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AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH
TO AUGUSTINE'S TEACHINGS ON CREATION
IN THE LIGHT OF *LAUDATO SI'*

(Dissertatio ad Doctoratum)

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THESIS ABSTRACT

An Ecological Approach to Augustine's Teachings on Creation in the Light of *Laudato Si'*

The impetus for this study is connected to three factors: the first-hand experience of the devastating effects of climate change, the publication of *Laudato Si'*, and the desire to make a nexus of Augustine's doctrine on creation and *Laudato Si'*. It builds on the hypothesis that more than the existential, political, and social questions, there are much deeper metaphysical and theological roots of the ecological crisis of our time. To achieve this goal, the study employs an undoubtedly important figure in the doctrinal development of the Church and Western theology in general—Augustine of Hippo. It looks into why Augustine, despite his importance in Western theology, is not a popular figure in current theological discussions on ecological issues. It considers the main questions raised by Augustine's contemporary critics who claim to have ecological concerns and see their arguments in the light of Augustine's doctrine of creation and the Trinity. It proceeds to analyze Augustine's doctrine of the created world under a 'new light' with certain ecological sensitivity inspired by *Laudato Si'* that brings about a new way of understanding Augustine. The wealth of the Augustinian thought on creation and the Trinity helps retrieve positive values or thoughts that can be of significant help in correcting or transforming modern worldviews which could be potentially dangerous and destructive to the environment. The investigation culminates with a nexus of Augustine's doctrine on creation and *Laudato Si'*. The juxta-positional analysis of Augustine's thought on creation and the important ecological and theological themes developed by the encyclical generates a rich and unique synthesis of insight which combines both the classical and the contemporary reflections on creation and ecology. Such insight is full of suggestions and basic principles that must not be disregarded, if ecology must be situated within the correct Christian parameters, and to avoid all forms of 'perverted ecology' tainted with concealed pantheism or panentheism—a counter-cultural activism or simply a passing fashion. The blending of the 'old' and the 'new' perspectives gives rise to a novel worldview and a new freshness which can help promote the so-called 'ecological conversion' in the modern times as we endeavor to address the more pressing problem of today's ecology.

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Abbreviations of the Works of St. Augustine (Augustinus Lexikon)

<i>adn. Iob.</i>	<i>Adnotationes in Iob</i> (Annotations on Job).
<i>agon.</i>	<i>De agone Cristiano</i> (The Christian Combat).
<i>ciu.</i>	<i>De ciuitate Dei</i> (The City of God).
<i>conf.</i>	<i>Confessionum</i> (The Confessions).
<i>c. Adim.</i>	<i>Contra Adimantum Manichaei discipulum</i> (Against Adimantus the Manichaean Disciple).
<i>c. Faust.</i>	<i>Contra Faustum Manichaeum</i> (Against Faustus the Manichaean).
<i>c. Fort.</i>	<i>Contra Fortunatum Manichaeum</i> (Against Fortunatus the Manichaean).
<i>c. Iul. imp.</i>	<i>Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum</i> (Against Julian, an Unfinished Work).
<i>c. Prisc.</i>	<i>Contra Priscillianistas et origenistas</i> (Against the Priscillianists and Origenists).
<i>doctr. chr.</i>	<i>De Doctrina Christiana</i> (On Christian Doctrine).
<i>en. Ps.</i>	<i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> (Expositions on the Psalms).
<i>ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i> (The Letters).
<i>Gn. adu. Man.</i>	<i>De Genesi adversus Manicheos</i> (Commentary on Genesis against the Manicheans).
<i>Gn. litt.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad Litteram</i> (Literal Meaning of Genesis).
<i>Gn. litt. inp.</i>	<i>De Genesi ad Litteram imperfectus</i> (Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis).
<i>Io. eu. tr.</i>	<i>In Iohannis Euangelium Tractatus</i> (Tractates on the Gospel of John).
<i>op. mon.</i>	<i>De opere monachorum</i> (On the Work of the Monks).
<i>ord.</i>	<i>De Ordine</i> (On Order).
<i>s.</i>	<i>Sermones</i> (Sermons).
<i>s. dom. m.</i>	<i>De sermone domini in monte</i> (On the Sermon on the Mount).
<i>trin.</i>	<i>De Trinitate</i> (The Trinity).
<i>uera rel.</i>	<i>De Vera Religione</i> (The True Religion).

Chapter 1

General Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

‘What is happening to our beautiful land?’ ... asked the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in its pastoral letter published in 1988 as the country faces an unprecedented ecological devastation¹.

The Philippines is an archipelago of about seven thousand six hundred islands. It is situated in one of the most vulnerable areas of the earth: it is along the typhoon belt of the Asia-Pacific region. An average of twenty tropical storms hit the country every year. A deadly storm named Thelma had killed around 5,100 in 1991.¹ And in recent years those storms had increasingly devastating effects. Four of the country’s ten most catastrophic storms have occurred in the past decade, and the most disastrous by far is the so-called Typhoon Haiyan which battered the country in 2013. Sustained winds speed reached nearly two hundred miles per hour, with authorities estimating at least ten thousand (10,000) dead and with more than a thousand missing and had displaced over four million people.² The following year, on the 13th of July 2014, another strong typhoon named Rammasun made a devastating visit in the country. Landslides, flash floods, strong rains and winds have put the Philippines in Red Alert status. The typhoon had caused a major power blackout within the capital in Metro Manila as it ruined at least ninety percent of the electric poles and lines.³ And recently on the 1st of November of 2020, another super typhoon named Goni entered the country and blasted into the eastern island province of Catanduanes at dawn from the Pacific with sustained winds of 225 kilometers (140 miles) per hour and gusts of 280 kph (174 mph), killing at least 10 people and triggering volcanic mudflows that engulfed about 150 houses.⁴

1 Sophie Brown (2013, November 11). *The Philippines Is the Most Storm-Exposed Country on Earth* [Blog Post]. Retrieve from <https://world.time.com/2013/11/11/the-philippines-is-the-most-storm-exposed-country-on-earth/#:~:text=How%20many%20storms%20on%20average%20strike%20the%20Philippines,was%201993%2C%20when%2019%20cyclones%20pummeled%20the%20coastline.>

2 Samantha Page, “Philippines Braces for Climate Change, and the Aid Community Adapts”, *Think-Progress* (20 March 2015), Web 21 March 2015.

3 Telling Meaningful Stories (July 2014). *10 Worst Typhoons that Went Down in Philippine History* [Blog Post]. Retrieve from <https://www.m2comms.com/blog/worst-typhoons-philippine-history/>.

4 Cf. Jim Gomez and Joael Calupitan (2020, November 1). *Powerful typhoon lashes Philippines, killing at least 10* [Blog Post]. Retrieve from <https://phys.org/news/2020-11-super-typhoon-batters-philippines-million.html>.

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Typhoons have impacted greatly the life-situation in the Philippines. We have almost too many to name. Yet the latest figures show that typhoons are becoming stronger and more violent in recent years, surpassing even the estimated limit of the ‘strongest level’ from super to mega typhoons. Sea levels around the archipelago are expected to rise at a rate three times greater than the world average in coming decades, increasingly submerging smaller Islands.⁵ Climate related disasters can be felt in almost all parts of the country. The devastating effects of climate change are literally killing the people of this small and disaster-prone country. The threat of climate change is something that cannot anymore be denied especially if one lives in one of the most eco-vulnerable places on earth like the Philippines.

As early as 1988, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, through its pastoral letter, warned that ‘the attack on the natural world which benefits very few Filipinos is rapidly whittling away at the very base of our living world and endangering its fruitfulness for future generations’.⁶ The Filipino bishops were specifically referring to the country’s extraordinarily rich coral reefs system which was threatened by illegal fishing methods and destructive practices. Coral reefs are often considered to be the ocean’s analogy to tropical rain forests, remarkably biodiverse and supplying critical habitat for an entire food chain upon which, ultimately many coastal societies depend. Indeed, the people in this country are living witnesses of the seriousness of climate change, the consequence of man’s abuse of the environment, the threat it posed to our ecosystem, and the potential humanitarian crisis it could bring to people in every country.

Thankfully however, the reality of climate change is gradually gaining recognition around the world. More and more people begin to agree that environmental devastation is a serious matter and that steps must be taken to slow it down. Leaders of different nations acknowledge that any effort without communal cooperation and action could not bear substantial result. In 2015, the United Nations held a climate change conference (COP 21 or CMP 11) in Paris, France, from the 30th of November to the 12th of December. The conference negotiated the so-called Paris Agreement—a global agreement on the reduction of climate change, the text of which represented a consensus of the representatives of the one hundred ninety-six parties attending it. On the 22nd of April 2016 (Earth Day), one hundred seventy-four countries signed the agreement in New York, and began adopting it within their own legal systems.⁷

5 Cf. Haiyan et al., “How is climate Change Affecting the Philippines?” The Climate Reality Project (19 January 2016), Web. 25, January 2016.

6 The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, *A Pastoral Letter on Ecology: What is happening to our beautiful land* (Manila: Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, 29 January 1988), 1

7 Cf. Pamela Falk, “U.S. joins 174 nations to sign hard-won climate pact”, *CBSNEWS* (22

And yet, despite this unified effort of world leaders, the solution to the crisis does not seem readily achievable. In fact, even the choice on how to implement the resolutions is open to much disagreement in many countries. Debates over the economic and technological impacts of the proposed solutions to the climate crisis often led to political impasse which derails the implementation of the conceived solutions. In fact, the 25th session of the conference of the parties to the United Nations framework convention on Climate Change (COP 25) held on December 2 to 15, 2019 here in Madrid, ‘ended with disappointments on many fronts, highlighting the growing gap between the stronger action needed to stem climate disaster and the sluggish responses of most major economies.’⁸

There is no doubt that scientific and technological knowledge, as well as the economic considerations will be key in the actual solutions. However, a closer look into the current ecological dilemma could lead one to suspect that there seem to be more fundamental issues underlying this problem and its roots are much deeper than those that can easily be seen from the scientific, political, social, and the economic level.

Long before the threat of climate change seeped into the social consciousness of civil world leaders, initiatives to awaken consciences on environmental issues had already begun with private individuals like Rachel Carson who published a book “Silent Spring” in 1960 that stirred public concern over the adverse environmental effects caused by the indiscriminate use of pesticides in modern farming practices.⁹ In 1966, the historian Lynn White Jr. made a controversial intervention in which he blamed Christianity “for the devastation of nature in which the West has been engaged for centuries.”¹⁰ These and many others have continued to raise the alarm of the consequences of human detachment from the ecological systems that sustain us. As it happened to the prophets of old and many reformers in human history, most of them were ridiculed and rejected; some were subjected to physical threats and even killed, yet most have been proved to be right in the years that followed.

In the heart of the Catholic Church itself, there were already initiatives to stir consciences by no less than the popes themselves. As early as 1971, Pope Paul VI already raised concern of the ‘ill-considered exploitation of nature’ so that humanity ‘runs the

April 2016), retrieved on 9 November 2016.

8 The Center for Climate and Energy Solution (C2ES), *Outcomes of the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Madrid* (Arlington: The Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, 2-15 December 2019), 1.

9 Cf. R. Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

10 Ernest L. Fortin, “The Bible Made Me Do it; Christianity, Science, and the Environment”, *The Review of Politics* 57, no.2 (1995), 207.

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risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of its degradation'.¹¹ John Paul II became increasingly concerned about the issue that in his first Encyclical, he warned about the problem of consumerism and man's failure 'to look at natural environment far more than what serves for immediate use and consumption'.¹² He was the first one among the popes who called for 'ecological conversion'.¹³ Benedict XVI warned of the evil of relativism and abuse of freedom and pointed out that creation is harmed 'where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we used it for ourselves alone'.¹⁴ But for a social issue to gain prominence in the Church, it requires a document of the standing of an encyclical which is regarded as an instrument of the ordinary Magisterium containing the authoritative teaching of the Vicar of Christ. In terms of authority in matters of faith and morals, an encyclical is the second most important papal documents (next only to an Apostolic Constitution), exhorting the faithful on a doctrinal issue.

Finally, on the 24th of May 2015, Pope Francis released his second encyclical called *Laudato Si'*¹⁵ with the subtitle 'On Care for Our Common Home'. The encyclical, while not really straying away from the conventional dogmatic or spiritual themes, has opened itself to some of the latest scientific information available and deals with the ecological concerns that beset humanity in the modern times. Though it seems to be itself overdue as a papal encyclical, it is an important contribution of the Church in a critical area of human consternation. Its publication marks a very timely, important, and welcome turning point in the global conversation on the future of our climate and environment. While it seemed to be timed to encourage the negotiations leading up to the Paris Climate Agreement, its contribution goes beyond advocacy. It covers a wide range of issues spanning from climate change to creation theology and from favelas to coral reefs. The sheer number of questions dealt with in the encyclical could make one a bit apprehensive to wade deeper into the next issue despite its easy language and style. *Laudato Si'* is to date the longest of all papal encyclicals.

11 Pope Paul VI, Apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, (14 May 1971), 21: AAS63 (1971), 416-417.

12 John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979), 287.

13 Cf. John Paul II, Catechesis (17 January 2011), 4: *Insegnamenti* 41/1 (2011), 179. Prof. Jaime Tatay of Comillas Pontifical University noted that even if the phrase 'ecological conversion' is generally ascribed to Pope John Paul II who effectively deepened its meaning in the ecological context, the expression has already been used by the bishops of Lombardy (1988), Balearic Islands (1990), United States (1991), Brazil (1992), Germany (1997), and Czech Republic (2000). Cf. Jaime Tatay Nieto, SJ, *De la «cuestión social» a la «cuestión socio-ambiental» en Cuidar de la Tierra, cuidar de los pobres, Laudato si' desde la teología y con la ciencia*, ed. por Enrique Sanz Giménez-Rico, 2^a Edición (España: Sal Terrae, 2019), p. 182.

14 Benedict XVI, address to the clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone (6 August 2008): AAS 100 (2018), 634.

15 The title which translates "Praise Be to You" is derived from St. Francis of Assisi's 13th-century "Canticle of the Sun", which reminds us "that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life".

Developed around the concept of integral ecology, *Laudato Si'* squares up to the current problem of consumerism and irresponsible development, laments environmental degradation **and** global warming, and calls all people of the world to take “swift and unified global action”.¹⁶ Pope Francis hinted that the issue on ecological crisis ‘cannot be **approached piecemeal**’; **it must take into consideration deeper and transcendental questions like “what is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?”** And **“unless we struggle with these deeper issues our concern for ecology will not produce significant results”**.¹⁷ And based on the conviction that “change is impossible without motivation and a process of education”, he invites everyone to contribute in the so-called ‘ecological education’ that may lead to the so-called ‘ecological conversion’.¹⁸

This thesis is an effort to respond to the call of *Laudato Si'* to promote ecological sensitivity especially among educators in the ambit of philosophy and theology. It will venture into the metaphysical and theological roots of the ecological crisis of our time. It builds on the hypothesis that more than the existential and social questions put forward by Pope Francis in the encyclical, there are much deeper metaphysical and even theological roots of the ecological crisis of our time. Part of the intention of this study is to attempt to group together in a much simpler and accessible presentation the main themes and ideas of the groundbreaking encyclical of Pope Francis emphasizing on the theological dimension.

