dates have been proposed as special ‘days of creation’. In some circles in the United States an ‘earth day’ is celebrated on March 21 or April 22, and another option is the UN Environment Day on June 5. Other days have been suggested. Some churches use these ‘neutral’ dates as an opportunity of witnessing together with environmental NGOs and other activities. In some



countries especially June 5th has found a place in the calendar of the churches. For the churches the September period has, however, many advantages over all other dates. It provides a natural enrichment of the liturgical year and fits into its logic.

4. In some countries attempts have been made to give liturgical expression to Creation Time by assigning to each Sunday a theme and accordingly Biblical lessons. Such initiatives offer guidance to congregations but it would obviously be premature to expect an agreement among the churches on the liturgical content of Creation time. The proposal has succeeded in emphasizing the need for giving more space to the praise of the Creator in the worship of the churches. For the time being Creation Time is a testing ground for new suggestions and departures.

New Departures and Perspectives

In many respects Creation Time opens new horizons for the Churches – both for their own life and for their witness to society. A few aspects may be mentioned here

Opportunity for Joint Efforts

The Charta Oecumenica (2001) puts it succinctly: **“Together we want to help create sustainable living conditions for the whole of creation.”** **The ecological crisis confronts all churches with new challenges. They no doubt need to re-visit, and reflect on, their own traditions. But at the same time they need to combine insights and to join forces. A special time for Creation provides an opportunity for joint initiatives. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity reminds the churches of Christ’s prayer ‘That all may be one’. Creation Time invites them to a common response to the ecological crisis.**

A Time of Praise, Meditation and Reflection

The theme of Creation has not always received adequate attention in the churches. Creation Time is a time of praise and thanksgiving for the gifts of the Creation, an opportunity to listen anew to the true voice of Scriptures, to discover the riches of the various Christian traditions, to develop a spirituality which gives its proper place to the respect of the created world. It is a time when the worship of the churches can concentrate on the theme of Creation and new forms of worship and prayer can be tested. In recent years much thinking has taken place. Despite all efforts of integra-

tion many Christians fail to see the intimate link between the Biblical witness and the challenges of the ecological crisis. Creation Time can help to build bridges by bringing nature into the orbit of Christian spirituality.

The Biblical tradition of the Sabbath requires renewed attention. The link between the commandment and God’s creation is prominent in the Hebrew Bible. Not only people but also the land was to observe a time of rest. Jesus used the Sabbath to restore health and bring life. Do our Sundays still reflect this concern? Creation time could contribute to reviving a deeper understanding of the seventh day.

A more Responsible Approach to Creation – for both Individual Christians and Christian Communities

How do we respond to the ecological crisis not only in thinking but also through our actual way of life? In face of the threats to survival we realise that the present way of life, especially in industrialised countries, cannot in the long run be sustained. Limits must be respected both in exploiting resources and producing waste. The ‘ecological footprint’ must be considerably reduced. All of us need to ask ourselves: What amount of energy do I use? What do I eat and what kind of food do I buy where? In what ways do I contribute to the pollution of the environment? Creation Time can serve as an opportunity of *an ecological ‘check up’*. Where have things gone wrong? Where can I begin to act more responsibly?

Motorized mobility is one of the main factors of pollution. Do I really need to use a private car? Have my air travels been necessary – and if they have been unavoidable, should I not have paid compensation for the CO2 emissions which were caused? Creation Time could be *a period of ‘car fasting’*, a time to try out another approach to being mobile. For some years now September 22 is being promoted as a car free day – *Going to the City without my car* – the suggestion deserves the support of the churches.

The need for an ecological check up not only applies not only to individuals but also to *Christian communities, parishes and organisations*. Is their way of life really ecologically responsible? What about their energy consumption? What can be done to improve the insulation of church buildings? How is the landed property of the churches cultivated? What about the style of church activities – camps, excursions and church tourism? New initiatives to respond to these questions can be taken during Creation Time.



An integral part of the churches' witness is the commitment to justice for all people of the earth. Creation Time is a period of solidarity with the poor and the more vulnerable nations of this world.

Witness to Society and Collaboration with Environmental Organisations

'Ecological discipline' is essential for Christian witness. The call for a more responsible approach to the environment will only be credible if Christians take it seriously in their own community and personal lives. But a change of course in society requires political decisions. Churches need therefore also to become active in the arena of social responsibility.

Creation Time can serve as a time to develop and to make more widely known the options of the churches for an ecologically responsible society. Campaigns can be launched. Encounters can be organised. Exhibitions can be arranged.

Wherever possible Christians will seek collaboration with environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace, WWF and Green Cross, and associate themselves with their efforts to re-direct the present suicidal course of society. Their specialised analyses of great environmental issues such as energy, climate change, water etc are indispensable for the churches.

A Privileged Time for Dialogue with Scientists

The ecological crisis offers the opportunity of a new dialogue with science. Though much of the ecological crisis is due to the achievements of science and technology, scientists were also among the first to issue warnings. At an early stage they

began to realise that technological development could entail destructive consequences and turn 'progress' into disaster. Not only philosophers but also biologists, climatologists and representatives of various other disciplines have acted and are acting as 'prophets' of the ecological movement. Dialogue with scientists on the impact of the ecological crisis is essential for the responsible witness of the churches.

Dialogue with People of other Faith

The Charta Oecumenica places strong emphasis on dialogue with the Jewish people, with Islam and also with representatives of other religions. It speaks of a commitment to "pursue with them matters of common concern". Care for the gift of God's Creation is no doubt a concern shared by all religions; an exchange on the threats to the future of the planet may help to overcome antagonisms between religions.

Hope Stronger than Darkness and Death

A Time for Creation will be above all a sign of Christian hope in a time of despair. The prospects are far from encouraging. The threats to the future leave little room for constructive action. Darkness seems to prevail. Can we hope? It would be futile to deny the magnitude of the challenge and the possibility of a gradual decline of humankind. But faith in Jesus Christ is the source of a stronger hope than hopes for the achievement of human goals. It is based on the expectation of God's kingdom and sets us free to act in this world as ambassadors of his reconciling love.

