

## New House Rules: Christianity, Economics, and Planetary Living

### INTRODUCTION

**I**S THE ENVIRONMENT A RELIGIOUS ISSUE? Many do not think so. For most Americans, the problems with our deteriorating planet can be fixed by science, managed with new technology.<sup>1</sup>

Let us hope that this is so, that science and technology *can* solve the looming environmental crisis. But it may not be that simple. Lynn White's oft-quoted 1967 essay laid the blame for environmental deterioration at the feet of religion, specifically Christianity.<sup>2</sup> If Christianity has been capable of doing such immense damage, then surely the restoration of nature must also lie, at least in part, with Christianity. I believe it does, but also with other world religions as well as with education, government, economics—and science. The environmental crisis is a “planetary agenda,” involving all people, all areas of expertise—and all religions.

This is the case because the environmental crisis is not a “problem” that any specialization can solve. Rather, it is about how we—all of us human beings and all other creatures—can live justly and sustainably on our planet. It is about the “house rules” that will enable us to do so. These house rules include attitudes as well as technologies, behaviors as well as science. They are what the *oikos*, the house we all share, demands that we think and do so there will be enough for everyone. The words for these house rules are “derivatives” of *oikos*—ecumenicity, ecology, and economics—facilitating the manage-

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ment of the resources of planet Earth so that all may thrive indefinitely.

How does religion, and specifically Christianity, fit into this picture? Christianity fits where all religions do: as a worldview supporting the house rules. It fits at the level of the deeply held and often largely unconscious assumptions about who we are in the scheme of things, and how we should act.<sup>3</sup> While “anthropology” is not the only concern of religions, it is a central one and, for the purposes of the ecological crisis, the one that may count the most.

This essay will make the case that Christianity—at least since the Protestant Reformation, and especially since the Enlightenment—has, through its individualistic view of human life, implicitly and sometimes explicitly, supported a neoclassical economic paradigm and a consumer culture that has devastated the planet and widened the gap between the rich and the poor.<sup>4</sup> It will also suggest that Christianity, given its oldest and deepest anthropology, should support an alternative ecological model, one in which our well-being is seen as interrelated and interdependent with the well-being of all other living things and earth processes.<sup>5</sup>

Religions, and especially Christianity in Western culture, have a central role in forming who we think we are and what we have the right to do. It is the claim of this author that an individualistic anthropology is presently supported in the West not only by Christianity but also by government and the contemporary economic system.<sup>6</sup> When these three major institutions—religion, government, and the economic system—present a united front, a “sacred canopy” is cast over a society, validating the behavior of its people. It is difficult to believe that science and technology alone can solve an ecological crisis supported by this triumvirate, for these institutions as presently constituted legitimate human beings continuing to feel, think, and act in ways that are basically contrary to the conservation and just distribution of the world’s resources.

#### NEOCLASSICAL AND ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

Neoclassical and ecological economics offer two dramatically different anthropologies, with different “house rules.” The first

model sees human beings on the planet as a collection of individuals drawn together to benefit each other by fully exploiting natural resources. The second model sees the planet as a community that survives and prospers only through the interdependence of all its parts, human and nonhuman. The first model rests on assumptions from the eighteenth century: it sees human beings as individuals with rights and responsibilities, and the world as a machine, a collection of individual parts that are only externally related to one another. The second model rests on assumptions from postmodern science: it sees human beings as conscious and radically dependent parts of a larger whole, and the world as an organism, internally related in all its parts.

*Both* are models, interpretations, of the world and our place in it: neither is a description. This point must be underscored because the first model seems “natural”—indeed, “inevitable” and “true”—to most middle-class Westerners, while the second model seems novel, perhaps even utopian or fanciful. In fact, both come from the assumptions of different historical periods; both are world-pictures built on these assumptions, and each vies for our agreement and loyalty.

We need to assess the “economy” of both models, their notions of the allocation of scarce resources to family members, to determine which view of the “good life” is better. In this essay, I suggest that the machine model is injurious to nature and to poor people, while the organic model is healthier for the planet and all its inhabitants.