Behind the many solutions offered by world leaders in the political arena in solving environmental crisis, are sets of assumptions and preconceived ideas that are often termed as worldviews. The way people evaluate varieties of technical solutions and the moral consideration of their implementation are certainly conditioned by the way they look at the world and reality in general. To influence an outlook of the world is to influence the way people would handle crisis of whatever form and create solutions. And it can be safely said that many worldviews are influenced by some form of philosophical, religious, or even theological convictions. Not surprisingly then even beyond the Catholic religious circle, we find some of the most powerful religious leaders in the world taking the initiative to discuss within their own religious communities current and important ecological issues.

16 Jim Yardley and Laurie Goodstein, “Pope Francis, in Sweeping Encyclical, Calls for Swift Action on Climate Change”, *The New York Times* (18 June 2015), A6.

17 Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, (4 September 2015), 160: AAS 107 (2015), 911.

18 *Ibid.*, § 15, 213, 216-221.

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In Western theology, one of the most important figures is Augustine of Hippo (354-430). It is general knowledge though that Augustine exercised an enormous influence on the Christian tradition in the Western world that it would seem difficult to understand Western theology itself without somehow making some reference to Augustine. Scholasticism of the middle ages was almost inconceivable apart from his doctrines. Up to the contemporary times, it is almost impossible not to find a reference of him in catechesis, papal encyclicals, or in any important pastoral or theological discourse. To this day, Augustine's writings continue to mold the minds and hearts of many theologians, pastors, and laymen and he is certainly one of the central figures among the Church Fathers who continue to influence modern thoughts and worldviews. Yet, surprisingly, in current theological discussions on ecological issues, Augustine is not a favorite authority. Among contemporary theologians with strong ecological inclinations, it seems that he is "not a name of good omen", as Rowan Williams observed.¹⁹ In fact, *Laudato Si'*, despite its attempt to use and adhere to the Church's traditional doctrine in tackling the current ecological crisis, has not made a single quote or reference to Augustine. This ecological encyclical stands in stark contrast with Pope Benedict's first encyclical entitled: *Deus Caritas Est* (December 5, 2005) which bears a great deal of Augustinian citations.

After the publication of *Laudato Si'*, many efforts and studies have been devoted to ecology from different points of view.²⁰ Yet noticeably, references to Augustine are scarce and often used only as a pretext to deal with other issues related to environment or ecology.²¹ It seems that some contemporary critics of Augustine who viewed him to have Platonic orientation and prioritizing Greek philosophy over Scriptures may have

19 Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 60.

20 In Comillas University in Madrid, Spain, where this research work is being done, a group of professors of the Faculty of Theology, and professors and collaborators of the Faculty of Higher School of Engineering (ICAI) collaborated to produce a book entitled "Cuidar de la Tierra, cuidar de los pobres: *Laudato si'* desde la teología y con la ciencia" (To care for the Earth, to care for the poor: *Laudato si'* from theology and with science) which attempts bring to the readers their knowledge and reflections, product of their daily, careful, and rigorous reading of the recent encyclical of Pope Francis on the care of the common home. Cf. Enrique Sanz Giménez-Rico (ed.), *Cuidar de la Tierra, cuidar de los pobres: Laudato si', desde la teología y con la ciencia*, 2^a Edición (Madrid: Sal Terrae, 2019).

21 Cf. J. Lyndon, Joaquín García y Roberto Jaramillo, *Ecoteología. Una perspectiva desde San Agustín. Actas del IV Simposio sobre la relectura del pensamiento de San Agustín desde América Latina* (São Paulo, 23-28 de enero 1995), México: OALA, 1996. M. E. Sacchi, "Ecología y cristianismo", en *Ars Brevis* 4 (1998), 247-270. As its title denotes, this article is a general study which does not really delve into the details of the Augustinian thought. In this rather generic article, Augustine is cited only for the purpose of endorsing a doctrine of the Catholic Church indicating that the world was created from nothing by a Triune God. It does not, in anyway, present a structured reflection on the Augustinian thought related to ecology; instead, the authors used the Augustinian doctrine to back up various points of the Church's doctrine on creation, rather than on ecology.

a role in this situation. Apparently, a large contingent of modern scholars would view Augustine's doctrine on creation in a negative light. Some may have portrayed Augustine to have conceived a monistic view of God who, being pure will and power, has nothing positive to do with a fallen material world. This is reflected in Colin Gunton's commentary: "In Augustine's theology of creation...the Christological element plays little substantive role, and the pneumatological even less. The result is that the way is laid open for a conception of creation as the outcome of arbitrary will of the Father..."²²

If this interpretation of Augustine's doctrine of creation is right, then along with some trends of modern worldviews, one is led to treat creation and its material components to be unworthy of too much attention. All efforts must be directed instead to emulating a God who is 'pure spirit', and the material world should only be used as tool to attend this end. Man must not worry about his own corporeal conditions nor the physical world around him because his fundamental vocation must be oriented towards the wellbeing of his spiritual soul. If this type of worldview is championed by an influential figure and father of the Church at that, then it can indeed easily form part of the foundation for the subsequent development of worldviews that may justify the indifference of many people towards the environment or their stoical attitude to the current ecological problems which beleaguers the world today.

One however, could challenge this view. Does such an interpretation of Augustine's notion of God and the world do justice to what he actual thought and wrote? If one takes a deeper reading of Augustine's key writings about the Trinity and his commentaries of Genesis 1-2, while taking into account the fundamental and theological tenets of *Laudato Si'*, one would be surprised to see an entirely different view than those interpretations which some of Augustine's modern critics have attributed to him. In fact, even if one reads Augustine with very specific questions in mind arising from the modern challenges put forward by the encyclical and new scientific knowledge rooted in ecology, still there seem to be some positive ideas and attitudes which can be extracted and use in modern ecological discussions. His rich vision of God, his trinitarian vision of the world, and how God is related to the created world is fascinating. How beautifully Augustine defended the goodness of creation precisely because he conceived God as trinity and how creation reflects these vestiges of the Trinity are concepts worthy of a deeper and serious investigation.

Indeed, an impartial reading of the writings of Augustine would introduce one into a wide array of substantial and indisputable doctrines that can enlighten the path

22 Colin Gunton, *The One the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 54.

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towards a true and well-informed Christian ecology. For Augustine, creation should always be viewed in reference to the triune God, the eternal plan of the Creator, the special role of man in the universe, the relationship among creatures, and the final destiny of the whole universe. In the thoughts of the Bishop of Hippo, all these concepts are interconnected and interrelated. Therefore, regardless of the interpretations that can be made of the thought of Augustine, his writings yield prolific doctrines and practical suggestions that must not be disregarded if ecology must be practiced and kept within the correct Christian parameters. This research intends to present in a more systematic way some of the main questions raised by contemporary theologians who claim to have ecological concerns and see their arguments in the light of Augustine's doctrine of creation. We compare their views to what Augustine actually said in his writings.

Since the Augustinian thought touches on the essential and basic principles of Christian ecology, it is conceived in this study that his doctrines would still be of great value for today's ecological concerns and discussions. While it seems to be anachronistic to apply the practical criteria of current ecology to the thought of Augustine, or to pretend to find in the writings of the Bishop of Hippo reflections on environmental pollution, global warming, or the extinction of species, Augustine's thinking however is so rich that it can be a great source of essential and indisputable doctrines that should guide the praxis of a true Christian ecology. For this reason, it is the principal aim of this study, to come up with a nexus of Augustine's doctrine on Creation and *Laudato Si'* and comment on those points where the thought of the Pontiff could have been augmented and deepened by the ideas of Augustine while on the other hand, the papal document will enable us to see and appreciate the value and the relevance of the Augustinian worldview on creation in the light of the contemporary ecological concerns and social doctrines highlighted by the encyclical. We contend that in terms of the fundamental ecological doctrines, Augustine's doctrine of creation and *Laudato Si'* have many things in common and putting them side by side will generate a novel worldview with broad connotative context and extensive projection, as it echoes a theological thought with long historical roots that remains to be valid and effective in the present time. With this at the backdrop, a specific methodology and scope of the study will be adopted.

1.2. Methodology, Scope, and limits of the Study

This study would venture into the possibility of 're-reading' anew Augustine in his teaching on creation based primarily on his key writings about the Trinity and his

commentaries on Genesis 1-2, while taking into account the principal teachings and concerns put forward by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*. The chosen title “An Ecological Approach to Augustine’s Teachings on Creation in the Light of *Laudato Si'*” attempts to capture the ‘blueprint’ of the study and signals the course of the investigation proceedings. The words ‘Ecological Approach’ refer to the new endeavor to analyze Augustine’s doctrine of the created world with a certain ecological sensitivity inspired by Pope Francis in his second encyclical. While this study tries to be as faithful as possible to the original thoughts of Augustine on creation, it intends to see it in a ‘new lens’, conditioned by the ecological concerns and the social, moral, and theological teachings emphasized by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*. St. Thomas of Aquinas writes in his *Summa Theologiae* that *quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*—whatever is perceived of something, is received according to the condition of the receiver.²³ Consistent with this Thomistic maxim, the study recognizes the existence of certain subjective interests on the part of the researcher but also stresses the conviction that the subjective dimension may not necessarily compromise the objectivity of the study, provided that careful efforts must be undertaken to preserve the original thoughts and teachings of Augustine. It is therefore envisioned in this study that the ‘ecological sensitivity’ fostered by *Laudato Si'* may shed a ‘new light’ that can bring about a new way of understanding Augustine’s doctrine on creation, making it more useful and relevant to our time, and the latter may in turn strengthen the doctrinal foundation of the former with its long historical tradition as it is linked to Augustine, who is considered to be one of the most influential fathers and doctors of the Western Church.

While this study was initially impelled by certain curiosity of the underlying reason that led to the absence of Augustinian citation in *Laudato Si'*, it will not seek direct answers to this question. Instead, the investigation will focus on how modern critics interpret Augustine’s writing on creation and the Trinity that could have contributed to pushing Augustine to the sidelines in current ecological discussions. Then, an alternative interpretation of Augustine’s doctrine may be offered that can shed positive light on classical doctrines which can help promote the so-called ‘ecological conversion’ in the modern times. Moreover, this study will also deal directly with the encyclical itself, by trying to make an overview of *Laudato Si'* and group together in a much simpler and accessible presentation the main themes and ideas of Pope Francis giving more emphasis on his theological and ecological thoughts. Finally, a comparative presentation will be made of Augustine’s doctrine on creation and the theological emphasis and ecological concerns of *Laudato Si'* by putting them side by side in a nexus of thoughts. This is in view of the possibility that new insights may be generated; insights

23 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 75, a. 5; 3a, q. 5. In the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 12, a.

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with long historical significance as it is linked to a 5th century Father of the Church yet also very much relevant to our time as they also relate to the current thoughts and concerns highlighted by the encyclical.

One of the obvious questions facing this study is how to put a ‘logical bridge’ between Augustine’s doctrine of creation written in the fourth and fifth centuries and the contemporary ecological issues highlighted in *Laudato Si’*. Clearly, the big theoretical question one struggles to answer in this study is how to find an ecological significance or relevance from a theologian so far removed from our own time? Is there no real danger of anachronism in this regard? Evidently, Augustine did not think in contemporary ecological categories when he wrote his reflections on creation the way Pope Francis does when he employs the Church’s moral and theological doctrines to current ecological problems that must be faced today; nor can we easily say that the people of today think in theological and philosophical categories the way thinkers and theologians of the fourth or the fifth century did.

At first glance, this problem seems to be insurmountable, but a deeper reflection may show that it can be answered. First, we need to acknowledge that some modern critics of Augustine have, at least implicitly, blamed his doctrine for the undesirable effects it produced to the subsequent negative worldviews. If these ecological and religious critics of classical theology can attribute, at least indirectly, the negative impact of doctrines that subsequently influenced political, moral, technological and scientific developments, then it can be said that the contrary is also of equal possibility; that is to say that some positive influence or lessons can also be learned as well from classical thoughts. This means that by ‘re-reading’ an influential figure like Augustine, there is a big chance of retrieving positive values or thoughts that can be of significant help in correcting or transforming modern worldviews which are deemed to be potentially dangerous and destructive to the environment.

Obviously, it is not right to just ‘take up’ Augustine’s doctrine of God and the world from his time and apply it in the modern context. Indeed, there is no easy one-to-one correlation of concepts and terminologies. This study will try to examine how Augustine understood certain key themes employed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si’* and consider these themes through a close, detailed, and critical analysis of his writings on the Trinity and creation. To preserve the objectivity of the investigation, the preferred approach is to read Augustine’s work *per se* and understand what he teaches about God and creation. While the help of some Augustinian scholars will certainly be employed, this research will not go as far as to engage the debates within August-

tinian scholarship in detail. The favored procedure is to let Augustine speak through his writings. Quotations shall be made directly from the original works of Augustine by putting the original Latin text in the footnotes and by integrating into the corpus the generally accepted English translations of the text, mainly from “The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century” (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002) and from the “Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers”, a series edited by Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). Only after coming up with a systematic understanding of his doctrines from his own words that we would then see it anew in the light of the doctrinal themes and concerns of *Laudato Si*’, drawing some concluding remarks from the correlation that may bring to light new perspectives of God, human beings, the world, and ecology more relevant to the worldview and language of our time.

Finally, it is not the aim of this study to formulate ready-made ethical or moral prescriptions to be applied intending to solve specific ecological problems of today. Rather, it will attempt to describe the religious worldview Augustine employed to account for the goodness of creation and the moral and theological language he used and compare them to the doctrinal highlights and ecological concerns of *Laudato Si*’. It seeks to show the practical significance of the Augustinian doctrines of the Trinity and creation in providing Christian doctrines with moral guidelines more relevant to the pressing contemporary ecological issues. Furthermore, it will attempt to translate abstract theological and philosophical concepts into simpler terms that can easily be adapted for teaching purposes. Although the study itself has a value that could stand on its own, it adds more benefit if those profound concepts unveiled in the study would be digested into simple terms in such a way that the fruits of the study will have contemporary relevance and can easily be taught to every ordinary student of our time.

1.3. Structure of the Study

In view of the planned investigation and goals presented above, a certain structure of the study is employed.