This witness is the deepest meaning of a Time for God's Creation.



Taking action in pastorate

Every year, Creation Time reminds us of our great responsibility as Christians, to fight for the well-being of our environment and our natural resources, in order to preserve them for future generations. There is hardly anybody who has not been affected by the ecological and social problems of our globalized society. Everybody wants to change something, wants to move things to a new level. However, like in many areas of our daily lives, we often stick to intentions, never fully realizing them. Repression and resignation win over reason and responsibility. Discussing ecological and social problems calls for a new discovery of old virtues, in order to remind people as individuals, and as consumers, of their responsibility for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. As a means of support for the realization of our responsibility, this part of the dossier begins with a new interpretation of virtues and some criteria for decision-making on ecological and social levels.

Furthermore, you will find examples of successful initiatives that can be supported

by anybody. Usually our prejudices are bigger than the disadvantages we actually face, when we adopt a sustainable life style. However, the advantages for our health and for the well-being of our families are overwhelming. Abandoning our car for short-distance rides, holiday journeys by train or the use of renewable energy are not obstacles, but rather the way to a healthy future that enables future generations to grow up in a living world – a world that we have taken for granted all our lives.

We must not assume that God will banish the evil forces of this world with one breath-taking miracle. As long as we believe this, our prayers cannot be answered, for we will demand things that God will never do for us. God will not do our work all by himself, just like we cannot do everything without him.

We have to realize that it is superstition to believe that God will act if we do not.

(M.L. King)



Virtues – a modern interpretation

Prof. Dr. Günter Virt

In order to discuss the potential of motivation for occidental tradition, it is important to update the four so-called cardinal virtues regarding their relationship with our environment:

justice, prudence, restraint, courage,

Justice: The awareness that we are connected with all living beings should remind us that we have to face nature with respect.

Prudence: The wide-reaching ecological problems should bring to our attention that

all technological impacts on nature have to be decided carefully. We must respect the ecological limits that we do not even fully understand yet.

Restraint: A frugal life will lead to fewer needs and more modest technological aims, as long as we still have the freedom to make decisions and do not have to fight for our survival.

Courage: Only courageous commitment can lead to an improvement in society. We have to have faith in Creation in order to fight destructive skepticism and resignation.

Criteria for decision making in the Christian Churches

Prof. Dr. Günter Virt

1.) criterion of foundation

Protection and care for the reality that fulfills our basic needs must have priority over any measures for realities that are built upon them.

2.) criterion of integration

Securing measures for our basis of life deserves precedence over measures regarding other aspects of society. This means we have to consider the demands of humans, plants, animals and soil first, before the demands of human societies can be fulfilled.

3.) criterion of urgency

Basic needs of poor people and of future generations have precedence over less important needs of modern society.

4.) criterion of precaution

Avoiding environmental damage and pollution must have priority over much more difficult and expensive repair measures in the future.

5.) criterion of "polluter pays"

The producers of environmental pollution and damage must be held responsible by

law. Only if no person or no group of people can be found guilty of causing the damage, the costs have to be carried by the public.

6.) criterion of cooperation

Since environmental problems are not restricted by country borders, all measures of cooperation between the states must be aided.

7.) criterion of reversibility

If damage cannot be avoided, reversible measures must have priority over irreversible ones (i.e. nuclear waste, nobody knows how to store it properly)

8.) criterion of regeneration

Renewable energy sources must have priority over conventional ones. It is crucial to invest in research too.

9.) criterion of frugality

Saving energy is the most important of all measures. Investing in a careful use of resources is sustainable and intelligent.



Recommendations

for the observation of CREATION DAY and TIME OF CREATION

a) for your personal life

MORNING REFLECTION – being human and responsibilities originating from it

Consider **MOBILITY**: choose a (more) sustainable form of transportation - public transport, bicycle, walking, car pooling! Be aware of an increase in ground ozone during summer!

BUYING / CONSUMING: check the necessity of and the method of production of each item, considering eco-social criteria, e.g. flowers are often grown under working conditions hazardous to the workers' health. Cargo transit as rolling storage facilities on highways! Promote organic farming and the protection of biological diversity through the purchase of organically and regionally grown food.

Help realize **CONCRETE ECO-SOCIAL PROJECTS**: Climate Alliance, Clean Clothes, FairTrade, Wind Energy, solar cooking and other supporting instruments in the Third World, sustainable energy,...

CONTEMPLATING Nature and "Anti-Nature", excursion in your everyday life City life: a tree is dying in our midst, grass is breaking through the asphalt ...

ACTING COURAGEOUS-LY against outrageous and dangerous developments like biopolitics, economic globalisation, risks with nuclear energy ... Give a signal! Give your signature for campaigns, and support political steps to help the weak and disenfranchised people!
"Life is an adventure as well, an expedition into reality"

LITERATURE: Visit a specialised bookshop, a library, watch special movies

DIALOGUE with others, articulate eco-social problems in your personal environment.

PEDAGOGY: What can we learn from others? What can we learn from Jesus Christ?
John 8:7-11: a careful approach - John 2:13-25: Jesus firmly confronts those guilty of negligence

CONSTRAINTS and FEARS: What is the role of the environment in which I live? Be prepared to ... let go!

GUILT: Is Integrity of Creation a pastoral topic? What is a "trivial offence"?
"The one who is careless is already a brother of the one who tears down"
(from the Jewish tradition)

For even if you only toss a battery over your shoulder, you endanger the health and consequently the life of others ... (THE SCENE OF CRIME: L i f e)

STATEMENTS OF THE CHURCH: How are they being implemented? Seek the discussion! Look for implementation of recommendations ...