The reason economics is so important, why it is a religious and ecological issue, is that it is not just a “matter of money”; rather, it is a matter of survival and flourishing. Economics is an issue of values. In making economic decisions, the “bottom line” is not the only consideration. Many other values come into play, from the health of a community to its recreational opportunities; from the beauty of other life-forms to our concern for their well-being; from a desire to see our children fed and clothed to a sense of responsibility for the welfare of future generations.

Contemporary neoclassicists generally deny that economics is about values.<sup>7</sup> But this denial is questionable. The key feature of market capitalism is the allocation of scarce resources by

means of decentralized markets: allocation occurs as the result of individual market transactions, each of which is guided by self-interest.<sup>8</sup> At the base of neoclassical economics is an anthropology: human beings are individuals motivated by self-interest. The value by which scarce resources are allocated, then, is the fulfillment of the self-interest of human beings. The assumption is that each will act to maximize his or her own interest, and by so doing will eventually benefit all—the so-called invisible hand of Adam Smith's classical theory.

But what of other values? Two key ones, if we have the economics of the entire planet in mind, are the just distribution of the earth's resources, and the capacity of the planet to sustain our use of its resources. However, these matters—distributive justice to the world's inhabitants, and the optimal scale of the human economy within the planet's economy—are considered "externalities" by neoclassical economics.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the issues of who benefits from an economic system and whether the planet can bear the system's burden are not part of neoclassical economics.

In sum, the worldview or basic assumption of neoclassical economics is surprisingly simple and straightforward: the crucial assumption is that human beings are self-interested individuals who, acting on this basis, will create a syndicate or corporation, even a global one, capable of benefiting all eventually. Hence, as long as the economy grows, individuals in a society will sooner or later participate in prosperity. These assumptions about human nature are scarcely value-neutral. They indicate a preference for a certain view of who we are and what the goal of human effort should be: the view of human nature is individualism and our goal is growth.

When we turn to the alternative ecological economic paradigm we see a different set of values. Ecological economics claims we cannot survive unless we acknowledge our profound dependence on one another and the earth. Human need is more basic than human greed: we are relational beings from the moment of our conception to our last breath. The well-being of the individual is inextricably connected to the well-being of the whole.

These two interpretations of who we are and where we fit in the world are almost opposites of each other. Neoclassical economics begins with the unconstrained allocation of resources to competing individuals, on the assumption that if everyone acts in this way, issues of fair distribution and sustainability will eventually work themselves out. Ecological economics begins with the health of the whole planet, on the assumption that only as it thrives now and in the future will its various parts, including human beings, thrive as well. In other words, ecological economics *begins* with sustainability and distributive justice, not with the allocation of resources among competing individuals. Before all else, the community must be able to survive (sustainability), which it can do only if all members have the use of resources (distributive justice). Then, within these parameters, the allocation of scarce resources among competing users can take place.

Ecological economics does not pretend to be value-free; its preference is evident—the well-being and sustainability of our household, planet Earth. Ecological economics is the management of a community's physical necessities for the benefit of all, a human enterprise that seeks to maximize the optimal functioning of the planet's gifts and services for all users. Ecological economics, then, is first of all a vision of how human beings *ought* to live on planet Earth in light of the perceived reality of *where* and *how* we live. We live in, with, and from the earth. This story of who we are is based on contemporary science, not on an eighteenth-century story about social reality.

NEOCLASSICAL OR ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS:  
WHICH IS GOOD FOR PLANET EARTH?

Can neoclassical economics as currently understood sustain the planet? In the neoclassical economic view the "world" is a machine; presumably, then, when some parts give out they can be replaced with substitutes. If, for instance, our main ecological problem is nonrenewable resources (oil, coal, minerals, etc.), then human ingenuity might well fill in the gaps when they occur. Since the earth is considered an "externality" by neo-

classical economics, then “good for the planet” can only mean good for human beings to use. Sustainability is not the major priority.