Chapter 1 consists of the “General Introduction” which incorporates the background of the study, its significance, the problem, and the hypothesis that give stimulus for a scientific theological investigation. As already mentioned above, one of the motivating factors of this study is the firsthand experience of the precarious state of the environment especially in places like the Philippines and the current ecological concerns that engross the world. The reality of climate change is something that one

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cannot anymore deny and people around the globe begin to agree that environmental devastation is a serious matter and that steps must be taken to slow it down. But this effort could not bear substantial result if communal cooperation and action amongst people is not achieved. It is presumed however that this communal cooperation cannot be achieved only through scientific information about the reality of climate change, or by employing the latest scientific technology, but also by effectively changing certain worldviews through sound education and elevating environmental awareness in the level of the transcendental values which give ecological ethics its deepest meaning.

Chapter 2 bears the title “Augustine’s Teachings on Creation.” It will deal with the theme on Augustine’s doctrine on creation and his modern critics. In this chapter, we investigate how some contemporary critics interpret Augustine’s doctrines on creation and the Trinity which may have contributed to pushing Augustine to the sidelines in contemporary issues related to ecology. We will present the more important and controversial themes raised by his critics like the problem of dualism, Neoplatonic orientation, Trinity and modalism, and the question of dominion and hierarchy. While it will not engage in a point-by-point rebuttal or debate on the doctrinal issues in question, nor argue directly against the possible misreading of Augustine’s scheme by some contemporary theologians who have strong ecological concern, this chapter offers an alternative interpretation of Augustine’s doctrine that may shed positive light on classical doctrines which can help promote the so-called ‘ecological conversion’ in the modern times. We will analyze especially those issues raised by Augustine’s critics and see if those criticisms really measure up to what he actually wrote and taught by looking directly into his writings. It will attempt to figure out and interpret Augustine’s worldview base on his doctrine on the Trinity and creation, his use of the Scriptures, tradition, and reason. It will inquire as objectively as possible into what really is his understanding of the Creator, the Trinity, the reality of creation, man’s role in the created world, material realities, the interrelatedness of things, and the relationship between the Creator and creatures. The objective of this chapter is to produce a systematic presentation of Augustine’s view of creation based mainly on his key writings about the Trinity and his commentaries on Genesis. Useful elements of his doctrine on man’s relationship with God and vice versa, and the relationship of men among themselves and their surroundings may also be tackled in this chapter. The principal aim of this chapter is to see Augustine’s relevance in contemporary ecological discussions. We will explore the possibility that despite the criticisms put forward by some of his contemporary critics, Augustine’s doctrine of creation can contribute positively to finding solutions in the present-day ecological crisis. We contend that Augustine’s theology of creation is not one-sided. His outlook of creation contains positive resources

for developing certain perspective which may inspire positive response to John Paul II's call for 'ecological conversion' in the modern times.

Chapter 3 bears the title "*Laudato Si'*: Ecological Concerns and Theological Emphasis." It will deal with the encyclical itself, focusing on its ecological concerns and theological emphasis. In here, we take brief review of the historical circumstances which occasioned the emergence of the contemporary ecological concerns and the increasing sensitivity of the public to the ecological problems. We will briefly mention the initiatives of individual persons who can be considered pioneers in environmental consciousness as they came forward to warn humanity of environmental hazards. We will examine the famous thesis of the historian Lynn White Jr. entitled "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" in which he blames Christianity "for the devastation of nature in which the West has been engaged for centuries;"²⁴ for being "the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen", for not only establishing "a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends."²⁵ Are his accusations justified? We will also investigate the Catholic Church's early response to ecological crisis. Important documents from the Synod of Bishops, Apostolic Exhortation, encyclicals, and Papal messages which reveal both the collective and personal initiatives on the part of the authorities of the Catholic Church to awaken conscience on environmental concerns through doctrinal means will be discussed. The main objective of this chapter is to present an overview of the encyclical and make an exposition of the main themes like the notion of integral ecology, the reality of the environmental problems, creation theology, Christology, incarnational spirituality, human ecology, the interconnectedness, and interdependence of all of things, the problem of modern anthropocentrism, the dominant technocratic paradigm, among others. These themes will be presented according to the approaches which seem to be dominant in the encyclical, namely: the phenomenological, theological, analytical, the practical and spiritual approach. It is intriguing to note that *Laudato Si'*, despite its attempt to relate the Church's traditional doctrine on creation and the current scientific ecological facts, never quoted Augustine despite him being considered one of the most influential fathers in the Western Church. However, it is not the intention of this research to make an evaluation or a critical appraisal of the text of *Laudato Si'* that probably can be done in other suitable studies.

24 Ernest L. Fortin, "The Bible Made Me Do it; Christianity, Science, and the Environment", *The Review of Politics* 57, no.2 (1995), 207.

25 Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", *Science* vol. 155, no.3767 (10 March 1967), 1204-5.

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Chapter 4 which bears the title “A Nexus of Augustine’s doctrine on Creation and *Laudato Si’*” is viewed to be the heart and apex of the investigation. In this chapter, a nexus of Augustine’s doctrine on creation and *Laudato Si’* will be developed. By making a juxta-positional analysis of Augustine’s thought and the important themes of *Laudato Si’*, a rich synthesis of insights is envisaged to be attained. The approach is to re-read Augustine’s classical teachings on creation and the Trinity with a ‘new lens’ equipped with the ecological sensitivity inspired by *Laudato Si’*. While it may seem to be anachronistic to apply the practical criteria of current ecology to the thought of Augustine, or to pretend to find in the writings of the Bishop of Hippo reflections on environmental pollution, global warming, or the extinction of species, etc., Augustine’s teachings on creation and his vision of the Trinity are so rich that they must not be disregarded, if ecology has to be situated within the correct Christian parameters, and to avoid all forms of ‘perverted ecology’ tainted with concealed pantheism or panentheism—a counter-cultural activism or simply a passing fashion of modernity. Indeed, an impartial reading of the writings of Augustine could lead one to discover a rich source of essential and indisputable doctrines that should guide the praxis of a true Christian ecology. Because the Augustinian thought touches on the essential and basic principles of Christian ecology, it is conceived in this study that his thought can be of great value for today’s ecology. For this reason, a nexus of Augustine’s doctrine on Creation and *Laudato Si’* will be presented with commentaries and elaborations on those points where the thought of the Pontiff could have been augmented and deepened by the ideas of Augustine and on the other hand, the value and relevance of the Augustinian teachings will be appreciated in the light of the contemporary ecological concerns highlighted by *Laudato Si’*. It is envisaged in this chapter that *Laudato Si’* can give new ecological understanding of Augustine’s doctrine on creation and for its part, the said ecological encyclical’s doctrinal authority may be amplified if we can show indeed that its main theological tenets and social teachings are consistent with the long-revered Augustinian doctrine which has an exceptionally long historical tradition. Finally, it is envisioned in this study that the wealth of the Augustinian thought on creation and the Trinity can help us retrieve different essential elements from traditional theology that can guide our present-day ecological reflection in the light of the ecological concerns emphasized by *Laudato Si’*. The blending of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ insights is hoped to generate new freshness in our endeavor to address the more pressing problem of today’s ecology.

Chapter 5 will be the “General Conclusion” and final chapter of the investigation. It will contain the recapitulation of the entire investigation, final analysis of the research, its general statements, and ending comments. In here, we mark a definite closure to the investigation.

1.4. Originality of the Study

The novelty of the investigation can be seen in two major areas: an ecological approach on Augustine's doctrine of creation and a nexus of Augustinian teaching on creation and *Laudato Si'*, that could shed light on the relevance of some traditional and classic doctrines to the contemporary ecological issues.

Augustine is perhaps one of the most studied Fathers of the Church of all times. Up to now, with an average of four hundred publications annually (not a few of these are books), and every title is generously signposted in the *Bulletin Augustinien* of the *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, one could hardly doubt that this is indeed the case. That being so, what is new then in this 'another study' of Augustine? One can easily observe in the Augustinian publications that majority of the themes associated to Augustine are related to spirituality, morality, and dogma. Perhaps only a handful have linked Augustine to ecological themes or issues related to the care of the material world. In fact, as already pointed out above, *Laudato Si'*, despite its considerable effort to adhere to the Church's traditional doctrine in tackling the current ecological crisis, has no Augustinian citation. To link Augustine's doctrine to any theological investigation involving ecological issues and interests is something that is relatively new.

Secondly, creating a nexus of theological works that are centuries apart is indeed a particularly challenging task but can also be rewarding if, by being able to create a 'logical bridge', new positive and novel insights are brought to light. This current theological investigation is precisely envisaged to be so. Augustine can be a very influential theologian of antiquity, but his influence may not produce positive results in the current pressing issues if it is not somehow adapted to the contemporary situation and worldview. The novelty of this investigation consists in the re-reading of Augustine's theology of creation and understanding it anew in the light of the doctrinal theme and ecological concerns of *Laudato Si'*. By drawing some concluding remarks of the correlation, we may be able to bring to light new perspectives of God, the world, human being, and ecology with rich historical tradition yet more relevant to the language and concerns of our time.

Chapter 2

Augustine's Teachings on Creation

2.1. Contemporary Critics of Augustine

This chapter investigates on how some contemporary critics interpret Augustine's doctrines on creation and the Trinity which may have contributed in pushing Augustine to the gutters on issues related to ecology. While it does not directly argue against the possible misreading of Augustine's scheme by some contemporary theologians who have strong ecological concern, it offers an alternative interpretation of Augustine's doctrine that may shed positive light on classical doctrines which can help promote the so-called 'ecological conversion' in the modern times.

Needless to say, when Augustine wrote his reflections on creation and the Trinity, he did not have the contemporary ecological concerns as we have known them today, so that a straightforward accusation that he created theological problems on current ecological issues is absurd. But some contemporary critics have blamed Augustine's doctrine of creation and the Trinity to have laid the ground for doubt towards the goodness of materiality that may have contributed a great deal to the ecological mess in which this planet now lives. Furthermore, Augustine is accused of forming a model of Trinity that fails to offer good news to ecology. The "gravity" of Augustine's teaching seems to be such that for Colin Gunton, one of the major challenges that faces a theology of creation in the modern West, is "to overcome the influence of Augustine" and to embrace a doctrine of creation that is cut off from his impoverish Trinity.²⁶ So what are exactly those doctrines of Augustine that his critics perceive to have cast a dark cloud on the contemporary ecological discourse?²⁷

26 Cf. Colin Gunton, "Between Allegory and Myth: The Legacy of the Spiritualizing of Genesis" in *The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. Colin Gunton (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1997), 47-62. Also cf. Colin Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1991), 32.

27 In looking at the contemporary critiques of Augustine, much focus is directed to modern English writers and especially to Colin Gunton's assessment of Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity, as the latter had more serious engagement with what is "understood" as Augustine's doctrinal legacy.

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2.1.1. *The Problem of Dualism*

One of the Augustinian thesis on creation perceive by some contemporary critics as disturbing and problematic is Augustine's emphasis on the radical distinction between God and the created universe. Moreover, in the realm of creatures, there is a hierarchy of perfections, with the spiritual realities being superior and possessing an imposing authority over the material. This view is exemplified by Sallie McFague when she writes:

“The received view consisted of a nest of shared beliefs, but the two most important for our concern are the God created ‘ex nihilo’, from “nothing”, and that God created hierarchically, with the physical subordinated to the spiritual... The imaginative picture it paints is of a God fashioning the world, either intellectually by word...or aesthetically by craft..., but in either case out of what is totally different from God, and in a manner that places humanity above nature, spirit above body.”²⁸

As to the theme that the more perfect tends to lord over the less perfect, Anne Primavesi writes:

“A particular reading of this foundational text (Gen. 1-3) has given Western culture the fundamental idea that the universe is a hierarchy: a system of order imposed by spiritual power from above... Whenever we affirm belief in God as ‘Maker of the Universe’ we are referring to this image and reinforcing the claim to have and to exercise ‘spiritual power’ over matter.”²⁹

The authors quoted above are women theologians with strong ecological leaning. The “problematic dualism” that is being referred to, is the radical and seeming “unbridgeable gap” between God and the world, the spiritual and the material, which seems to be Augustine's characteristic insights when he deals with the relationship between God and the created world. In their reading of Augustine, the Creator is absolutely alien from the world He created, and creation itself is an act of God imposing spiritual shape or form upon an intrinsically formless or worthless matter. The whole creative process involves an obvious discontinuity between a God who is absolute and pure spirit, and the created universe which is contingent and material.

The critics of Augustine who tend towards this direction have become impatient

28 Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age* (London: SCM, 1987), 109.

29 Anne Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity* (London: Burns & Oates, 1991), 203.

with the classical doctrine which they perceive to bear an Augustinian hallmark and they want to remove from the discourse of creation any element of "dualism" that lays the grounds or sanctions other subsequent "dualisms": mind and body, humanity and nature, man and woman, etc. They argued that focusing on the basic distinction between cause and effect, active and passive, and allot a heavy metaphysical and theological importance to the former, will create an attitude which looks up to the spiritual realities as model worthy of emulation but despises creation and its material components or reduce them to mere tool for a much nobler spiritual end. In this line of thinking, man must not worry so much about his own corporeal conditions nor the physical environment around him because his fundamental vocation must be oriented towards the wellbeing of his spiritual soul. Such an attitude will have disastrous impact on how we deal with our ecological environment. They propose that the present ecological crisis demands new models of creation discourse and argue passionately on the imagery of a God 'embodied' in the creation or better still, a God who 'gives birth' to creation which is "bound in" with God's own being.³⁰

2.1.2. Neoplatonic Orientation

Colin Gunton traces the problem of Augustine's dualism to the latter's Neoplatonist philosophical position.³¹ Augustine's "sophisticated but more Platonizing approaches" shows his commitment to Greek philosophy over and against the scriptural portrayal of God at work in creation.³² In his interpretation of Augustine, creation is twofold: the creation of the Platonic "intellectual" world of forms and the physical world which is patterned after the eternal forms.³³ This dualistic scheme leads to a "distorted" appreciation of creation where a hierarchy of value is set up: the immaterial or spiritual is perceived to be higher than, and must be favored over, the material creation which is inferior than the immaterial creation.

This Platonic approach, however, has undesirable effects. First, is the growing

30 It is difficult to construct a coherent perspective that unites the modern critics of Augustine. What is being described above are just few of the pertinacious arguments put forward by the authors being cited. Other authors who tend towards this direction are Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent* (London: Penguin Books, 1988), Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins), 1992. A more serious engagement with what is "understood" as Augustine's doctrinal legacy can be found in Colin Gunton's work, *Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West*, SJTH 43 (1992): 33-58, and *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

31 Cf. Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2.

32 Ibid., 2-3, 54-56.

33 Colin Gunton, *Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 2.

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dislike of the material order of things in favor of the immaterial mind that is derived from the Platonic forms. It develops an attitude which tends to overlook the inherent goodness and beauty of concrete material realities as they are only valued in relation to the immaterial and eternal beauty. “Material beauty, which the Augustinian tradition regards as of importance only as the route to a higher, immaterial beauty...is necessarily linked with plurality, with the multiplicity of created reality”.³⁴ This diverse particularity of creatures however is disdained as leading the mind away from the contemplation of the immaterial and immutable One.³⁵ Obviously, it is incompatible with scriptural account which acknowledges the goodness of every creature as they exist as concrete, particular beings in the world.