CREATION THEOLOGY and SPIRITUALITY OF CREATION – are to become the basis for an adequate and relevant proclamation, for contemporary formation work, for daily life situations and ecological commitment in parish pastoral programs ...

W O R S H I P at the end of the day "We present to You, O God, this day."



b) for the daily life praxis of the church

OPEN HOUSE presentation of info material, church statements, government guidelines, e.g. Agenda 21, book displays to theological and ecological themes ...

MUSIC: musical compositions about creation

LITERATURE: book exhibits with focus on theological and ecological topics and issues

CREATIVITY:

visual arts

performing arts and poetry related to creation

VISIONS and DREAMS: individual personal contributions for the realization of sustainable life projects, e.g. "Balance Sheets of Justice", purchasing bio-products, soft mobility, solar roof, fair travel, sustainable energy supply ...

EXCURSIONS to places of damaged nature, and healing and healed nature
garbage dumps, nuclear power plants
mountains, forests, water
organic farms ...

MEDIA: get them involved

Being **up-to-date:** cooperate with other activists

INVITATIONS: environmental, developmental and peace organisations, representatives from political parties and the world of economy

Penitential practice: Deliberately aim at restoration ("restitution") of lost habitats

**"He who is simply careless is
a brother of the one who de-
stroys."**

(Jewish Wisdom)

**"He who proclaims hope,
must have hope."**

c) for the liturgical life of the Church

Creation worship services – reflect on eco-social problems

Biblical Genesis Story and its implications

Moving toward change of attitude

Rules for blessings and benedictions orient them toward sustainability and "Reign-of-God Compatibility"! (consumer temple? freeways? cable cars?...)



EUROPEAN CAR FREE DAY – back to humanity, back to Creation

Univ.Prof. DI Dr. Hermann Knoflacher

If God had wanted car drivers instead of people, he would have given us wheels – probably putting a great part of his creation in danger after the first five days. Instead of the wonders of the diversity of the network of Creation, which contains us all, Earth would be dead and empty like the highways today. The power that kerosene has given our “feet” when driving a car is far stronger than people can imagine – just like the outcome of their deeds is often unknown to them. Not knowing the destructive aspects of the use of cars, people have created a traffic system and used it against nature, for the fun of individuals, but for the disadvantage of society and the entire creation.

For a long time, people followed the principles of creation and developed diversity, freedom, beauty in their settlements; they walked with their feet from one village to another in order to develop further. Children’s voices and the noises of work were the acoustic profile; the air was clean – until industry started to poison it. The damages of the industry may have decreased now, but the damages caused by the industry’s products, i.e. cars, are evident all over the world.

People cannot breathe clean air anywhere, because it always carries the remainder of combustion engines of technical traffic systems, causing cancer and alterations to the DNA in the process. The beauty and the diversity of early settlements have turned into a desert of agglomeration with sky scrapers being prominent features.

The European Car Free Day offers a huge chance for everyone to discover how poor people have become despite the material wealth – which consists of an accumulation of industrial products. In order to “see” and realize our poverty, you just have to walk afoot in your area, and try to find what people really need: a diversity of jobs, various shops, leisure time activities for the children, without putting them in danger, meeting points for adults and seniors. Just 50 years ago, all those things that are now gone, have existed! Today, people live in a world where cars demand most

of the space, where landscapes have been ruined by roads and highways, and where the air that we breathe is poisoned with emissions.

The free mobility of people has been lost, in order to make space for speed machines. If we count the life time that has been lost by car accidents and illnesses caused by emissions from traffic, we realize that we pay each hour that we spend driving with half an hour of our own life - a price for the limitless comfort that we are not even aware of! Each minute, three people die from car accidents all over the world, and fifty times more people are hurt during that time frame, not to mention the misery that the families experience.

Each highway and each road is a construction where people not only die from accidents, but where people are harmed by emissions and noise.

The emissions from traffic can be found in a radius from up to 12 kilometres around a road. Much worse is the situation in narrow Alpine valleys that have been greatly damaged during recent decades. The noise from the highways can now be heard on the Alpine peaks, where people used to come to find silence and relaxation.

The oil production will not be able to satisfy the demand in the future. Cheap energy sources, like we were used to in the 20th century, cannot be used any longer. Companies who still build roads and highways are working against people and against our future. While the rate of new born children is dropping, the number of the industry’s children – the cars – is growing! And they get fatter, heavier and bigger, demanding more and more space that actually belongs to our children. Even our legal system is working against people, for it demands a parking lot for each apartment, but no space for children!

And the media are caught in their self-made trap, believing not to be able to change anything, or they even believe to depend on cars. Only physically challenged people really depend on cars as



a substitute for their own physical mobility – which is just another term to describe a car. The lack of occasions to find a local shop has been increased over the last 50 years. People are forced to use cars to reach shops – which is the main problem! It is a vicious circle. It gets more and more obvious and shows the near end of an era that tried to establish structures against the principles of nature.

The Car Free Day may help as many people as possible to realize that it is crucial to return to the way of Creation, which will continue by walking afoot – if people like it or not. The term “the last people today – those who walk afoot – will be the first in the future.” is proved here.

And just like a camel cannot walk through an eye of a needle, car drivers will not reach heaven. Still, politicians keep expanding the trap for clueless people, with the needs of huge companies being their only interest, depriving people of their living space and well being in the process.

The Car Free Day is a chance for drivers to return to the ways of mobility that Creation provides us with. We may return from our dead end that we were racing into with high speed and lots of oil. Perhaps we will discover – if we are lucky – the wealth that we have lost through the use of cars, but at least we will realize the poverty we are caught in.

The evolution to the two-legged movement of the modern human, the mobility of people before the “quadruped car” existed, was a long and difficult path, because it lead us uphill, like life in general – back to humanity, back to Creation.

A Contribution by Univ. Prof. DI Dr. Knoflacher

EUROPEAN CAR FREE DAY: 22 September



The primary cause for the rise of the greenhouse gases is vehicular traffic. The rate of increase of CO₂ is up to

30 % (Central European Data).