At the beginning of the new millennium, however, our planet faces more than the loss of nonrenewable resources. It also faces an accelerating loss of *renewable* resources, such as water, trees, fertile soil, clean air, fisheries, and biodiversity. If our planet is more like an organism than a machine, with all its parts interrelated and interdependent, then as its various parts lose vitality, it will, like any “body,” become sick to the point of not functioning any longer. Unable to sustain itself, it will die.

This is called the synergism of planetary operation. When the various members of an ecosystem are healthy, they work together to provide innumerable “free services” that none could provide alone, and that we take for granted: materials production (food, fisheries, timber, genetic resources, medicines), biological control of pests and diseases, habitat and refuge, water supply and regulation, waste recycling and pollution control, educational and scientific resources, recreation.<sup>10</sup> These services are essential to our survival and well-being; they can continue only if we sustain them. This “list” of services should be seen as a “web”: none of them can function alone; each of them depends on the others. These services are the “commons” that we hold in trust for future generations.

The most important services are not necessarily the most visible ones. For instance, in a forest it is not only the standing trees that are valuable, but also the fallen ones (the “nurse logs” on which new trees grow), the habitat the forest provides for birds and insects that pollinate crops and fight diseases, the plants that provide biodiversity for food and medicines, the forest canopy that breaks the force of winds, the roots that reduce soil erosion, and the photosynthesis of plants that helps stabilize the climate. The smallest providers—the insects, worms, spiders, fungi, algae, and bacteria—are critically important in creating a stable, sustainable home for humans and other creatures. If such a forest is clear-cut to harvest the trees, everything else goes as well. All these services disappear. A healthy ecosystem—complex and diverse in all its features, both large

and small—is resilient, like a well-functioning body. A simplified, degraded nature, supporting single-species crops in ruined soil with inadequate water and violent weather events, results in a diminished environment for human beings as well. “The bottom line is that for humans to be healthy and resilient, nature must be too.”<sup>11</sup>

As we have seen, nature becomes unhealthy gradually and in particular parts and places. But when particular aspects are degraded beyond a certain point, the destructive effects on the whole can be dramatic.

An excellent example of such negative synergism is global warming. I choose this example not only because it is among the top three planetary problems (the other two being loss of biodiversity and uncontrolled growth in human population and consumption), but also because it illustrates how these problems interact.

Global warming is the result of emissions from the burning of fossil fuels; this has occurred because of the size of the human population and also the high energy consumption of industrialized societies. Global warming affects not only human beings, but also plants and other animals. Since the weather is the largest and most sensitive system influencing the planet, its state is a barometer of the earth’s health.

Middle-class Westerners produce three to five times more of the carbon dioxide largely responsible for global warming than do people living in developing countries.<sup>12</sup> Automobiles are the single greatest producer of carbon dioxide emissions, but a consumer lifestyle in general is the culprit. While other countries such as China and India may equal or surpass the West in greenhouse gas emissions in the future, Westerners have been the preachers of consumerism as the good life. We have not only produced the vast majority of emissions to date, but we export the ideology of consumerism around the world as the heartbeat of every nation’s prosperity. Neoclassical economics, with its twin values of individual insatiability and economic growth, is the engine behind global warming.

It is the growing consensus among the world’s weather experts that by the year 2050 we can expect a 2.5°C increase in the worldwide temperature, and that this increase will be due

largely to human activity, especially the burning of fossil fuels.<sup>13</sup> The results are predicted to be devastating from a human point of view: desertification of the chief grain-producing lands, a growing scarcity of fresh water, loss of trees, flooding of coastal areas and islands, the spread of tropical diseases, an increase in violent weather events, a likely shortage of food, and so on. Global warming will change life as we know it and has already begun to do so. Through our consumer lifestyle we have triggered fearful, though still largely unknown, consequences for the most important and sensitive system within which we and everything else exist.