In Augustine’s effort to undermine God’s direct involvement in the creation of material realities, he favors the description of the one God who creates by arbitrary will. God is essentially a divine will totally distinct and separated from the material creation. The Neoplatonic conception of Angels are the first created forms and through them all other creatures are made. As Gunton puts it:

“Augustine’s interpretation of Genesis 1 in terms of a creation of forms, eternal archetypes, turns the celebration of particularity and variety into something dangerously like its subversion, because the replacing of Christology by Platonic universals generates a very different conception of the relation of universal and particular. Not the particularizing will of God, but the general conceptual forms come into the center”.³⁶

The result is an insurmountable gap between the creator and the creatures. And among the creatures of God a higher value is placed upon spiritual and intellectual creatures because they are by nature closer to God.

This Platonic scheme of Augustine can also stand in the way of the progress of natural sciences. Science gains knowledge through empirical observation of changing things. Platonic approach has the problem of linking material creatures to timeless and unchanging forms. Subsequent Western theology, influenced by this Platonic orientation, is unable to reconcile with theories of evolution, which is based on the observation of contingent realities.³⁷ Resistance to evolutionary theory is the result of devaluing things that are subject to change. In fact, for Augustine, change and temporality itself is ‘fallenness’ and disorder, instead of human sinfulness “whose redemption is the hope of the Christian Gospel”.³⁸

34 Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 140.

35 Ibid., 2-3, 54-56.

36 Ibid., 55-56.

37 Ibid., 2-3.

38 Ibid., 83.

2.1.3. Trinity and Modalism

Colin Gunton stresses the relationship between a well-formulated doctrine of creation and the perception of God as Trinity. In Gunton's view, the strong Platonic orientation of Augustine has led him to completely misunderstand the Trinitarian doctrine developed by Irenaeus and later by the Cappadocians that was based on the scriptural revelation of God's creative activity through the Son and the Spirit. Augustine uses instead the Greek philosophical theology which focuses on the universal forms as its point of departure. Thomas Marsh shares a similar interpretation when he writes: "But where that (Eastern) tradition would have maintained strong sense of the divine monarchy... Augustine abandons this position and understands the one God to mean the one divine substance or nature which then is verified in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit".³⁹

Gunton observes that instead of developing a Trinitarian doctrine based on the reflection of God's redemptive work in Jesus's life, death, and resurrection and the Holy Spirit's outpouring on the first Christians, Augustine uses the Platonic doctrine of knowledge, envisioning God as some sort of "super-mind".⁴⁰ In this theological framework, the Trinity is reduced to a process of the mind, and favors analogies of the Trinity that are associated with the intellectual activity of the immaterial soul. This is the reason why Augustine did not look for analogies of the Trinity in the material world, instead looked for vestiges of the Trinity in human mind. Eventually, this has led Augustine to fall into a trap which reduces the three divine persons to the overarching mind of which they are merely processes.⁴¹ The result is modalism: "The only conclusion can be that, in some sense or another, it is divine substance and not the Father that is the basis of the being of God, and therefore, *a fortiori*, of everything else".⁴²

Gunton notes also that Augustine's dislike of anything related to materiality prevents him from taking seriously the Incarnation of Christ as a basis for knowing the Son and the Son's relationship to God.⁴³ His attempts to formulate the doctrine of Trinity are not grounded in the humanity of Jesus but in the divinity of the Son, thus generating an abstract vision of the Trinity as nothing more than a "rational triad".⁴⁴ When the Word Incarnate is no longer uniquely identified as the mediator, the relationship of the Word to the Father and the Holy Spirit becomes abstract and "flattened out", so that the trinitarian relations become meaningless over and against the oneness of God's substance.

39 Thomas Marsh, *The Triune God* (New London, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 1994), 132.

40 Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 44.

41 Ibid., 44-45.

42 Cf. Colin Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1991), 54.

43 Ibid., 33-34.

44 Ibid., 34-35.

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In Gunton's view, the influence of Greek Philosophy inhibits Augustine from adopting the Cappadocians' notion of God's *ousia* which was conceived from the reflection based on the dynamic relationships of the three persons as described in scripture. The Cappadocians conceived the three persons or hypostases not as three individuals but three "concrete particulars in relation to one another".⁴⁵ In this dynamic relationship, the three persons together constitute one substance or *ousia*. Gunton argued that Augustine could not simply grasp the relationship between *ousia* and hypostases as both distinct and mutually integrative. The reason is that Augustine opts for a static, unchanging conception of *ousia* which made it difficult for him to integrate the concept of persons because its dynamism and adherence to the former would contradict "Aristotelian subject-predicate logic".⁴⁶ Hence, in relation to *ousia*, hypostasis cannot be an "ontological predicate" but only a "logical predicate". In this theological framework, however, the three hypostases "disappear into the all-embracing oneness of God".⁴⁷ Gunton concludes that Augustine has a modalistic tendency.⁴⁸

Regarding creation, Augustine's lack of concern for God's economic work has led him to reduce creation as mere object of God's "arbitrary will". This minimizes God's personal involvement through the works of the Son and the Holy Spirit.⁴⁹ This lack of trinitarian involvement in the creation also has repercussion in God's redemptive activity so that in Augustine, the link between creation and redemption is "weakened to the point of disappearing".⁵⁰ The oneness of God is "manifestly elevated over the plurality of the Trinity". In the end, Gunton concludes that Augustine is not trinitarian in his doctrine of creation but monistic.⁵¹

2.1.4. The Question of Dominion and Hierarchy:

Another Augustinian teaching regarded by contemporary theologians as problematic is the question of dominion and hierarchy in the created order. In Jürgen Moltmann's interpretation of Augustine's discussion of the superiority of the male over the female, as the former is created in the image of God, he concludes that Augustine understood dominion and the image of God to be precisely about the rule of dominating power.⁵²

45 Ibid., 39.

46 Ibid., 39-41.

47 Ibid., 42.

48 Ibid., 53.

49 Cf. Colin Gunton, *One, the Three and the Many*, 189-90.

50 Ibid., 120.

51 Ibid., 205.

52 Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, trans. M. Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 236-240.

"The soul... which dominates the body, and the man who dominates the woman, correspond and in actual fact constitute the human being's likeness to God. *Imago Dei* is then on the one hand a pure analogy of dominion, and on the other... a patriarchal analogy to God the Father."⁵³

In Moltmann's reading of Augustine, he deduced that Augustine must have developed a doctrine of the Trinity that is more monotheistic than being trinitarian, as he gives priority of place to the Father in the hierarchy of the Divine Persons. He argues that Augustine interprets the Father in terms of patriarchal and dominating power. Such a hierarchy, where God the Father is at the top of a pyramid of power relations that are essentially about the domination of those below him, is tantamount to exercising one's superiority through control.

Along this line of thought, Sallie McFague—without explicitly naming Augustine—has also asserted that the traditional Christian expression of God as a king exercising dominion over creation, does two things: first, it makes God appear distant and untouchable like a human monarch who rules, at best, through a kind of disinterested benevolence or, at worst, through an exercise of dominion that is tantamount to sheer domination; and second, the expression of God as king, fails to take seriously God's relationship to the whole creation.⁵⁴ According to McFague, a human monarch, while claiming dominion over lands, nonetheless is concerned primarily with the rule of human beings. From a monarch's point of view, other creatures are largely irrelevant apart from their utility for human purposes. In other words, the vision of God as a king can hardly be perceived apart from the idea of sheer usefulness or profitability. At the very least, McFague's description of kingly rule lacks nuance.

Furthermore, Moltmann points out that Augustine's treatment of the image of God in man is one where the body is rejected as not having any value at all; instead, a psychological explanation of God's imprint in the soul is preferred. In Augustine's discussion of the vestiges of God, he finds the existence of the trinitarian image in man's highest faculty which is the intellect and will so that the possibility of the body to be reflective of the divine reality was completely out of the scenario. This low view of the body, of course, corresponds to low view of the physical world.⁵⁵

53 Ibid., 240.

54 Sallie McFague, "A Square in the Quilt," in *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment Is a Religious Issue, an Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. S. C. Rockefeller and J. C. Elder (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 49ff.

55 Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 240-242.

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2.2. Augustine on Trinity and Creation

At this point, we try to turn to Augustine's own arguments and offer an alternative assessment on issues stressed by some of his critics.⁵⁶

2.2.1. Scriptures, Tradition, and Reason

The assumption that Augustine's training in skepticism and Neoplatonism and his general Platonic philosophical approach would have a profound effect upon his theology, could probably color how one interprets Augustine's arguments. But while the influence of philosophical thoughts in Augustine cannot be denied, some scholars observe that after his conversion to Christianity, no philosophical school can take pride of having a dominant influence.⁵⁷ All of Augustine's arguments were subjected to the critique of scriptural faith. John M. Rist observes that contrary to the assumption that Augustine simply downplayed the theological-biblical traditions of the church in favor of a philosophical method, it is more plausible that Augustine maintained a more balance understanding of the relationship of philosophy and faith, with each accorded its proper place.⁵⁸

Scott Dunham noted Augustine's commitment "to exploring Trinitarian faith using the received tradition of Nicaea, as well as the necessity of grounding such an exploration in the biblical revelation of God's identity".⁵⁹ Augustine himself seemed to have outlined his preferred approach when he presented *The Trinity* as an answer to the "talkative arguers" (*garrulis ratiocinatoribus*) who doubt the Catholic doctrine:

56 While it is impossible to incorporate in this article an exhaustive citations and arguments of Augustine, we attempt to emphasize a few citations and point out that there may be a misreading of Augustine's scheme by some contemporary theologians. A more exhaustive presentation is made by Scott A. Dunham in his book, *The Trinity and Creation in Augustine* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018). Cf. Cándido Tejerina, Creación y caída en los libros XI-XIV de "La ciudad de Dios": Estudio Agustiniiano 5 (1970) 239-296; Marceliano Arranz Rodrigo, Fuentes de la doctrina agustiniana de la creación virtual. En: Jornadas Agustiniianas. Valladolid, Ed. Estudio Agustiniiano 1988, 153-166; Ídem., Interpretación agustiniana del relato genesiaco de la creación. En: José Oroz Reta (Coord.), San Agustín. Meditación de un Centenario. Salamanca, Ed. Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1987, 47-56; Ídem., Semillas de futuro. Anotaciones a la teoría agustiniana de la creación virtual: Cuadernos Salmantinos de Filosofía 23 (1987) 43-77; Ídem., Semillas de futuro. Anotaciones a la teoría agustiniana de la creación virtual: Cuadernos Salmantinos de Filosofía 13 (1986) 35-60; Ídem., Semillas de futuro. Aportes agustinianos a la teoría de la creación virtual. En: José Demetrio Jiménez (Coord.), San Agustín, un hombre para hoy. Tomo II. Congreso Agustiniiano de Teología. 26-28 de agosto de 2004. Buenos Aires: Religión y Cultura, 2006, 93-112.

57 Augustine himself acknowledged the influence of several philosophical writers including Cicero and Plotinus in the *Confessions* where he describes his journey to conversion.

58 Cf. John M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5-10.

59 Scott A. Dunham, *The Trinity and Creation in Augustine* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 26.

“First, however, we must demonstrate, according to the authority of the Holy Scriptures, whether the faith be so (that God is a Trinity). Then, if God be willing and aid us, we may perhaps at least so far serve these talkative arguers (*garrulis ratiocinatoribus*)...as to enable them to find something which they are not able to doubt...”⁶⁰

Here, Augustine shows that his starting point in explaining and proving the doctrine of the triune nature of God to the “talkative arguers” (*garrulis ratiocinatoribus*) so as “to enable them to find something which they are not able to doubt” is the Holy Scripture. In the *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine indicates his firm belief on the authority of the Sacred Scriptures over “false Philosophy” and the “superstition of false religion”:

“But when they (philosophers) produce from any of their books a theory contrary to our Scripture, and therefore contrary to the Catholic faith, either we shall have some ability to demonstrate that it is absolutely false, or at least we ourselves will hold it so without any shadow of a doubt. And we will so cling to our Mediator...that we will not be led astray by the glib talk of false philosophy or frightened by the superstition of false religion.”⁶¹

A forthright reflection on this Augustinian text can lead one to see that rather than making abstract philosophical concepts his point of departure in the formulation of Trinitarian doctrine, Augustine's approach is to set the foundations provided by biblical faith at the heart of his response against those who doubted the Catholic doctrine or sought rational models and theories to explain God's Threeness.⁶²

Moreover, some scholars observe that the emphasis that Augustine places upon the scriptural basis for the doctrine of the Trinity does not compromise the rational

60 Augustine, *trin.* 1, 2, 4, trans. Arthur West Haddan, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 822: “Sed primum secundum auctoritatem Scripturarum sanctarum utrum ita se fides habeat demonstrandum est. Deinde si voluerit et adiuverit Deus, istis garrulis ratiocinatoribus, elatioribus quam capacioribus atque ideo morbo periculosiore laborantibus, sic fortasse serviemus ut invenient aliquid unde dubitare non possint, et ob hoc in eo quod invenire nequiverint, de suis mentibus potius quam de ipsa veritate vel de nostris disputationibus conquerantur”.

61 Augustine, *Gen. litt. imp.* 1, 21, 41, trans. J. H. Taylor, S.J., (Newman Press, New York, 1982). PL 34, 262: “Quidquid autem de quibuslibet suis voluminibus his nostris Litteris, id est catholicae fidei contrarium protulerint, aut aliqua etiam facultate ostendamus, aut nulla dubitatione credamus esse falsissimum: atque ita teneamus Mediatorem nostrum, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae atque scientiae absconditi (Col. 2,3), ut neque falsae philosophiae loquacitate seducamur, neque falsae religionis superstitione terreamur”.

62 This interpretation of the Augustinian approach contradicts Gunton's view which emphasizes on Augustine's commitment to Greek philosophy over and against the scriptural portrayal of God.

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explanation of the doctrine.⁶³ Scripture and right reason are inseparable in Augustine because they complement each other. Philosophy which is committed to right thinking does not necessarily contradict theological explanation. In fact, it provides theology and faith sound rational foundations. Likewise, the revelation and explanation of faith enlighten reason so that it can conceive truths which otherwise it can never achieve without the aid of biblical revelation like the mysteries of the Trinity and the incarnation of Christ.