Judging from the latest results of the Climate Conferences, the reduction of CO₂-emissions by 28 % till 2010 will only be attainable under drastically altered circumstances.

A change in circumstances is something that can be created by "a change in daily behavior" of the citizens.

Christians are exempted neither from the above circumstances nor from the responsibility to change course.

A rise in the number of casualties of traffic related air pollution raises the casualty figures of persons killed by vehicular traffic.

Particularly during the summer months the ground ozone level rises (caused by car exhausts fumes), posing an additional health risk for small children.

Christians contribute to these developments. Consequently, they are called to take up the challenge posed by the "car free day" to search for healthier and sustainable modes of mobility and to translate them into practice.

- **Car-fast**, clarify the purpose and necessity
- **Car-sharing**, share cars, establish car sharing groups
- **Season tickets for public transport**, incentive for transfer from private to public
- **Fit and Mobile**, allow for walking and jogging paths and trails
- **Bicycle**, fast, manoeuvrable means of transportation for shopping and briefcase
- **Check vacation destination!**

- **Balance of expenses**, how much does my mobility cost ?
- **Going to church** („Kirchgang“), does this have something to do with going, i.e. walking?
- **Information and advocacy campaigns**, e.g. using bicycles
- **Walking to the kindergarten?** “look at the flowers growing along the sidewalk!”
- **Prayer liturgy for the traffic victims of the last years**

Recently, a study has been published about the increase in cases of injuries of children. According to the study, injuries have increased by 20% over the past few years. The study explains this with a lack of exercise in daily life. Less walking in our daily lives leads to a degeneration of the muscles and, as a consequence, more frequently simple falls and dislocations cause injury

We recommend to the churches to celebrate a ‚creation liturgy‘ on the "car free day".

The liturgy could be followed, according to each church tradition, by a blessing of bicycles or a special blessing for those who use bicycle as a means of transport.

**

*"Go and live attentively, respecting and actively participating in the life of the Earth,
because God who lives in the wholeness and integrity of creation is going with you.
Amen*

Climate Initiative “my car free day – all year long”

*Ulrich Kral, climate consultant,
ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung*

Since traffic emissions are still increasing, the attack on the health and the lives of the population still continues and the use of cars is further promoted by politicians, ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung has launched an Austria-wide campaign. The participants are asked to avoid using a car at least on one day per week, for every week of the year. This weekly period will bring the advantages of soft mobility to the

attention of the participants and is likely to result in a change of behavior.

A sticker for the car windshield shows this intention to the public. There are seven different stickers, one for each day of the week.

A folder with information on climate, mobility, health, which can also be used as a postcard, comes with it.

Why do without the car?

Car traffic is one of the main producers of toxic emissions, greenhouse gases and carcinogenic hydrocarbons. This also affects the current climate change negatively.

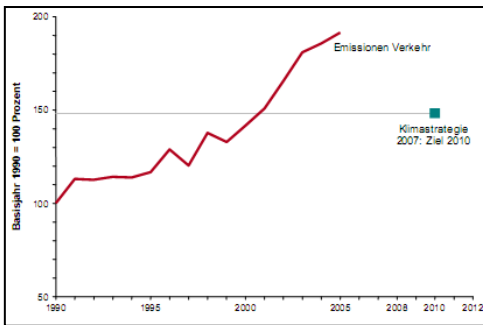
The origins of this enormous contribution to climate change can be found in a terrible traffic and space policy that has been sup-

ported for 50 years! Even today, individual mobility is still favored over sustainable means of mobility. The current structures lead to an excessive use of cars and to traffic from northern to southern countries, passing through Austria.

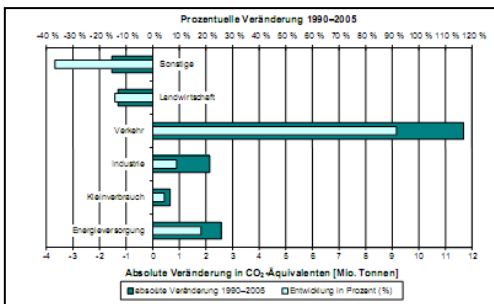


Abb. 1: car emissions contain cancerogen substances

Climate facts resulting from car traffic



Between 1990 and 2005 greenhouse gases have increased by 92%. In 1990 car traffic was responsible for only 16% of all greenhouse gases. By 2005, the figure had increased to 26%. 99% of all traffic-related greenhouse gas emissions from hail from carbon dioxide.



The greenhouse gases stemming from car traffic are increasing enormously compared to other sectors. With 92%, it is on top of the list.

Damage for health and life of the population

- In no other area of society, hundreds of victims are simply accepted.
- Two thirds of the population feels disturbed by the traffic noise
- 15% are suffering from asthma.
- 2400 people die from emissions in Austria, every year
- 55000 people are hurt during car accidents in Austria, every year
- Two thirds of the population in industrialized countries is not sporty.

The Climate Initiative “my car free day” is broadening the concept of car abstinence on the European Car Free Day, since the reduction of emissions is not only important during the Lenten season, but also during the rest of the year. In this context, we have to act in order to provide future generations with a fulfilled life. With your help, we can achieve it.

Participation and information

Stickers, info folders, dossiers, posters and brochures can be ordered from ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung, Section Climate:

ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung, Section Climate

Tel.: 01 / 878 39 - 539, Fax.: -540

E-Mail: office@argeschoepfung.at

Internet: www.argescoepfung.at



The Ecological Footprint

There are currently about 6.5 billion people living on our planet. Regarding the size of the usable Earth surface, there is about 1.8 hectare available for each one of us.

Everything people need to live and everything that can be bought in a supermarket requires space on Earth to be produced. Not to forget, waste and emissions require space to be disposed of.

In 1994, the scientists William Reed and Mathis Wackernagel suggested the

Ecological Footprint

as an admeasurement for this drain of land resources (measured in Global Hectare, which is usually about 10.000 square metres).