The prospect of global warming is not science fiction. According to projections made by our best scientists, the question is no longer "What if global warming comes?" but "How bad will it be?" At both the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio in 1992 and at the follow-up conferences since, the industrial countries agreed in principle to stabilize and eventually cut back carbon dioxide emissions. However, little if any practical progress has been made, in large part because the neoclassical economic worldview is so dominant. In countries like the United States, there has been little public discussion of the consequences of consumerism. *All* of us are collaborators in this silence. We enjoy the consumer lifestyle; in fact, most of us are addicted to it, and, like addicts, we cheerfully live in a state of denial. But we need to overcome our denial. The prospect of global warming should disturb our complacency. Unless we change our ways, the future will be very grim. Global warming is the canary in the mine, whose death is a clue that our lifestyle goes outside the planet's house rules.

#### CHRISTIANITY AND THE ECOLOGICAL ECONOMIC MODEL

One way to change our ways is to begin to think differently about economics. In metaphorical terms, ecological economics invites us to picture ourselves not as isolated individuals but as housemates. The ecological model claims that housemates must abide by three main rules: take only your share, clean up after yourselves, and keep the house in good repair for future occu-



pants. We do not own the house; we do not even rent it. It is loaned to us for our lifetime, with the proviso that we obey the above rules so that the house can feed, shelter, nurture, and delight those who move in after us. These rules are not laws that we can circumvent or disobey; they are the conditions of our harmonious coexistence, and they are constitutive of our happiness.

If we were to follow these rules, we would be living within a different vision of the good life, the abundant life, than the one that is current in our consumer culture and that is destroying the planet. We would begin to accept what ecological economist Robert Costanza calls our greatest calling:

Probably the most challenging task facing humanity today is the creation of a shared vision of a sustainable and desirable society, one that can provide permanent prosperity within the biophysical constraints of the real world in a way that is fair and equitable to all of humanity, to other species, and to future generations.<sup>14</sup>

Now, given these two economic worldviews—the neoclassical and the ecological—which should Christianity support? Presently, Christianity is supporting the neoclassical economic paradigm to the degree that it does not speak against it and side publicly with the ecological view. Does this evident indifference matter? Yes, it does, if one accepts the assumption of this essay that worldviews matter. While there is no direct connection between believing and acting, thinking and doing, there is an implicit, deeper, and more insidious one: when a worldview seems “natural” and “inevitable,” it becomes a secret source of our decisions and actions.

Moreover, a persuasive case can be made that there is an intrinsic connection between the ecological economic model and Christianity. Distributive justice and sustainability, as goals for planetary living, are pale reflections, but reflections nonetheless, of what Jesus meant by the kingdom of God.<sup>15</sup> Let us look at the vivid portrait of Jesus by New Testament scholar John Dominic Crossan.<sup>16</sup> “The open commensality [i.e., table] and radical egalitarianism of Jesus’ Kingdom of God are more terrifying than anything we have ever imagined, and even if we can never accept it, we should not explain it away as something

else.”<sup>17</sup> For Jesus, the kingdom of God was epitomized by *everyone* being invited to the table; the kingdom is radically egalitarian at the level of satisfying bodily needs. Crossan regards the Parable of the Feast as central to understanding what Jesus means by the kingdom of God. This is a shocking story, trespassing society’s boundaries of class, gender, status, and ethnicity—as its end result is inviting *all* to the feast. There are several versions of the story (Matt. 22:1–13; Luke 14:15–24; Gospel of Thomas, 64), but in each one a prominent person invites a number of other people to a banquet, only to have them decline the invitation. One chooses instead to survey a land purchase, another to try out some new oxen, a third to attend a wedding. The frustrated host then tells his servants to go out into the streets of the city and bring whomever they can find to dinner: the poor, the maimed, the blind, the lame, the good, and the bad (the list varies in the three versions). The shocking implication is that everyone—*anyone*—is invited to share in God’s bounty. As Crossan remarks, if beggars come to your door, you might give them food or even invite them into the kitchen for a meal, but you do not ask them to join the family in the dining room or invite them back on Saturday night for supper with your friends.<sup>18</sup> But that is exactly what happens in this story. The kingdom of God, according to this portrait of Jesus, is “more terrifying than anything we have imagined” because it demolishes all our carefully constructed boundaries between the worthy and the unworthy, and it does so at the most physical, bodily level.