The Sacred Tradition of the Church also plays a very important part in Augustine's Trinitarian doctrine. After the quotation (from *trin.* 1, 4) we mentioned above, Augustine continues his explanation of what he understands as the purpose of the "Catholic expounders of the divine Scriptures" (*catholici tractatores*):

"Yet not that this Trinity was born of the Virgin Mary, and crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven, but only the Son. Nor, again, that this Trinity descended in the form of a dove upon Jesus when He was baptized; nor that, on the day of Pentecost, after the ascension of the Lord, when there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, the same Trinity sat upon each of them with cloven tongues like as of fire, but only the Holy Spirit. Nor yet that this Trinity said from heaven, You are my Son, whether when He was baptized by John, or when the three disciples were with Him in the mount, or when the voice sounded, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again; but that it was a word of the Father only, spoken to the Son; although the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as they are indivisible, so work indivisibly. This is also my faith, since it is the Catholic faith."⁶⁴

Augustine subjected his understanding of the triune God within the Nicene tradition by giving a straightforward quotation of the creed in the first lines of this quotation and annexed his own explanation of its trinitarian significance. He also cites specific scriptural events where each of the three divine persons are revealed and associated with the particular action.

63 Cf. Muller E., "The Dynamic of Augustine's *De Trinitate*: A Response to a Recent Characterization", *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995): 65-91.

64 Augustine, *trin.* 1, 4, 7. trans. Arthur West Haddan, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 824: "Non tamen eamdem Trinitatem natam de virgine Maria et sub Pontio Pilato crucifixam et sepultam tertio die resurrexisse et in caelum ascendisse, sed tantummodo Filium. Nec eamdem Trinitatem descendisse in specie columbae super Iesum baptizatum, aut die Pentecostes post ascensionem Domini sonitu facto de caelo quasi ferretur flatus vehemens et linguis divisus velut ignis sedisse super unumquemque eorum, sed tantummodo Spiritum Sanctum. Nec eamdem Trinitatem dixisse de caelo: Tu es Filius meus, sive cum baptizatus est a Iohanne sive in monte quando cum illo erant tres discipuli, aut quando sonuit vox dicens: Et clarificavi et iterum clarificabo, sed tantummodo Patris vocem fuisse ad Filium factam quamvis Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus sicut inseparabiles sunt, ita inseparabiliter operentur. Haec et mea fides est, quando haec est catholica fides".

Clearly the citation above shows that for Augustine, the problem of the Triune Being is not merely about defending the unity of the divine substance. By citing the Scripture and the Nicene creed, he shows that specifically, the problem of the Trinity is about understanding how the *threeness* of the persons is both particular (as revealed in Scriptures) and inseparable. The real challenge for Augustine is to explain how the three distinct divine persons are one substance in a way that also affirms the specific works of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the trinitarian economy as portrayed in the scripture and summarized in the Nicene Creed.

Keeping in mind Augustine's chosen method in addressing the problem of the Trinity—that is, a careful consideration of scriptural texts and the humble submission to tradition while not undermining critical reason—we now turn to his defense of the trinitarian doctrine.

2.2.2. God is a Trinity, But Not Triple

We have already seen above how some 'modern critics' of Augustine have labelled him to have some *modalistic* tendencies. Robert Jenson further emphasized such *modalistic* tendency in Augustine in this manner:

“The three persons are not only equally related to the one substance, but identically related, so that the difference between them, that is, the relations, are irrelevant to their God... When the Nicenes called the Trinity as such God, they so named him because of the triune relations and differences; when Augustine calls the Trinity as such God, it is in spite of them”.⁶⁵

Jenson points out that because of the idea of a simple divine substance, Augustine sees simply in the *threeness* of God a logical problem, but he does not consider the persons to be ontologically distinct in the Godhead. But then Augustine wants to avoid exactly this kind of misunderstanding whereby one imagines an underlying substance, either distinct from the three persons or ontologically more real than the divine relations of the persons. Augustine writes:

“Since, therefore, the Father alone, or the Son alone, or the Holy Spirit alone, is as great as is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit together, in no manner is He to be called threefold.”⁶⁶

65 Robert Jenson, *The Triune Identity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 118-119.

66 Augustine, *trin.* 6, 8, 9. trans. Arthur West Haddan, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 929: “Cum itaque tantus est solus Pater, vel solus Filius, vel solus Spiritus Sanctus, quantus est simul Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus, nullo modo triplex dicendus est”.

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This in-depth understanding of equality of persons is precisely what enables Augustine to avoid a *modalistic* conception of the Trinity, since the equality of the persons is such that neither the idea of difference of substance between any of the three, nor the idea that the divine substance can exist apart from the three, can be thought of:

“In God Himself, therefore when the equal Son, or the Holy Spirit equal to the Father and the Son, is joined to the equal Father, God does not become greater than each of them severally; because that perfectness cannot increase. But whether it be the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit, He is perfect, and God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit is perfect; and therefore He is a Trinity rather than triple.”⁶⁷

When Augustine speaks of the equality of each person with the other and with the whole, it is not because he understands the Trinity to be a substance without distinction between the persons, but because the idea of the divine simplicity enables him to conceive of the three persons as each having *being* in himself perfectly and equally. Despite their distinction, their union does not increase the perfection of the Godhead, because His fullness of perfection is so that nothing can be added nor be subtracted from it.

Clearly, Augustine sets out to explain the doctrine in the light of the scriptural presentation of the divine missions citing scriptural events where each of the three divine persons are explicitly associated with particular action. For Augustine, the three persons we profess in the creed are indeed the one God of the scripture, but not in such a way that the three became incarnate in Jesus, but Jesus alone; nor were the three all manifest in the dove at Christ’s baptism, but the Spirit alone; nor the three who addressed the Son at his baptism and at the transfiguration, but the Father alone.⁶⁸ Hence, based on this scriptural account, the equality of the persons with each other and with the Trinity as whole does not mean that the persons are “flattened out into an indistinct substance”, as some critics of Augustine would suggest.⁶⁹ The one substance is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who are each in themselves what the others are, without being the others, and are one trinitarian God but not triple.

2.2.3. Creation, the Work of the Triune God

Consistent to his theological scheme of founding his doctrine of the Trinity upon specific scriptural account, Augustine also has founded his doctrine of creation upon the divine activity as revealed in the scripture. And just as for Augustine the biblical ac-

67 Ibid.

68 Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 1, 7.

69 Cf. Colin Gunton, *Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 54.

count reveals the reality of the Triune God, so the biblical record of God's redemptive work will also manifest the Triune nature of God's activity in creation for it is the same God who is shown in the scripture as both creator and redeemer.⁷⁰ In a particularly condensed passage in Book 1 of *the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine lays out his view on why the act of creation is triune in character:

“Hence, in the very beginning of creation...it is the Blessed Trinity that is represented as creating. For, when Scripture says, *In the beginning God created heaven and earth*, by the name of “God” we understand stand the Father, and by the name of “Beginning,” the Son, who is the Beginning, not for the Father, but first and foremost for the spiritual beings He has created and then also for all creatures; and when Scripture says, *And the Spirit of God was stirring above the water (Gn 1:2)*, we recognize a complete enumeration of the Trinity. So in the conversion and in the perfecting of creatures by which their species are separated in due order, the Blessed Trinity is likewise represented: the Word and the Father of the Word, as indicated in the statement, *God said*; and then the Divine Goodness, by which God finds pleasure in all the limited perfections of His creatures, which please Him, as indicated by the words, *God saw that it was good.*”⁷¹

In the quotation above, “God” refers to the Father in Augustine's language of trinitarian doctrine. The Father who is the source of the Son in the sense that the Son is always from the Father, and the Holy Spirit is from the Father primarily and through the Son,⁷² is also the source of creation. But unlike the divine persons who are coeternal and equal with the father, the creation is made from nothing and is therefore different and not equal to the Father.

The phrase “in the beginning” refers to the Son. This ascription to the Son by Augustine is not evident in Genesis but he finds justification in the Johannine prologue

70 In his book *Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine. The theology of Colin Gunton in the Light of Augustine* (Pickwick Publications, Oregon 2011), Bradley G. Green exposes the deficiency of Gunton's reading of Augustine. Green argues that Augustine did not break the link between creation and redemption but affirmed that the created order of the universe is a means for achieving genuine knowledge of God. Moreover, the ‘created order’ is the only means by which redemption can be realized.

71 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 6, 12, trans. John Hammond Taylor: Ancient Christian Writers. Kindle Locations 277-281, (Kindle Edition). PL 34, 250-1: “Ut quemadmodum in ipso exordio inchoatae creaturae, quae coeli et terrae nomine, propter id quod de illa perficiendum erat, commemorata est, Trinitas insinuat Creatoris (nam dicente Scriptura: In principio fecit Deus coelum et terram [Gn. 1,1]; intellegimus Patrem in Dei nomine, et Filium in principii nomine, qui non Patri, sed per seipsum creatae primitus ac potissimum spiritali creaturae, et consequenter etiam universae creaturae principium est: dicente autem Scriptura: Et Spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquam [Gn. 1, 2], completam commemorationem Trinitatis agnoscimus); ita et in conversione atque perfectione creaturae, ut rerum species digerantur, eadem Trinitas insinuetur: Verbum Dei scilicet, et Verbi generator, cum dicitur: Dixit Deus; et sancta bonitas, in qua Deo placet quidquid ei pro suae naturae modulo perfectum placet, cum dicitur: Vidit Deus quia bonum est (Gn. 1, 3)”.

72 Cf. Scott Dunham, *The Trinity and Creation in Augustine*, 37-40.

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wherein John claims that in the beginning everything is created through the Word. In *Sermon 1*, Augustine argued against the Manicheans who denied that God created the world through the Son, he said:

For - so they - Moses says: In the beginning God made heaven and earth but does not mention the Son by whom all things were made, while John says: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was in God and the Word was God. It was in the beginning in God. All things were made through him, and without him nothing was made... What will they say when I answer them that the Son of God is the very Beginning in which God made heaven and earth, according to Genesis?... Indeed, that in the beginning God made heaven and earth was certainly written by Moses, and that he wrote of the Lord is attested by the words of the Lord himself.⁷³

The name “Beginning” refers to how God creates everything in His Son. Augustine notes that according to John, everything is created through the divine Word of God, who is the coeternal Son of the Father but was himself uncreated.⁷⁴ In the Book 1 of *the Literal Meaning of Genesis*, he said:

“And does this belong to the Divine Word... *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (Jn 1, 1)? When it is said of the Word, *All things have been made through Him* (Jn 1, 3), it becomes quite clear that light was made through Him when God said, *Let there be light* (Gn 1, 3), and so this utterance of God is eternal. For the Word of God, true God in the bosom of God and the only Son of God, is coeternal eternal with the Father; and yet through this utterance of God in the eternal Word, creation has been brought about in time.”⁷⁵

73 Augustine, *s. 1, 2, 2*. PL 38, 24-25: “Moyses enim dicit” inquit “In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram nec nominat Filium per quem facta sunt omnia, cum Ioannes dicat: In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. Hoc erat in principio apud Deum. Omnia per ipsum facta sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil”... Quid enim dicturi sunt, cum ipsum “principium” Filium Dei esse respondero, in quo Deum fecisse caelum et terram Genesis loquitur?... Ecce in quo principio fecit Deus caelum et terram. Caelum ergo et terram fecit Deus in Filio, per quem facta sunt omnia et sine quo factum est nihil, ut etiam Evangelio concordante cum Genesi, secundum Testamenti utriusque consensum teneamus hereditatem, litigiosasque calumnias exheredatis haereticis relinquamus.”

74 Cf. Jn 1:18.

75 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 2, 6, trans. John Hammond Taylor: Ancient Christian Writers. Kindle Locations 277-281, (Kindle Edition). PL 34, 218: “Et utrum hoc ipsum ad naturam pertineat Verbi eius, de quo dicitur: In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum (Jn 1, 1)? Cum enim de illo dicitur: Omnia per ipsum facta sunt (Jn 1, 3); satis ostenditur et lux per ipsum facta, cum dixit Deus: Fiat lux (Gn. 1, 3). Quod si ita est, aeternum est quod dixit Deus: Fiat lux; quia Verbum Dei apud Deum, Filius unicus Dei, Patri coaeternus est: quamvis Deo hoc in aeterno Verbo dicente creatura temporalis facta sit”.

Similarly, in the work of conversion, Augustine suggests the involvement of the Father and the Son by explaining the phrase "God said" as referring to "the Word" and the "Father of the Word". What is "said" is the Word and it is the Father who "speaks" in eternity.

Augustine understands the quotation from Genesis "and the Spirit of God was stirring above the water"⁷⁶ as referring to the Holy Spirit when he notes that by this phrase "we recognize a complete enumeration of the Trinity". But when referring to the work of the conversion and in the perfecting of creatures, Augustine goes further by identifying the Holy Spirit with God's love and "goodness by which God finds pleasure in all the limited perfections of His creatures". The Holy Spirit works to perfect creaturely love which Augustine describes as "needy and poor":

"Now, love is generally needy and poor, so that its outpouring makes it subordinate to the objects that it loves. Hence, when there is mention of the Spirit of God, whereby the Divine Goodness and Love are to be understood, perhaps He is said to be stirring above creation, so that God may be thought of as loving the work to be produced not out of any need or necessity, but solely out of the largeness of His bounty (*abundantiam beneficentiae*)."⁷⁷

In here, Augustine describes the Holy Spirit as goodness and love "stirring above the water" (Gn 1:2) in the light of the divine unconditional and self-sufficient love that is poured out or given "out of the largeness of God's bounty" (*abundantiam beneficentiae*). In contrast to creaturely love, which is subordinated to the object of its love, God's love is not needy, not subordinated to anything else, but overflows freely from its inner bounty.

When Augustine identifies the working of the three persons in the act of creation, it is not a sheer exercise of theological speculation, testing his trinitarian theory on an obscure biblical text. Rather, Augustine himself is convinced of the necessity of the trinitarian doctrine he received from the Church that he believes that God's activity revealed in scripture must always be triune in nature.

2.2.4. The Vestiges of Trinity in Creation

Contrary to Gunton's claim that Augustine did not look for analogies of the Trinity in the material world but solely in the immaterial activity of the human mind⁷⁸, Au-

76 Cf. Gn 1:2

77 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 7, 13, trans. John Hammond Taylor: Ancient Christian Writers. Kindle Locations 277-281, (Kindle Edition). PL 34, 251: "An quoniam egenus atque indigus amor ita diligit, ut rebus quas diligit, subiciatur; propterea cum commemoraretur Spiritus Dei, in quo sancta eius benevolentia dilectioque intellegitur, superferri dictus est, ne facienda opera sua per indigentiae necessitatem potius quam per abundantiam beneficentiae Deus amare putaretur".