While the land consumption for 1 kg of potatoes is quite easy to determine, it is pretty hard to do for the use of electricity or oil, but it is possible.

According to this formula, our current life style in Austria requires 4.9 hectare for each person, which is far more than is available!

This means, we would need about 3 planets, if all the 6.5 billion people lived our life style (the life style of the USA would even require 5 planets!) Since Earth is not going to get bigger, the increasing consumption of resources in rich coun-

tries will lead to a lack of resources in other places. While **one quarter** of mankind claims **three quarters** of the resources for themselves, three quarters of mankind and the entire fauna have to get by with the remaining quarter.

It is an illusion to assume that all people can live an equal life style, if our economy develops accordingly.

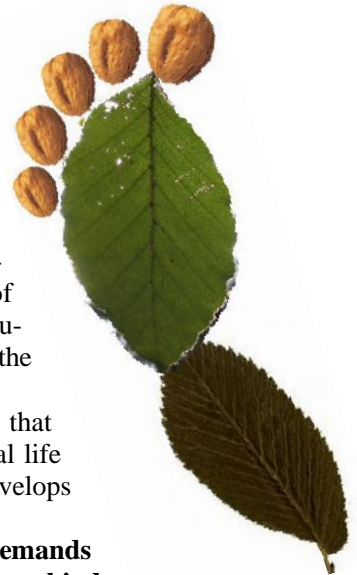
Our incredibly high demands condemn a great part of mankind to live a life in poverty!

Our current system is not sustainable!

How can we live in order to give everyone a chance in the future? We have no choice but to decrease our ecological footprint, meaning we have to use fewer resources.

There is 1.8 hectare available for each one us, but we are currently claiming about 4.9 hectare!

We have to reconsider what a „good life“ means to us. Our mutual aim should be to live satisfied and happily within the ecological borders of our planet. This is currently not the case. We take a great deal more than we should. However, the living situation in the industrial countries makes it almost impossible for individuals to get by with the *fair footprint* of 1.5 hectare. Still, a great improvement is possible!



We have to remember four main ideas:

Do not **FLY**

Do not **DRIVE A CAR** regularly

EAT LESS MEAT and animal products and choose organic and regional products

LIVE IN A SMALL HOME, near to public transport means and use sustainable energy sources



How to determine your Ecological Footprint:

WWF has produced a questionnaire in cooperation with the *Sustainable Europe Research* Institute SERI, which determines your personal ecological footprint by answering a few simple questions about your life style.

Everybody should consider at least these 12 questions:

- Do you fly? If so, how many hours per year?
- How do you move? Are you walking afoot, do you use public transport means or do you drive a car? If so, how often do you use your car?
- Do you eat meat and fish? If so, how often per week? Do you choose organic and regional products?
- How do you live? How many square metres are available for each person in your household?
- Do you buy mainly regional products, or at least products from your country?
- How many clothes do you buy each month?
- Are you taking care of your paper consumption? Do you use recycled paper?
- How much waste do you produce in your home?
- Where do you get your electricity?
- Do you use energy-saving-devices? Do you know “Energy Classes” when buying machines? Are you avoiding stand-by-options?
- How do you heat your home? Coal, oil, gas, biomass? Do you save energy in winter? Is your home sufficiently insulated? ,
- Do you take care of your environment? Is it important to you?

Answering these questions you can easily determine your personal ecological footprint!

Try it yourself:

<http://www.fussabdruck.at/>

<http://www.footprint.ch>

www.footprint.at

The project “Justice Budgets” (Bilanci di Giustizia)

A practicable model for daily life for the Regulation of Production and Working Conditions

Mag. Georg Zimmermann MSc

Overshadowed by the constant war activities all over the world it is often forgotten, that these conflicts arise due to the scarcity of resources (or rather out of desire to control the limited natural resources), and not so much because of religious motives.

Water shortage, contaminated soil and grounds, the fishing ground of oceans exploited and emptied, in other words, the destruction of the life support systems, are the primary reasons for violence and war. In the First World with its surplus of resources, the idea of “lack of resources” sounds abstract and frivolous, when it means that, e.g. a particular Chilean wine or particular Japanese rice crackers are not in stock in our supermarkets.

Does it make any sense to us to do without things that we don't really need? Can we change something in the world, if the actual problems don't have anything to do with us, but are thousands of kilometres away?

Someone, who had to find his way through the horrible exhaust fumes of the traffic pollution in Istanbul, Bangkok or Sao Paolo will, with the integrity of the atmosphere in mind, probably ask what he or she can do for the protection of the atmosphere when he or she goes to his or her daily work on a bicycle in a small Austrian town instead of taking the car. All the more, when their neighbours use their cars with a 100 PS engines just for buying breakfast bread at the bakery around the corner! Can I really change something as an individual? Is it not always the same people who try to do without unnecessary things?

What starts small can end up big

The “Justice Budgets” (Bilanci di Giustizia) challenge us as individuals to step out of the daily rut of life and change our fixated life habits. Thus



we can create a common vision or direction, or in other words a role model for everyone, who feels inspired by a sustainable lifestyle but couldn't translate it into action yet.

In view of the very transparent method of the program that makes it is easy to understand and the great effectiveness which are the basis of the “Justice Budgets” (Bilanci di Giustizia), we want to reach out to people inclined or even interested in practicing more self control and move towards a change of behaviour believing that it would be to difficult. This way of living consciously sustainably and economically can eventually trigger an actual paradigm change in our welfare society.

It may sound very utopian and unworldly-idealistic, but a great amount of examples show that recent social trends could bring about great changes: renewable energies, alternative individual transportation systems, organic pest control, organic food, eco-tourism - all of that is already happening in this world. What has been established in the First World will have its effect on the rest of the world more quickly than in earlier times thanks to the global information network.