For first-century Jews, the key boundary was purity laws: an observant Jewish man did not eat with the poor, with women, with the diseased, or with the “unrighteous.” For us, the critical barrier is economic laws: we are not called to sustainable and just sharing of resources with the poor, the disadvantaged, the “lazy.” To cross these barriers in both cultures is improper, not expected—in fact, shocking. And yet, in both cultures, the issue is the most basic bodily one: who is invited to share the food—in other words, who lives and who dies? In both cases, the answer is the same: everyone, regardless of status, is invited. This vision of God’s will for the world does not specifically

mention just, sustainable planetary living—but it is surely more in line with that worldview than it is with the blind satisfaction of individual consumer desires.

Unlike our first-century Mediterranean counterparts, North American middle-class Christians are not terrified by the unclean; but we are terrified by the poor. There are so many of them—billions! Surely we cannot be expected to share the planet's resources justly and sustainably with all of them. Yet the Jesus of the parable appears to disagree: he is not, it seems, interested so much in “religion,” including his own, as in human well-being, beginning with the body: feeding the hungry and healing the suffering. Moreover, his message, according to Crossan, had less to do with what he did for others than with what others might do for their neighbors:

The Kingdom of God was not, for Jesus, a divine monopoly exclusively bound to his own person. It began at the level of the body and appeared as a shared community of healing and eating—that is to say, of spiritual and physical resources available to each and all without distinctions, discrimination, or hierarchies. One entered the Kingdom as a way of life and anyone who could live it could bring it to others. It was not just words alone, or deeds alone, but both together as life-style.<sup>19</sup>

The body is the locus: how we treat needy bodies gives the clue to how a just society will be organized. It suggests that correct “table manners” are a sign of a just society, the kingdom of God. If one accepts this interpretation, then the “table” becomes not just the bread and wine of communion, but also the public meals of bread and fishes that one finds throughout Jesus' ministry.<sup>20</sup> At these events, all are invited to share in the food, whether it be meager or sumptuous. Were such an understanding of the Eucharist to infiltrate Christian churches today, it could be mind-changing—and maybe world-changing, too.

Is it also absurd, foolish, and utopian? Perhaps, but, as I have suggested, there appears to be a solid link, a degree of continuity, between this reconstruction of society—the kingdom of God—and what I have described as the ecological economic worldview. Perhaps just, sustainable planetary living is a foretaste, a glimmer, an inkling of the kingdom of God.

If this is the case, then for middle-class North American Christians it may well be that *sin* is refusing to acknowledge the link between the kingdom and the ecological economic worldview, explaining it away because of the consequences for our privileged lifestyle. Sustainability and the just distribution of resources are concerned with human and planetary well-being *for all*. This, I suggest, is the responsible interpretation of the Parable of the Feast for North American Christians today. By paying attention to those invited to the feast and those excluded, this interpretation demands that we look at the systemic structures separating the haves and the have-nots in our time. And it demands that we name these structures for what they are: evil. They are the collective forms of our “sin.” They are the institutions, laws, and international bodies of market capitalism (often aided by the silence of the church) that allow a few to get richer while most become poorer.

#### NEXT STEPS: A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

In order to dislodge the neoclassical economic worldview and Christianity’s complicity with it, three steps are needed.

The first step is to become conscious of neoclassical economics as a model—not a description—of how to allocate scarce resources. There are other ways to live, other ways to divide things up, other goals for human beings to pursue. “Economics” is always necessary, but not necessarily neoclassical economics: ecological economics is an alternative.

The second step is to suggest some visions of the good life that are not consumer-dominated, visions that are just and sustainable. The good life is not necessarily the consumer life; rather, it could include providing the basic necessities for all, universal medical care and education, opportunities for creativity and meaningful work, time for family and friends, green spaces in cities, and wilderness for other creatures. We need to ask what *really* makes people happy, and which of these visions are most just to the world’s inhabitants and most sustainable for the planet.