78 Cf. Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, 44-45.

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gustine implies vestiges of the Trinity even in material creatures. This is because for Augustine, the entire universe bears the mark of the creator and somehow reflects His nature. Taking an important hint from the Book of Wisdom, Augustine claims that all of creation participates in the divine being through *measure*, *number*, and *weight*.⁷⁹ Augustine makes a connection between “six days of creation” and the threefold ordering of creation because both indicate the perfections of creatures that originated from and governed by the Trinity. Reflecting on Wisdom 11:20, Augustine said:

“We should call to mind what Scripture says elsewhere: “Thou hast ordered all things in measure and number and weight”. And let the soul that is able reflect on this...and let it consider whether these three—measure, number, and weight—in which, according to Scripture, God ordered all things, existed somewhere before the creation of every creature, or whether they too were created... Before creation nothing existed except the Creator. Therefore, these three were in Him. But how? The works of creation are, so Scripture tells us, in Him. Shall we in some way identify measure, number, and weight with Him, and say that the works of creation are, as it were, in Him by whom they are ruled and governed?”⁸⁰

For Augustine, when *Genesis* narrates that creation is completed in six days, it is symbolic of the fact that six is a perfect number. In the *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, he wrote:

So then, we find the number six to be the first perfect number for the reason that it is completed by its parts. There are, you see, also other numbers that are perfect for other reasons and causes. Well then, we have called six a perfect number in that it is completed by its parts, those parts at least of which the number whose parts they are is a multiple; of such a part, you see, you can ask how many times.⁸¹

79 The Latin words Augustine used were *mensura*, *numerus*, and *pondus*.

80 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 4, 3, 7, trans. John Hammond Taylor: Ancient Christian Writers. Kindle Locations 277-281, (Kindle Edition). PL 34, 299: “Quapropter cum eum legimus sex diebus omnia perfecisse, et senarium numerum considerantes, invenimus esse perfectum, atque ita creaturarum ordinem currere, ut etiam ipsarum partium, quibus iste numerus perficitur, appareat quasi gradata distinctio; veniat etiam illud in mentem, quod alio loco Scripturarum ei dicitur: Omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere disposuisti (Sap. 11, 21); atque ita cogitet anima, quae potest, invocato in auxilium Deo, et impertiente atque inspirante vires, utrum haec tria, mensura, numerus, pondus, in quibus Deum disposuisse omnia scriptum est, erant alicubi antequam crearetur universa natura, an etiam ipsa creata sunt; et si erant antea, ubi erant. Neque enim ante creaturam erat aliquid nisi creator. In ipso ergo erant. Sed quomodo? nam et ista quae creata sunt, in ipso esse legimus (Rm. 11, 36): an illa sicut ipse, ista vero sicut in illo a quo reguntur et gubernantur?”

81 *Ibid.*, 4, 2, 2, trans. Edmund Hill. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 2002). PL 34, 350: “Invenimus ergo senarium numerum primum esse perfectum, ea ratione quod suis partibus compleatur. Sunt enim et alii numeri aliis causis rationibusque perfecti. Proinde istum senarium ea ratione perfectum diximus, quod suis partibus compleatur, talibus duntaxat partibus, quae multiplicatae possint consummare numerum cuius partes sunt. Talis enim pars numeri dici potest quota sit.”

Augustine indicates that the perfection of the number six “parallels the order of the works of creation,” because six “rises in three steps from its parts” just as the progress of creation can be divided also into three ascending phases.”⁸² Mathematically speaking, a perfect number equals the sum of all of its factors (divisors). According to this principle, 6 is a perfect number because its factors are 1, 2, 3, and adding them together results to 6. Augustine then applies this formula to Genesis 1. The first ascending phase is the first day of creation, which brings light. The second phase of creation in which the universe is completed, comprises the second day—the firmament, and third day—the earth and the sea. The third phase comprises the fourth, fifth, and sixth days of creation in which those things that are contained within the universe are made: the fourth day—the planets and stars; the fifth—the water creatures; and the sixth—the land creatures.⁸³ The completion of creation culminates in the symbolic perfection of the sixth day according to the pattern of the perfect number six.

Regarding the threefold ordering of creation, Augustine suggests that *measure* points to how creatures have limit; *number* enables each creature to find its place in a whole; and *weight* draws the creature to its purpose. He continues:

“He (God) is surely not identified with these three things as we know them in creatures, the limit in things that we measure, the number in things that we count, the weight in things that we weigh. But in the sense that measure places a limit on everything, number gives everything form, and weight draws each thing to a state of repose and stability, God is identified with these three in a fundamental, true, and unique sense. He limits everything, forms everything, and orders everything.”⁸⁴

Augustine points out that even if God is not identical with measure, number, and weight as elements of created reality, they represent the direct impact of God on the world. These three elements of material reality represent the way God acts on creation. As creatures are structured according to measure, number, and weight, they participate in God's trinitarian governance.

82 Ibid., 4, 2, 2 – 4, 3, 7.

83 Cf. Ibid.

84 *Ibid.* PL 34, 299: “Neque enim Deus mensura est, aut numerus, aut pondus, aut ista omnia. An secundum id quod novimus mensuram in eis quae metimur, et numerum in eis quae numeramus, et pondus in eis quae appendimus, non est Deus ista: secundum id vero quod mensura omni rei modum praefigit, et numerus omni rei speciem praebet, et pondus omnem rem ad quietem ac stabilitatem trahit, ille primitus et veraciter et singulariter ista est, qui terminat omnia et format omnia, et ordinat omnia; nihilque aliud dictum intellegitur, quomodo per cor et linguam humanam potuit: Omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere disposuisti, nisi: Omnia in te disposuisti?”

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For Augustine, God is the “Measure without measure”.⁸⁵ Moreover Augustine does not limit measure only to material things:

“Measure, number, and weight are not to be found or thought of only in stones and wood and other such bodies, earthly or heavenly, having mass or quantity. There is also the measure of an activity, which keeps it from going on without control or beyond bounds...”⁸⁶

Augustine refers to human activity which is also governed by limits so that man would not exceed all the natural bounds within which he is created. God has created everything inanimate and rational being within limits of mutable existence for beyond mutability and existence is eternity.

God is the number because in the founding of creation, the Triune God gives unformed matter its shape (form).⁸⁷ So then, every created reality has number formed by “the Number without number”.⁸⁸ Material creatures have number in terms of mass and quantity. But men and spiritual beings have “the number of the affections and of the virtues, by which a soul is held away from the unformed formed state of folly and turned towards the form and beauty of wisdom”.⁸⁹ God is the form and number that keeps spiritual and rational creatures from falling back to an unformed state of folly.

Finally, the Trinity is also the weight of creatures which “draws each thing to a state of repose and stability”, so that they would rest in the place for which they were created.⁹⁰ Like measure and number, Augustine points out that creaturely weight is “drawn by the Weight without weight”.⁹¹ In corporeal realities, weight draws them to find rest in their proper places, like water which seeks its own level and oil which tends to settle in the surface of the water because it is lighter than water in weight. In the moral and spiritual agent, they are drawn by “the weight of the will and of love, wherein appears the worth of everything to be sought, or to be avoided, to be esteemed of greater or less value”.⁹²

85 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 4, 3, 8.

86 Augustine, *Ibid.*, 4, 4, 8. PL 34, 299: “Neque enim mensura et numerus et pondus in lapidibus tantummodo et lignis atque eiusmodi molibus, et quantiscumque corporalibus vel terrestribus vel coelestibus animadverti et cogitari potest. Est autem mensura aliquid agendi, ne sit irrevocabilis et immoderata progressio; et est numerus et affectionum animi et virtutum, quo ab stultitiae deformitate, ad sapientiae formam decusque colligitur”.

87 Augustine, *Ibid.*, 1, 4, 9.

88 Augustine, *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 8.

89 Augustine, *Ibid.*, 4, 4, 8.

90 Augustine, *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 7.

91 Augustine, *Ibid.*, 4, 4, 8.

92 *Ibid.*

The concept of weight in creatures allows Augustine to make some powerful connection with the use of the metaphor of weight in *The Confessions* where he famously writes, "My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift we are set on fire and carried upwards; we grow red hot and ascend".⁹³ In this quotation, Augustine associate 'weight' with 'love' which carries him upward because his heart has been set on fire by God's gift.

God then is the one who limits all things, gives intelligible form to all things and directs all things for a purpose. And this threefold principle of measure, number, and weight is also applicable by analogy to spiritual and rational beings as their actions are limited so that they would not go beyond the bounds of their nature (measure), as they possess affections and virtues which keep them from the unformed state of folly and turn towards wisdom (number), and as they are drawn by the weight of the will and of love. Everything then that God creates exhibits this threefold principle, which is also the basis of creaturely unity, as Augustine writes:

"There is not a single living creature, after all, in whose body I will not find, when I reflect upon it, that its measures and numbers and order are geared toward a harmonious unity."⁹⁴

Just as the triune God is one and three, so He is the source of creaturely unity through His *threeness* that is one. And just as every creature is made by the Three who are One, so does every creature mirror the Trinity and His perfect work when it properly exhibits measure, number, and weight as a unified and harmonious whole.⁹⁵

For Augustine it is precisely in the harmony and by being a coherent system that creation shares or participates in the reality of the triune God. And it cannot participate in any other way. In Augustine's theological scheme, creation cannot be a 'bit' of God nor be an 'overflow' of the divine essence because being God is being outside the realm of change and contingency which characterize all creatures.⁹⁶

93 Augustine, *conf.* 13, 10.

94 Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 16, 26, trans. Edmund Hill. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 2002). PL 34, 185: "Non enim animalis alicuius corpus et membra considero, ubi non mensuras et numeros et ordinem inveniam ad unitatem concordiae pertinere".

95 In reference to Genesis 1, 26ff., Augustine also points out the imprint of the Trinity in the human soul, as it is reflected in the *threeness* of the mind, the love and the knowledge (*Trin.* 9, 5, 8; 9, 12, 8); and also, of the memory, the intelligence, and the will (*Trin.* 10, 11, 18; *Conf.* 13, 11, 12). Also confer Luis F. Ladaria, *El Dios y Verdadero: El Misterio de la Trinidad* (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1998), pp. 246-248.

96 Cf. Mark Ellingsen, *Ancient African Insights about Creation and Nature which Relate to Modern Physics: Augustine and Dionysius of Alexandria*: Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center 42 (2016) 63-72. The article deals with the theological and geographical context where the

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Within this theological framework on creation, the view of some modern critics of Augustine who like to see God being ‘embodied’ in the creation or better still, a God who ‘gives birth’ to creation which is “bound in” with God’s own being, cannot just fit in.⁹⁷ In Augustine’s theological scheme, creation tells us most about God when it is most clearly different from Him; it speaks of God’s perfection by being imperfect, it shows God’s immutability by being changeable. And the more creation shares in the sort of life that God has, the more it steers us back inevitably to their fundamental difference.⁹⁸

The issue of dualism and hierarchy highlighted by Augustine’s critics, becomes problematic only within a system where relations of distinct realities ought to be unified and interdependent. But in Augustine’s scheme of things, God is not within the same frame of reference with creation. While creation needs God’s providence for its existence and sustenance, God in His fullness does not need creation at all.⁹⁹ Augustine specifies that creation is purely the result of God’s inherent goodness, “for He found His works pleasing, in keeping with the benevolence by which He was pleased to create them”.¹⁰⁰

It is important to note however that despite the intrinsic difference between God and His creatures, Augustine does not suggest that there exists between them an ‘unbridgeable separation’ or distance, as some of his modern critics have claimed. In fact, in the *Literal Meaning of Genesis* (5, 20, 40), Augustine implies the closeness of God with His creation by pointing out the complete ontological dependence of the latter. God for His part acts continuously on creation, preserving its contingent existence:

“Against this opinion we can cite the saying of our Lord, *My Father is working Still* (Jn 5, 17) Furthermore, God does not make only great and important things but also the lowliest things of this earth. For St. Paul says: *Foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be but a mere kernel perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But it is God who gives it a body as He has willed to do, and to each and every seed He gives an appropriate body*” (1Cor 15, 36-38). Let us, therefore, believe and, if possible, also understand that God is working even now, so that if His action should be withdrawn drawn from His creatures, they would perish.”¹⁰¹

Augustinian thought on creation was conceived and developed.

97 See the presentation on contemporary critics of Augustine in Part II of this chapter.

98 Cf. Augustine, *s.* 126, 3. In here, Augustine explains the fundamental difference between the visible creation and the invisible Creator, even if creation somehow reflects the reality of the Creator.

99 Cf. Rowan Williams, *On Augustine*, pp. 59-78. The insights presented in this book on God’s “needlessness” of creation was previously presented in William’s article *Good for Nothing? Augustine on Creation: Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 9-24.

100 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 8, 14.

101 *Ibid.*, 5, 20, 40, trans. John Hammond Taylor: *Ancient Christian Writers*. Kindle Locations 277-281, (Kindle Edition). PL 34, 335: “Contra quos profertur illa sententia Domini: Pater meus usque

Clearly for Augustine, the intimacy which exists in the Creator-creature relationship is not only ontological; even after their production from nothing, God continuously desires, sustains, and rules His creation:

“...If He who made did not rule the world, what is made would fall to ruin: He cannot but administer that which He hath made. Because then nothing hath been added to the creation, He is said to have rested from all His works; but because He does not cease to govern what He made, rightly did the Lord say, “My Father worketh even hitherto.””¹⁰²

Thus, their value is given not only by being God's good creatures, but in relation to God's unceasing care for every creature by making it, sustaining it, and drawing it to its natural end in God. By citing St. Paul, Augustine stresses the intimacy of every creation to God, not only with the spiritual and rational beings, but even with the most minute of creatures whose existence is also desired and sustained by God.¹⁰³

Moreover, God does not create the world by imposing His divine will on ‘something’ because creation for Augustine is production from ‘nothing’.¹⁰⁴ His creative power does not enact over an inert matter; rather it is, in itself, the ground of all power and all agency within creation. God causes an entire process in which intelligible beings come to reality. Creation in Augustine's perspective is the result of God's absolute freedom of self-communication, His willingness to love a complete ‘other’ with absolutely no self-directed interest.¹⁰⁵

nunc operatur...Deinde, quia non solum magna atque praecipua, verum etiam ista terrena et extrema ipse operatur, ita dicit Apostolus: Stulte, tu quod seminas non vivificatur, nisi moriatur; et quod seminas, non corpus quod futurum est seminas, sed nudum granum fere tritici, aut alicuius caeterorum; Deus autem dat illi corpus quomodo voluerit, et unicuique seminum proprium corpus (1 Cor. XV 36-38). Sic ergo credamus, vel, si possumus, etiam intellegamus usque nunc operari Deum, ut si conditis ab eo rebus operatio eius subtrahatur, intercidant”.