Mag. Georg Zimmermann MAS

The “Justice Budgets” (Bilanci di Giustizia) began in Italy at the initiative of Don Gianni Fazzini, and at present 600 families or individuals have become members of the movement. The



ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung has adopted this concept and initiated a similar initiative in Austria. We invite you to participate! Find more about it on our homepage: www.argeschoepfung.at

This is what you need:

- Starting package with the questionnaire and sheets, you can order it by phone from ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung or you can download it from: www.argeschoepfung.at
- Furthermore, the homepage of ARGE SVA offers a platform for the communication among the participants
- Personal counselling
- Networking among the participants
- Cooperations with the „Bilanci die Giustizia“ in Italy, where more than 600 households are actively participating

Here are some statements from other participants, after taking part in the program:

„It is exciting and funny to find a new way of life.“

„Many new acquaintances and new communities, also a feeling of freedom.“

„Creation Responsibility means more to me now. Even though we are just making small steps, it is great to do something for our world – and in the process – for the future of our children..“

„It is fun visiting organic farmers with friends and finding out how much better organic products actually are.“

„I am shopping mostly in regional shops that I can reach by bike. I do not buy things coincidentally any more.“

Steps to a sustainable life style

Taking records for the „financial statements“ in your household/your office may help you to check your own life style and consumption behaviour in order to be aware of how to take the first steps to improvement. „Sustainability“ means purchases or behaviours that **fit certain**

criteria for environmental and social compatibility, and which **protect our environment and lead to social justice** in the process.

For virtually **all areas of life** there are alternatives to our common ways that do not work against Creation. Being a participant you can decide yourself, what areas of your life you want to change.

Some examples:

- Purchase of products from organic agriculture and Faire Trade products
- Buying at region shops/Fair Trade shops/directly from the farmers
- Using environmentally sound detergents and cleaning agents
- Saving water and energy, using „green electricity“-providers
- Abandoning your car, using car pools
- Ethical Investments
- Natural healing methods
- Avoiding littering
- Renting goods or buying used products, repairing things instead of buying new ones
- Social and environmental management, neighbourhood solidarity...

Your buying decision determines...

- The packaging method of products – less wrapping is better
- The fabrication of products
- The amount of waste you produce
- The assortment of products that a shop can offer
- How many motor trucks are frequenting our streets
- How much energy the production of goods requires

Whether a sustainable product becomes generally accepted to benefit us all...

Financial statements – how do they work?

Controlling yourself when buying things, **recording the products you buy** in special sheets and answering **questionnaires** (available at ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung). **You** can realise the **direction of your “sustainable” consumption behaviour** and open up a new **positive economic world**. The **feedback** you give us will be **scientifically evaluated** (in cooperation



with the Institute of Technology and Economy of the University of Economy, Vienna)

Why participate?

Your advantages at a glance:

- You save money
- Recording your purchases makes you aware of how much you buy
- You Realize your consumer's behaviour
- You can live a sustainable and fair life style
- You find time for more important things
- You save resources
- You experience the fun of community life
- You can realize mutual aims
- You will be constantly advised and supported by us
- Everyone can contribute
- You improve your living quality

„Sustainable development is a development that fits the needs of a modern generation, without putting the possibilities of future generations in danger, or without just satisfying somebody's personal needs. The demand to make this development “sustainable” applies to all people and countries“

Gro Harlem Brundtland

Excerpt from the questionnaire of the Justice Budgets:

Regular expenses (in €):

Category	conventional	sustainable
food		
clothes		
living		
energy		
cleaning / hygiene		
health		
education / culture / leisure time		
office/school		
garden		
mobility		

Sustainable investments (in €):

Area	Invested sum	Sustainable function
energy		
water		
heating		
Ethical investments		
donations		

Separating / avoiding litter

Area	conventional	altered
Separating litter		
Avoiding litter		



Bible texts regarding Creation

Old Testament

Hymn of Creation (P)	<i>Gen 1,1-2, 4a</i>
Tales from paradise (J)	<i>Gen 2,4b – 25</i>
Man is part of the Earth	<i>Gen 3,19</i>
Gathering of the animals in Noah's Ark	<i>Gen 7,7-9</i>
God stands by his Creation	<i>Gen 8,20-22</i>
Noah's Alliance	<i>Gen 9,1-17</i>
Year of Sabbat	<i>Lev 25,1-7</i>
Year of Joy	<i>Lev 25,8-13</i>
Sabbat Peace for man and animal	<i>Dtn 5,12-15</i>
Gratitude to God	<i>Dtn 8,7-20</i>
All is God's property	<i>Dtn 10,14</i>
Protection of Fruit Trees	<i>Dtn 20,19-20</i>
Protection of Birds	<i>Dtn 22,6-7</i>
Offering the first fruits	<i>Dtn 26,1-4.10-11</i>
God shows himself through small signs	<i>1 Kön 19,9-13</i>
God's power of Creation	<i>Hiob 9,2-10</i>
Recognizing God in nature	<i>Hiob 12,7-10</i>
God's incredible power of Creation	<i>Hiob 38,1-40,2</i>
The righteous knows what his cattle needs	<i>Sprüche 12,10</i>
Man and animal are everlasting	<i>Koh 3,16-22a</i>
God loves his creatures	<i>Weish 11,17-26</i>
God as master over nature	<i>Weish 19,1-17</i>
Gratitude to God	<i>Sirach 7,30</i>
Strive for wisdom	<i>Sirach 14,20.15,1</i>
Responsibility of mankind	<i>Sirach 15,14-17</i>
Praising the Creator in nature	<i>Sirach 42,15.43,33</i>
Real of peace (paradise)	<i>Jes 11,1-9</i>
Salvation Time of Messiah	<i>Jes 35,1-10</i>
Creation and mankind	<i>Jes 45,18</i>
Results of man's faults	<i>Jes 64,1-7</i>
Misery through drought	<i>Jer 14,2-9.19-22</i>
Santification of Sabbat	<i>Jer 17,21-27</i>
God discards the evil	<i>Jer 18,1-11</i>
God's greatness	<i>Jer 51,15-19</i>
The water of salvation	<i>Ez 47,1-12</i>
Doxology in the furnace	<i>Dan 3,51-90</i>
Sin beats nature	<i>Hos 4,1-3</i>
Drought and hunger	<i>Joel 1,2-4.10-22</i>
Anxiety for life	<i>Jona 2,1-11</i>
Reversal and judgement	<i>Mal 3,19-24</i>