The third step is to rethink what a different worldview—the ecological economic one—would mean for the basic doctrines of Christianity: God and the world, Christ and salvation, human life and discipleship. While this last task is beyond the scope of this essay, I would like to end with a few brief comments about God and the world, because this is at the heart of who we think we are and what we should do. Since our interpretive context, the ecological economic model, is about the just and sustainable allocation of resources among all planetary users, the framework for speaking of God and the world becomes worldly well-being. To phrase it in terms of a gloss on Irenaeus of Lyons: “The glory of God is every creature fully alive.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it “worldly Christianity”: he said that God is neither a metaphysical abstraction nor the answer to gaps in our knowledge—God is neither in the sky nor on the fringes, but at “the center of the village,” in the midst of life, both its pains and its joys.<sup>21</sup> An ecological economic model means an earthly God, an incarnate God, an immanent God.

The general outline of this theology is basically different from the theology implied by the neoclassical model of economics. A “worldly Christianity” entails a movement toward the earth: from the otherworldly to this world; from above to below; from a distant, external God to a near, immanent God; from soul to body; from individualism to community; from mechanistic to organic thinking; from spiritual salvation to holistic well-being; from anthropocentrism to cosmocentrism. The ecological model means a shift not from God to the world, but from a distant God related externally to the world to an embodied God who is the source of the world’s life and fulfillment. The neoclassical economic model assumes that God, like the human being, is an individual—in fact, the superindividual who controls the world through laws of nature. This God is like a good mechanic who has produced a well-designed machine that operates efficiently. This God is present at the beginning (creation) and intervenes from time to time to influence personal and public history, but is otherwise absent from the world. An ecological theology, on the contrary, claims that God is radically present in the world, as close as the breath, the

joy, and the suffering of every creature. The two views of God and the world, then, are very different: in the one, God's power is evident in God's distant control of the world; in the other, God's glory is manifest in God's total self-giving to the world.

In closing, I will note that these two pictures of God and the world suggest two different answers to the questions of who we are and what we should do. In the first, we are individuals responsible to a transcendent God who rewards or punishes according to our merits and God's mercy. In the second, we are beings in community living in the presence of God who is the power and love in everything that exists. In the first, we should do what is fair to other individuals while taking care of our own well-being. In the second, we should do what is necessary to work with God to create a just and sustainable planet, for only in that way will all flourish. This is the great work of the twenty-first century. Never before have we had to think of everyone and everything all together. We now know that if we are to survive and if our planet is to flourish, we will do so as a whole or not at all. But we do not have to do this alone: "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it."<sup>22</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>In a special issue of *Dædalus* entitled "The Liberation of the Environment," the lead essay, by Jesse Ausubel, opens with the claim that the liberator of the environment will be human culture, whose "most powerful tools are science and technology." *Dædalus* 125 (3) (Summer 1996): 1. The tone throughout the essay as well as others in the issue is optimistic, as Ausubel notes in closing by quoting the epitaph inscribed on the U.S. National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C.: "To science, pilot of industry, conqueror of diseases, multiplier of the harvest, explorer of the universe, revealer of nature's laws, eternal guide to truth." *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>2</sup>Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (10 March 1967): 1203–1207.

<sup>3</sup>Marcus J. Borg describes this well: "A root image is a fundamental 'picture' of reality. Perhaps most often called a 'world-view,' it consists of our most taken-for-granted assumptions about what is possible. . . . Very importantly, a root image not only provides a model of reality, but also shapes our perception and our thinking, operating almost unconsciously within us as a dim background affecting all of our seeing and thinking. A root image thus functions as both

an image and a lens: it is a picture of reality which becomes a lens through which we see reality.” Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1994), 127.