102 Augustine, *s.* 68, 5, trans. Edmund Hill. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991). PLS 2, 504: “Sed tamen, nisi ille qui fecit, mundum regeret, caderet quod factum est; non potest nisi administrare illud quod fecit. Quia ergo nihil additum est creaturae, requiescisse dictus est ab omnibus operibus suis; quia vero quod fecit gubernare non cessat, recte dixit Dominus: Pater meus usque nunc operatur”.

103 Cf. Augustine, *uera rel.* 18, 35. In here Augustine points out that even the lowest good is from God and is therefore, of God.

104 On creation from nothing in Augustine's thought, confer Tarsicius van Bavel, “The Creator and the Integrity of Creation in the Fathers of the Church, Especially in Saint Augustine”, *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990), 4-7.

105 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 2, 4: In here, Augustine stresses that God creates not out of need but out of love.

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2.3. Augustine's Relevance to Ecology

We have already mentioned that when Augustine wrote his reflections on creation, ecology was not yet a matter of some concern. Yet it does not mean that Augustine's doctrine of creation has nothing to contribute to ecology. In fact, despite the criticisms put forward by some of his contemporary critics, we see that Augustine's theology of creation is not one-sided. His outlook of creation contains positive resources for developing certain perspective which may inspire positive response to John Paul II's call for 'ecological conversion' in the modern times.¹⁰⁶

In this part of the study, we highlight some of the prominent doctrines of Augustine which might be understood to contribute positively to the contemporary ecological controversy and concerns.

2.3.1. Ecology and Augustine

Although some authors, particularly in the English-speaking world, are hesitant to make reference to Augustine when they talk about ecology,¹⁰⁷ a reflective and unbiased reading of his works can provide us with valuable thoughts that can inform and shade light on some essential ecological issues. His doctrine on creation, where Protology (or creation theology), Trinitarian theology and eschatology are linked together, can be a rich source of ideas, guidelines, and orientations. It would certainly be anachronistic if one seeks to find in the works of Augustine examples of ecological actions or initiatives, or to seek solutions to the current ecological problems. These were concerns that obviously had never been dealt with during his time, even though abuses committed against nature, and the waste of some natural resources might have already occurred also in that era. Simply put, it was not a major concern in Augustine's time. That is why we cannot just apply the schemes of our industrial and consumerist society to the categories of Augustine's thought and culture. Ecological concern, like the way we understand it in the present, was simply not part of Augustine's 'spirit of the age'.

106 Cf. Catechesis (17 January 2011), 4: *Insegnamenti* 41/1 (2011), 179.

107 As is the case with: Lynn White Jr.; Matthew Fox (*Original Blessing*, Santa Fe, Bear and Company, 1983, 19, 21); Jay McDaniel; Rosemary Radford Ruether (*Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, San Francisco, Harper San Francisco, 1992, especially chapter 5, 185-186); Sally McFague (*The Body of God. An Ecological Theology*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993, 32, 223, n.21); Gordon Kaufman (*In Face of Mystery. A Constructive Theology*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1993, 271). Cf. Mark Wiebe, "A Green Augustine. What Augustinian Theology Can Contribute to Eco-theology", in J. Dod - Kim Paffenroth - Mark Smillie, *Augustine and the Environment*, London, Lexington Books, 2016, 182.

It is true that in some of his works, Augustine tells us of some abuses against nature or proposes examples of practices that today we could qualify as polluting or ecologically harmful. However, Augustine does it for other reasons. He mentions ecological issues fundamentally for catechetical or apologetic purposes. In here, we can mention two concrete cases. The first has something to do with the production of olive oil in that period. Augustine tells us that after the olives were pressed in the oil mill, the oil was collected in large earthenware jars in the cellars, while the waste from the production of the oil (called in Latin “*amurca*”) that was nothing but a dirty, smelly, and thick water, was thrown into the streets and squares. This implies lack of cleanliness and pollution.¹⁰⁸ But, as already mentioned, Augustine does not comment on this fact to denounce pollution or the lack of hygiene in Hippo and other cities of North Africa, but to draw a spiritual reflection of the situation. Olives represent the believers; the olive press or oil mill is a figure of the world, where good and bad Christians are crushed by the tribulations and difficulties of this earth. The result is that while the good Christians, like olives, produce good fruit for God, that is to say, they produce clean and pleasant oil, the bad Christians, for denying God and not accepting tribulations, are like the waste of oil production, the “*amurca*”, which was taken out of God’s warehouse and was thrown into the streets, where being good for nothing other than dirtying places, was trampled on by people (Mt 5:13).

Another interesting case is when Augustine referred to air pollution in one of his sermons. Obviously, the context was not that Augustine had to deal with the issue of air pollution and denounce it in view of the damage it could do to the environment. Instead, the main intention was to criticize some pagan superstitions. Thus, in one of his sermons, Augustine complained about the suffocating smoke that had spread over the city because of numerous bonfires lit on the night of the 23rd of June, the night of the summer solstice; for Christians, it was the eve of the feast of the birth of John the Baptist. For the pagans, it was just another ritual feast. The environmental pollution was so intense that year, possibly in 401AD,¹⁰⁹ that Augustine appealed to the faithful to end such pagan rituals of making fires at night, not only for religious reasons, that is, by setting aside the pagan practices incorporated in the culture, but more importantly to avoid the harm and the inconvenience brought about by the intense smoke to the populace:

108 Cf. Augustine, *en. Ps.* 80, 1: “By means of these three things the oil is secretly liquefied in the mill, and the residue is thrown without proper hygiene.”

109 The experts do not agree on the date when Sermon 293A was delivered. F. Dolbeau questions it with good reason. Anoz doubts it. Cf. J. Anoz, “Cronología de la producción agustiniana”, in *AVGVSTINVS* 47 (2002), 287.

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Let there be an end to the survivals of sacrilegious rites, an end to vain concerns and silly games. Let the things that are customarily done be done no more; they may not be done any longer in honor of the demons, but all the same they are still being done according to the custom of the demons. Yesterday, after evening prayers, the whole city was ablaze with stinking flames; the smoke of them covered the whole sky. If you are indifferent to the religion involved, at least think about the damage to the common good.¹¹⁰

Possibly in a broad sense, we could see hint of ‘ecological concern’ in these words of the Bishop of Hippo, since he asked that bonfire rituals had to be ended, not only to eliminate pagan superstitions, but also for the inconvenience that the smoke had caused to the inhabitants of the city. It is clear in this context however, that Augustine was not really concern of the damage done to the environment, nor of the harm this pagan practice could do to the people’s health. His preoccupation was directed simply to that annoying smoke which disrupted the peace and order of the city and cause a lot of trouble in the daily lives of the people.

Order is a fundamental concept in the ecological thoughts of Augustine. For Augustine, creation is when God produces being from nonbeing and established definitive order in the relationship of creatures. The disruption of this order by sin has generated chaos which reverberated in all parts of creation. To restore the original order, Augustine teaches that the key is in man’s heart. If we want to restore the original order of the universe, we begin by restoring order in the human heart and then the order in creation will just follow.

On the other hand, this order means that everything in the universe has a reason for being, even though this order may remain hidden from man on many occasions. That

110 Augustine, *s.* 293B, 5. Trans. by Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 7. Edited by J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1993), 165. PL 38, 1331. *Cessent reliquiae sacrilegiorum, cessent studia atque loca vanitatum; non fiant illa quae fieri solent, non quidem iam in daemonum honorem, sed adhuc tamen secundum daemonum morem. Hesterno die post vesperam putentibus flammis civitas tota flagrabat; universum aerem fumus obduxerat. Si parum attenditis religionem, saltem iniuriam cogitate communem.* For other cases and examples from St. Augustine’s time of deforestation, pollution or animal abuse, Cf. D. Hughes, *Ecology in Ancient Civilization*, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1975, 103 ff. In a more recent work, Hughes states that part of the fall of the Roman Empire is due precisely to the ecological disorder created by the Romans themselves, by deforesting large areas and exploiting the land: “Most historians have given up trying to find one all-conquering cause for the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, and have retreated to the safer ground of multiple causation. What brought down Rome was a number of processes that interacted. One of these was the Roman mistreatment of the natural environment, including overexploitation of scarce natural resources such as forests and soil, and failure to find sustainable ways to interact with the ecosystems of Italy and the many other lands, including Dacia, which they conquered.” D. Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World. Humankind’s Changing Role in the Community of Life*, London-New York, Routledge, 2009, 74.

is why Augustine sincerely confesses that he does not know why God created the frogs and flies, however he suggests that their existence is due to an order established by the Trinity, who has arranged everything with measure, number and weight (Wis 11:20), and who governs the common house with care much greater than any human person can care for and govern his own house. This text from *Genesi aduersus manicheos* is singularly important, since Augustine not only speaks of order, but of the common house, of the "house of the universe". The metaphor so often used in ecological discourse and that even gives origin to the same word (oikos=house; logos=science), is present in the reflection of Augustine. Frogs, flies and other animals that apparently are not beneficial to man, exist because in the house of the universe, the common house, there is an order established by the Trinitarian God, and it is up to the human being to preserve, guard and perfect this order:

If you object to their not being of any use, be thankful they do not harm, because even if they are not needed for our homes, at any rate they contribute to the completion of this universe, which is not only much bigger than our homes, but much better as well; God manages it after all, much better than any of us can manage our homes.¹¹¹

The encyclical *Laudato Si'* uses this metaphor as well, as the subtitle indicates: "on the care of the common house", and the image is repeated in the encyclical nine times.¹¹²

Augustine did not write a specific theme on ecology. As we have already emphasized, it was not part of the 'spirit of the age' or a subject that aroused interest within the thoughts and culture of his own time. Nevertheless, in his writings, particularly in his five commentaries on the book of Genesis,¹¹³ he left us interesting ideas that can guide our reflection on the present-day ecological issues.

111 Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 16, 26. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 56. PL 34, 360: Si tibi displicet quod non prosunt, placeat quod non obsunt; quia etsi domui nostrae non sunt necessaria, eis tamen completur huius universitatis integritas, quae multo maior est quam domus nostra et multo melior. Hanc enim multo melius administrat Deus, quam unusquisque nostrum domum suam.

112 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 1, 3, 13 (x2), 17, 53, 61, 155, 232,

113 Throughout his life, Augustine wrote five commentaries on the first chapters of Genesis. The first of these is *De Genesi aduersus manicheos* (388-391). The second is an unfinished attempt to make the commentary of this biblical book, called *De Genesi ad litteram liber unus imperfectus* (393). The third commentary is to be found in the *Confessions*, specifically in the last three books (396-401). The fourth is *De Genesi ad litteram*, where St. Augustine takes up again and revise what he had written some years before, creating a work of great theological and spiritual depth (401-415). Finally, in Book XI of *De ciuitate Dei*, St. Augustine again comments on this biblical book (412-423).

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It must be stressed, in the first place, that the main source or foundation of the Augustinian thought is the Holy Scriptures. Certainly, Augustine's reading of the word of God was not freewheeling or autonomous, but it was a careful study guided by the *regula fidei*¹¹⁴ and the tradition of the Catholic Church. Augustine is aware of the sacred value that the word of God has and the respect necessary in interpreting the sacred text. For this reason, the Augustinian works is nothing more than just an exposition or an elaboration of what the biblical text has revealed.

Hence, when speaking of ecology, what we can see in the Augustinian doctrine is a sheer explanation of what the Bible itself proposes. This is particularly the case when one reads Augustine's commentary on the first chapters of the book of Genesis where the accounts of creation are presented. In this biblical text, Augustine sees a fountain of ideas and materials for reflection on the created universe. For Augustine, as he points out in the second book of the *De Trinitate*, there are two paths, not opposed but complementary, to reach the knowledge of the triune God: contemplation on creation and the prayerful study of the Sacred Scriptures. Therefore, the Bishop of Hippo asks God to free him from two nefarious evils in the search for God, namely hasty presumption, and the stubborn defense of what turns out to be false. Augustine for his part, commits himself to investigate (*ad inquirendam*), and to seek God by this double path; that of the contemplation of nature and the meditative study of the Bible. As Augustine says in the prologue of *De Trinitate*:

There are two things most hard to bear with, in the case of those who are in error: hasty assumption before the truth is made plain; and, when it has been made plain, defense of the falsehood thus hastily assumed. From which two faults, inimical as they are to the finding out of the truth, and to the handling of the divine and sacred books, should God, as I pray and hope, defend and protect me with the shield of His good will, and with the grace of His mercy, I will not be slow to search out the substance of God, whether through His Scripture or through the creature.¹¹⁵

2.3.2. Fundamental Goodness of Creation.

Contrary to the common presumption of the Augustinian pessimism towards the ma-

114 Cf. Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 3, 3; *conf.* 8, 30; *c. Faust.* 11, 6; *trin.* 15, 49, et al.

115 Augustine, *trin.* 2 *prol.* Trans. by Arthur West Haddan. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 845: "Sed duo sunt quae in errore hominum difficillime tolerantur: Praesumptio priusquam veritas pateat, et cum iam patuerit praesumptae defensio falsitatis. A quibus duobus vitiis nimis inimicis inventioni veritatis et tractationi divinorum sanctorumque Librorum si me, ut precor et spero, Deus defenderit atque muniverit scuto bonae voluntatis suae et gratia misericordiae suae, non ero segnus ad inquirendam substantiam Dei sive per Scripturam eius sive per creaturam."

terial universe, Augustine has a very clear, optimistic, and inspiring outlook of the created world. In fact, in Sermon 68, while reflecting on the beauty of nature he said:

“Observe the beauty of the world and praise the plan of the creator. Observe what he made, love the One who made it...because He also made you, His lover, in His own image.”¹¹⁶

For Augustine, creation reflects God's beauty and goodness, and for rational creatures like man, it serves as a mirror which reflects his own goodness, being created to God's image and likeness must lead the whole of humanity to the worship and enjoyment of God. In a masterly usage of a metaphor, Augustine likens creation to an “open book, not written by ink”:

“Others, in order to find God, will read a book. Well, as a matter of fact there is a certain great book, the book of created nature. Look carefully at it top and bottom, observe it, read it. God did not make letters of ink for you to recognize Him in; He set before your eyes all these things He has made. Why look for a louder voice? Heaven and earth cry out to you, ‘God made me’...Observe heaven and earth in a religious spirit...”¹¹⁷

Struck by how a diverse universe in motion, holds together in an orchestrated harmony, Augustine used an imagery of a ‘big book’ that brings a story-like quality to how he sees the world. Augustine's **trinitarian interpretation of creation enables him to see the world as a unified whole whose status** in the eyes of God is ‘good’ with regard to individual creature; and ‘very good’ with reference to the whole created universe. If for Augustine nature is indeed like a book that tells us about God, then we need to learn how to read it from “top to bottom”. We can see who the subject is in their story and enjoy that story in all its goodness because of its author:

“All whatsoever the Lord willed, He made in the heaven, and in the earth, in the sea, and in all its deep places (Psalm 134:6). Who can comprehend these things? Who can enumerate the works of the Lord in the heaven and earth, in the sea, and in all deep places? Yet if we cannot comprehend them all, we should believe and hold them without question, because whatever creature is in

116 Augustine, *s.* 68, 5, trans. Edmund Hill. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991). PLS 2, 504: “Tu autem non valde cures, si gyros siderum et caelestium terrenorumve corporum ignores: vide pulchritudinem mundi, et lauda consilium Creatoris: vide quod fecit, ama qui fecit. Tene hoc maxime, ama qui fecit; quia et te ipsum amatorem suum ad imaginem suam fecit”.