New Testament

Responsibility (salt and light)	<i>Mt 5,13-16</i>
God or money	<i>Mt 6,24</i>
The gate to life is small	<i>Mt 7,12-14</i>
Good or bad fruits	<i>Mt 7,15-20</i>
Message to all creatures	<i>Mk 16,14-18</i>
Appeal for reversal	<i>Lk 11,29-32</i>
Fake security	<i>Lk 12,16-21</i>
God cares for us	<i>Lk 12,22-31</i>
Recognizing the signs	<i>Lk 12,54-57</i>
God's solicitor	<i>Lk 16,9-13</i>
The word has become flesh	<i>Joh 1,1-18</i>
God loves the world	<i>Joh 3,16</i>
The Creation sighs	<i>Röm 8,18-23</i>
New Creation in Christ	<i>2 Kor 5,17-19</i>
God's Plan for salvation	<i>Eph 1,3-14</i>
Christ as master over the universe	<i>Eph 1,17-23</i>
Christ as counterpart of God	<i>Kol 1,12-20</i>
Living as new humans	<i>Kol 3,1-10</i>
Awareness of the Christians	<i>1 Thess 5,1-6</i>
All of Creation is good	<i>1 Tim 4,1-5</i>
Creation and judgement	<i>2 Petr 3,2-7</i>
The Creator is divine	<i>Rev 4,2-11</i>
All creatures pray	<i>Rev 5,11-14</i>
Do not damage land, sea, trees	<i>Rev 7,1-3</i>
Destruction of natural habitats	<i>Rev 8,2. 6-9,6</i>
God's reign and judgement	<i>Rev 11,15-18</i>
Praising the Creator	<i>Rev 14,6-7</i>
The new Creation	<i>Rev 21,1-4</i>
The new Jerusalem	<i>Rev 21,9-11.22-23</i>
Living with God	<i>Rev 22,1-5</i>

Psalms for use in church service

The glory of the Creator – the dignity of mankind	<i>Ps 8</i>
Praise Creation	<i>Ps 19,1-7</i>
God's glory in a thunderstorm	<i>Ps 29</i>
Praise the mighty and benevolent God	<i>Ps 33,6-9</i>
Thank for God's gifts	<i>Ps 65,6-14</i>
The King of Peace and his realm	<i>Ps 72</i>
A hymn to God's loyalty	<i>Ps 92,1-6</i>
A new song praising the judge and saviour	<i>Ps 98</i>
A hymn to the creator	<i>Ps 104</i>
Litany for God's eternal grace	<i>Ps 136,1-9.25f</i>
Litany for God the Creator	<i>Ps 148</i>
The great alleluja	<i>Ps 150</i>



Recommended passages for reflection:

Mt 16:12 "Signs of the Time" - Interpretation

“Then they understood that he was not talking of yeast for bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

The signs of our times: climate change, ozone hole, floods, crop failure, streams of refugees.... can we and do we want to learn a lesson from it?

Mt 11:29 "The Yoke" - The Lightness of the Yoke

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart; and you will find rest.”

It is indeed a heavy yoke to stand up against the spirit of the times and the illusion of a mentality of

“everything is possible. Looking at Jesus we will gain the virtue of composure - and can bear the yoke.

Mk 6:34 "When Jesus had Planned Something Else"-Compassion

“As Jesus went ashore he saw a large crowd, and he had compassion on them for they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he started a long teaching session with them.”

Oftentimes, we, too, have planned something else, have enough concerns of our own. And yet we should still care for the environment? However, understanding the necessity will generate the necessary powers for action!

Mt 24:43 „The Hour“ - Vigilance and Alertness

“Just think about this: if the owner of the house knew that the thief would come by night around a certain hour, he would stay awake to prevent him from breaking into his house”

Do we want to wait until the ecological disaster will strike with full force? Do we hope to simply not live to see it? Or do we have a sense of responsibility for the future generations?

**Mt 7:21****"The action is what counts"**

Not everyone who says to me: Lord! Lord! will enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father in Heaven.

It is not enough to praise and worship God, the Creator, in our Sunday services without respecting in our daily lives and behavior the order and purposefulness of creation!

QUOTATIONS

The „pre-ecological human being“ is to the „ecological human being“ – which they have talked about for more than hundred years – like the „blind“ to the „seeing“ (using biblical imagery).

“The destruction of the earth caused by human beings is going on at the moment”

*The principle of „Sustainability“ has its base already in the Old Testament (Deut 30:19)
“I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life that you and your descendants may live...”*

The state of knowledge about development, crisis, and catastrophes is not enough to change course, despite our powerful information technologies.”

„We find ourselves at a point at which the dimensions of the catastrophe cannot be grasped any longer, so there is only the escape into self destruction“

„The earth can be compared to a space ship where provisions and places are counted“

The sun rises on the good and the bad - so does the ozon hole.

*The devil has conspired against us and is leading us in a circle,
we got lost in the snow, I don't know a way out.”
Pushkin (in Dostoevsky's Demons)*

*Good measure and order lost
Walking in circles instead of living within the natural cycles
Confusion is reigning in the world*

*A person who is not ecologically sensitive, which means someone who doesn't have a relationship to the natural environment or doesn't respect it, is spiritually incomplete.
A spiritually incomplete person cannot be happy.*

Thoughts regarding “Tourism as an opportunity” Sermon aid

MMag DDr. Erna Zisser



Various texts, many of which have even been reworked into songs we often like to sing, give an insight on the pleasure people enjoy when they're travelling – always regarding the delight of travelling, wandering, voyaging at the time of the creation of the poem or song.