<sup>4</sup>The literature on the neoclassical economic model and its alternative—what I am calling the ecological economic model—is large and growing. Some of the works I found most helpful are as follows: Lester R. Brown et al., *State of the World* annual reports (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984– ); Robert Costanza et al., *An Introduction to Ecological Economics* (Boca Raton, Fla.: St. Lucie Press, 1997); David A. Crocker and Toby Linden, eds., *Ethics of Consumption: The Good Life, Justice, and Global Stewardship* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998); Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future*, 2d ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994); Herman E. Daly, *Beyond Growth: The Economics of Sustainable Development* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); Neva R. Goodwin, Frank Ackerman, and David Kirion, eds., *The Consumer Society* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1997); Steven C. Hackett, *Environmental and Natural Resources Economics: Theory, Policy and the Sustainable Society* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1998); Larry L. Rasmussen, *Earth Community Earth Ethics* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996); Joerg Rieger, ed., *Liberating the Future: God, Mammon, and Theology* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998); United Nations, *Human Development Report*, issued annually (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990– ); Michael Zweig, ed., *Religion and Economic Justice* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

<sup>5</sup>By the oldest and deepest anthropology, I am referring to what George Hendry calls the “cosmological” and “political” understandings of God and the world rather than the more recent and narrow “psychological” view. George Stuart Hendry, *Theology of Nature* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), chap. 1. The latter, which supports individualism, has arisen in the last several hundred years; but the other two, one emphasizing the whole creation and the other the community of all human beings, are grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures as well as in the New Testament and early theology (especially Irenaeus and Augustine).

<sup>6</sup>The evidence supporting this claim would take considerable space to lay out. Suffice it to say here that both the born-again and New Age versions of popular religion do so; the Declaration of Independence’s “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” does; and Adam Smith’s description of the human being as a creature of insatiable greed makes a significant contribution. All focus on the rights, desires, and needs of individuals.

<sup>7</sup>Milton Friedman’s distinction between “positive” and “normative” economics is typical: “Normative economics is speculative and personal, a matter of values and preferences that are beyond science. Economics as a science, as a tool for understanding and prediction, must be based solely on positive economics which ‘is in principle independent of any particular ethical position or normative judgments.’” Milton Friedman, *Essays in Positive Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 4.

<sup>8</sup>Hackett, *Environmental and Natural Resources Economics*, 33.

<sup>9</sup>See Daly, *Beyond Growth*, 50ff.

<sup>10</sup>Janet N. Abramowitz, "Valuing Nature's Services," *State of the World 1997*, ed. Lester R. Brown et al. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977).

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>12</sup>Bangladesh, a country that may well be flooded through global warming, produces a yearly average of 183 kg of carbon dioxide per capita versus an average of 11,389 kg per capita in the industrialized countries. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1998* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 57.

<sup>13</sup>*Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: Second Assessment—Climate Change 1995*, published by the world Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environmental Programme. It should be noted that this report was the consensus of 2,500 weather scientists and was published without a dissenting minority report. Since that time, its results have been confirmed by recent studies.

<sup>14</sup>Costanza et al., *An Introduction to Ecological Economics*, 179.

<sup>15</sup>If all contemporary understandings of Christ should be grounded in historical judgments about Jesus of Nazareth—if there should be continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith—then we need to see if the ecological economic context is an appropriate one for interpreting Christ and Christian discipleship for the twenty-first century. I am not suggesting that a Christian's faith is based on the state of historical Jesus research at any particular time; nonetheless, Christianity has always claimed continuity with its founder. Recent research, which has moved out of narrow church contexts of interpretation to sociological, cultural, and political ones of first-century Mediterranean society, has reached a remarkable consensus on some broad outlines of Jesus' life: most notably, that he was a social revolutionary opposed to the structures of domination and domestication of his day. This consensus is expressed in different ways by New Testament scholars such as E. P. Sanders, Burton Mack, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, and Richard Horsley. For an overview of the scholarship, see Borg, *Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship*.

<sup>16</sup>John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarpersSanFrancisco, 1994).

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 73–74.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 113–114.

<sup>20</sup>See *ibid.*, 79–81.

<sup>21</sup>See letter of 30 April 1944 in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: Collins, 1960), 90ff.

<sup>22</sup>Psalm 24:1.