“God sends those who he favours on a journey through the world.”

Travelling on vacation is hardly ever seen as fulfilling a divine assignment, as a kind of God's privilege we enjoy, but those who stay at home do not. Like another verse of the same song:

“they only know about having children, about daily chores and a lack of bread”.

Rather, it is the travelling agencies that give us the privilege to travel to remote destinations, they offer cheap tickets and flights. We simply have to *hit it* in order to get enough tickets in time. Usually, there's not much time left for preparation and stress arises. Anticipation, which is said to be the most beautiful kind of joy, does not get the time to develop.

Finally, when we take our seats on the plane and get the time to think, many things come to our mind: The plane is crowded – is the freedom above the clouds not as unlimited as it seems? Are those mountain hikers that I was joking about better off after all?

What am I looking forward to?

Where is my own activity, my creativity?

Will I be part of a group of tourists, like one sheep among a flock? Guided by a tourist guide, like by a shepherd?

I never took the time to prepare my journey, or did I simply let the opportunity pass?

Is my participation in this flight connected to some negative influences, like gas emissions or noise development? Could this flight be dangerous for the climate, for other people, for the environment?

Isn't the duration of my flight too long, compared to the time I stay at my holiday destination?

“The journey is the reward”: Did the people travelling by train, by bike, by boat, by bus make a better choice?

“I want to land” – finally there. How long it can take until a large group of travellers can check out of the airport... What does landing mean to me? Where do I want to land, and with whom? Who am I going to get acquainted with? Not only are other travellers vulnerable, but indigenous people are, too.

Control yourself: how do I act, what do I say, do I produce waste, do I use valuable resources, like water?

An Old Gaelic rune regarding hospitality reads as follows:

*“I saw a stranger, yesterday,
I brought him food to the dining room,
I brought him drink to the drinking room,
Music to the music room.
And in the holy name of Trinity
He blessed me and my house,
My cattle and my family
And the lark sang:
Often, often, often,
Christ walks in a stranger's costume.”*

Does he also walk in my costume, when I go someplace? Could it be that the people who spoil me are exploited in the process?

Am I able to show understanding and tolerance towards the people I meet?

“A wise man goes on a journey and spreads all his treasures, yet he returns as an even richer man.” Anastasius Grün (1806-1876) wrote this saying and was certainly not only referring to the good feeling you get from offering a gratuity to a servant. Some travellers return unsatisfied and can only say: “It brought me nothing but debts,”

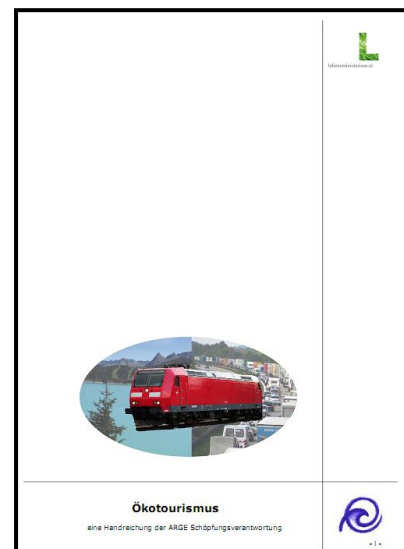
or like a man said to his wife, after she missed an excursion to the Egyptian pyramids: “You didn’t miss anything. There’s nothing in there, except some paintings on the wall.”

A poem by Anastasis Grün (written in 1831) tells about two wandering boys who returned from a long journey. Both told the same thing, yet they said it differently: The first one, bored and annoyed, said: “Oh, trees, meadows, rivers, woods and the blue sky with sunshine” – meaning there’s nothing new under the sun. The other one was excited and amazed and said: “Oh, trees, meadows, rivers, woods and the blue sky with sunshine.” He was able to enjoy the gifts of nature and the miracles of Creation again and again. Some remote traveller may have impressions like the first boy, yet he does not want to confess them, since such honesty could lead to mockery and malicious joy (maybe the best joy?) from

those who have stayed at home. He must prove to them that, when a person goes on a journey he has something to tell afterwards. No effort is too small to make those who listen envy him. They must not realize that he did not know what he wanted, even though he managed to get there really fast.

How joyful is it, however, to feel the desire to return to the holiday destination when you carefully plan the journey in advance and find the time to enjoy your stay. Then we can sing happily: “Let’s go see God’s beautiful world.”, coming from a state of mind, talk and deed, which lets those three sing in unison with the harmony of God’s Creation, in awe of the beauties of nature, the plants, trees and the people around us. So it is possible to carry tolerance, goodwill and respect into the world.

**A dossier on „Eco-Tourism“ is available at
*ARGE Schöpfungsverantwortung***





MONDAY PRAYER

Invitation to Prayer

for every Monday throughout the year

The Conciliar Process for JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION has significantly influenced UNCED 1992 in Rio and thus lives on in that way even though unrecognised. Much too little lives on in our churches.

One third of the global human population are members of Christian churches - what could they move if they were to realize it and took their responsibility for creation seriously!

We are concerned, but not without hope!

Like at the beginning of our initiative so now again do we invite to a regular MONDAY PRAYER:

**Every Monday Morning between 6 and 8 a.m.
Every one in the place where she or he is.**

Our Prayer Intention:

"Conversion" away from self-destructive processes and indifference/apathy toward "Responsibility for Creation".

We know about the needs of many a people working in citizens' initiatives and in the church's environmental work; and we pray for them, as we pray for the authorities in church, politics, business and science.

Prayer Recommendation *:

For the next days of prayer we propose Psalm 119 and look forward to the communion in prayer and action.

**"Your commandments are forever just:
Give me discernment, that I may live by them."**

Ps. 119:144

* more information: ARGE SVA!