117 Augustine, *s.* 68, 6, trans. Edmund Hill. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991) PLS 2, 505: “Alius, ut inveniat Deum, librum legit. Est quidam magnus liber ipsa species creaturae: superiorem et inferiorem contuere, attende, lege. Non Deus, unde eum cognosceres, de atramento litteras fecit: ante oculos tuos posuit haec ipsa quae fecit. Quid quaeris maiorem vocem? Clamat ad te caelum et terra: Deus me fecit”.

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heaven, whatever is in earth, whatever is in the sea and in all deep places, has been made by the Lord....”¹¹⁸

The Augustinian perspective of the created universe reminds us of how God Himself cares and loves creation. Creation is the result of God’s love, pouring “out of the largeness of His bounty” (*abundantiam beneficentiae*).¹¹⁹ God’s trinitarian love which is generated by the clinging of the Three Persons to each other in eternity, overflows towards creation by the actions of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the world. It is so that while the world is not God, it is saturated by the dynamism of the Trinitarian love.

While Augustine’s view of the world is not egalitarian, i.e., he recognizes the hierarchy of creatures, he does have a conception of the equality of creatures with respect to their origin. There is indeed a ‘hierarchy’ based on the amount of perfections every creature receives from God. But in relation to their origin, all creatures are equal because they all receive their *being* from God and manifest it in varied ways according to the condition of their existence.¹²⁰ The inanimate creatures participate in the divine dynamism through their own movements, limited and guided by measure, number, and weight; while the human subjects participate by their natural orientation towards God through their own limited but rational nature (measure), affections and virtues which lead them towards wisdom (number), and the capacity to love which is the weight that finds rest in God.¹²¹

How does this relate then to contemporary ecological concerns?

Everything in this universe has its own place in the divine ordering of things and its own story in the ‘big book’ of nature. Nothing is superfluous. This doctrine is in line with Pope Francis’s view as he claims “that each creature has its own purpose in God’s eternal design. The entire material universe speaks of God’s love”.¹²² Augustine’s doctrine which recognizes the goodness of every creature and draws a clear picture of the interrelatedness of creation, highlights the fact that every decision we make can cause reverberations throughout an ecosystem. Everything is part of God’s good creative work, and therefore is connected by a common origin and end in God. This theological

118 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 134, 6. PL 36, 1745: “Omnia quaecumque voluit, Dominus fecit in coelo et in terra, in mari et in omnibus abyssis. Quis autem comprehendat haec? quis enumeret opera Domini in coelo et in terra, in mari et in omnibus abyssis? Tamen si comprehendere omnia non possumus, inconcusse credere et tenere debemus quoniam quidquid creaturarum in coelo, quidquid in terra, quidquid in mari et in omnibus abyssis a Domino factum est...”

119 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 7, 13.

120 Cf. Augustine, *ep.* 140, 2, 3.

121 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 4, 3, 7.

122 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 84.

interpretation of Augustine can certainly inspire us to reflect on our own place in the universe and reevaluate the impact of our own actions on the environment. If nature is indeed a 'great book' wide open for everybody to read, then we need to learn how to read it rightly. And for Augustine, the right reading of this book must lead us to know God because creation tells us of her creator, not by ink and paper, but by the grandeur of her beauty and the immensity of her design.

2.3.3. The book of creatures.

Thus, for Augustine creation is an open book that tells us about God. Creatures do not only have a practical purpose, but also, they have a semiotic or symbolic dimension, i.e., they can be, in a way "sacramental" in the Augustinian sense. All beings are signs that tell us about God. In the book of creation, God has not written with ink and words, but with concrete realities and living beings, which, signs as that they are, filled with beauty, can lead anyone who contemplates them to a reality beyond themselves—God the creature of the universe.

However, for Augustine this "gaze" towards the world must not be colored by two worldviews which he deemed to be an upshot of secularization and the worldly or "Babylonian" city. First, for Augustin, one must avoid the gaze motivated by vain or useless curiosity. Curiosity can have a positive meaning for Augustine if it inspires one to satisfy the *appetitus ueritatis* (desire for truth); but this *appetitus* has its own vicious counterpart—the *uana curiositas*—which takes place when one fails to seek the wisdom or knowledge of the truth that leads to God, but instead he searches for the vain and superficial things:

We should not vainly behold the beauty of the sky, the order of the stars, the brightness of the light, the alternations of day and night, the monthly courses of the moon, the fourfold seasons of the year, the meeting of the four elements, the life-force of the seeds begetting forms and numbers, and all things that keep their nature and their appropriate measure each in its own kind. In considering these things there should be no exercise of vain and perishing curiosity, but a step should be taken towards immortal things that abide forever.¹²³

Moreover, to be able to read rightly the book of creation, it is necessary to avoid

123 Augustine, *uera rel.* 52, trans. John H. S. Burleigh, in the library of Christian Classics, Augustine: Earlier Writings (Philadelphia The Westminster Press, 1953), 251. PL 4, 145: "Non enim frustra et inaniter intueri oportet pulchritudinem caeli, ordinem siderum, candorem lucis, dierum et noctium vicissitudines, lunae menstrua curricula, anni quadrifariam temperationem, quadripartitis elementis congruentem, tantam vim seminum species numerosque gignentium, et omnia in suo genere modum proprium naturamque servantia. In quorum consideratione non vana et peritura curiositas exercenda est, sed gradus ad immortalia et semper manentia faciendus."

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the second danger, i.e. dispersion. The person who breaks the right order of his own life and lives a life driven by various external elements, cannot look at the beauty of the world with sense of amazement and appreciation, and therefore cannot see in the beauty of creation the existence of God. This is possibly what happened to Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow, among others, who in their book “The Grand Design”¹²⁴, have suggested that the beauty of this world does not lead us anywhere, since it is nothing but part of a “Grand Design”, repeated infinitely in other universes. According to this “multiverse theory”, our universe is no more than just part of an endless number of universes, where everything repeats itself in the same manner as ours:

Our cosmic habitat—now the entire observable universe—is only one of many, just as our solar is one of many. That means that in the same way that the environmental coincidences of our solar system were rendered unremarkable by the realization that billions of such systems exist, the fine-tunings in the laws of nature can be explained by the existence of multiple universes.¹²⁵

Following their tautology, the reason why the beauty of this world is insignificant is the fact that there are some laws of “fine-tuning”, which according to them can be explained by the existence of multiple universes, making the beauty of this world just one among the many, infinitely repeated in multiple universes, so that there is nothing new and extraordinary in it.

Notwithstanding the “scientism” of these authors and their obvious atheistic orientation, it must be noted that the possible existence of multiple universes where the environmental conditions is identical to our own world—a presumption which is more of a fiction than a scientific fact, since until today nobody has proven it, and it takes more faith to accept its claims than to believe in theological dogmas—should never be a reason to deny or disvalue the beauty of the world. Quite the opposite. The possibility that there could be multiple universes with same ecological conditions with our planet, and that there could be creatures as beautiful as those that populate the face of the earth, must give humanity all the more reason to glorify and praise the Creator of such beauty. The choir of beauties of this earth would join the voices of those supposedly “billions of universes” so that in unison they would render greater praise and glory to the One, Creator of all.

On the other hand, Hawking and Mlodinow, explicitly deny the existence of a creator-God, asserting that everything came into existence through spontaneous generation (another theory condemned by “positivist science”). The existence of our universe and the supposed ‘multiple universes’ can be explained through spontaneous generation so that to

124 S. Haeking – L. Mlodinow, *The Grand Design*, New York, Bantam Books, 2010.

125 *Ibid.*, 165.

postulate the presence of a God who creates is unnecessary: "Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going"¹²⁶.

With regard to all those who think like Hawking and Mlodinow, Augustine had beautiful reflection for them as he stresses the necessity of integrity and unity within the soul itself, and to avoid external "dispersion" so that one is able to recognize the presence of God in the beauty of creation:

The human spirit, recollected within itself, grasps the beauty of the universe, which gets its name from *unum in diversis*, one in many. Therefore, that vision is denied to the soul distracted by too many pursuits, which avidly attains nothing but poverty.¹²⁷

On the other hand, in order to perceive the beauty of creation and to be able to see in that beauty a reflection of God's own beauty, it is necessary to receive a gift from the Holy Spirit, who helps human being open the eyes of the heart, and to perceive the sacramental dimension of everything that surrounds him. Particularly in a secularized world like ours, where nature has lost its symbolic dimension and is reduced to nothing more than a deposit of resources that can be exploited without limit, Augustine invites us to let ourselves be enlightened by the Spirit, to be able to perceive in the created world, the presence of God. The Bishop of Hippo states:

Infatuated are they who speak thus (that God did not create all things), since they see not Your works through Your Spirit, nor recognize You in them. But as for those who through Your Spirit see these things, You see in them. When therefore, they see that these things are good, You see that they are good; and whatsoever things for Your sake are pleasing, You are pleased in them; and those things which through Your Spirit are pleasing unto us, are pleasing unto You in us.¹²⁸

For Augustine, it is possible to ascend through creation from what is visible to the

126 Ibid., 180.

127 Augustine, *ord. 1, 2, 3*. trans. Silvano Borruso, *On Order by St. Augustine* (Indiana: St. Augustine's Press South, 2007), 5. PL 32, 979: "Ita enim animus sibi redditus, quae sit pulchritudo universitatis intellegit; quae profecto ab uno cognominata est. Idcircoque illam videre non licet animae quae in multa procedit, sectaturque aviditate pauperiem, quam nescit sola segregatione multitudinis posse vitari."

128 Augustine, *conf. 13*, 45-46, trans. J.G. Pilkington. *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 1. ed. by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 865: "Insani dicunt haec, quoniam non per spiritum tuum vident opera tua nec te cognoscunt in eis. Qui autem per spiritum tuum vident ea, tu vides in eis. Ergo cum vident, quia bona sunt, tu vides, quia bona sunt, et quaecumque propter te placent, tu in eis places, et quae per spiritum tuum placent nobis, tibi placent in nobis."

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invisible, from tangible realities to the ultimate cause of all things, that is the Trinitarian God Himself.¹²⁹ But in contemplating the world, love is necessary. It is imperative to see the world around us not with the eyes of consumerism, but with the eyes of love, as Augustine says in his sermon:

Love in order to see, because what you see is neither trash nor triviality. You will see then who made whatever else you love. And if these are lovely, what must he be like who made them? God doesn't want you loving the earth, he doesn't want you loving the sky, that is things you can see, but himself whom you can't see."¹³⁰

For Augustine, this is how the Angels in heaven esteem created realities. The Angels read and understood the book of creation from the perspective of love towards the Creator. They are not content with just seeing God's creation, they seek to see the Creator Himself: "The angels live enjoying not of the creatures, but of the Creator".¹³¹ For this reason the book of creatures must be read imitating the manner by which the Angels contemplate the face of God, since they read, choose and love (*legunt, eligunt, diligunt*): "For they always behold Your face, and therein read without any syllables in time what Your eternal will wills. They read, they choose, they love. They are always reading; and that which they read never passes away".¹³² In contemplating the book of creation and nature, it is necessary to see in it the presence and beauty of God in order to read, choose, and love God.

The encyclical *Laudato Si'* also speaks of the "Book of Nature." However, the pontifical document made no reference to Augustine, instead in number 6 of the said document, the reader is referred to Pope emeritus Benedict XVI.¹³³ Later, in number 85 of the encyclical, the "Book of Creatures" is mentioned again, and this time, the reference is made to John Paul II, who in the catechesis cited by Pope Francis, has made no mention also of Augustine.¹³⁴

129 Cf. Augustine, s. 126, 3. PL 38, 699: "Erige ergo rationalem aspectum, utere oculis ut homo, intende caelum et terram, ornamenta caeli, fecunditatem terrae, volatus avium, natatus piscium, vim seminum, ordinem temporum. Intende facta, et quaere factorem. Aspice quae vides, et quaere quod non vides".

130 Augustine, s. 22A, 4. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 11, ed. by J.E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1990), 53. PL 38, 151: "Ama, ut videas, quia non est vile quod videbis, non est leve. Illum videbis, qui fecit quidquid amas. Et si ista pulchra sunt, qualis est ipse qui fecit? Non vult Deus ames terram non vult Deus ames caelum, id est quae vides, sed ipsum quem non vides."

131 Augustine, s. 4, 4. PL 38, 34: "Vivunt autem angeli in gaudio, non creaturae, sed Creatoris".

132 Cf. Augustine, *conf.* 13, 18. Trans. J.G. Pilkington. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1. ed. by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.). PL 32, 673: Vident enim faciem tuam semper, et ibi legunt sine syllabis temporum, quid velit aeterna voluntas tua. Legunt, eligunt et diligunt; semper legunt et numquam praeterit quod legunt.

133 LS 6; Cf. Benedict XVI, Carta enc. *Caritas in veritate* (29 June 2009), 51: AAS 101 (2009), 687.

134 John Paul II, Catechesis (30 June 2002), 6. Cf. J.A. Orr, "The Philosophical Magisterium of

2.3.4. Doctrine of Creation and modern Pantheism

Augustine's theology on nature absolutely excludes pantheism and all its stealthy forms. For the Bishop of Hippo, the beauty which creation is adorned with does not make it a 'god', nor does it make it part of the substance of God—a worldview espoused by pantheism and many other neo-pagan environmental movements. According to the Augustinian teaching, when this happens, an essential element is ignored—the double purpose conferred on creation by Word of God. First, according to Augustine, creation with all its grandeur is meant to bring us to God, the source of all good things, and secondly, it is created by God to satisfy the needs of men and women, and of all other living things.¹³⁵ Man for his part is so ordained to protect creation and serve as its steward so that he has the responsibility to look after the world and administer it in the name of God (Gen 2:15).

In recent times, many neopagan environmental movements tend to exalt living creatures and creation itself, not only by putting them at same level with men, but even at times, by placing them above humanity itself, thus creating further alteration of the fundamental order of creation where the irrational must submit to and be governed by the rational being.¹³⁶ For Augustine, creation is governed by natural order and is never part of the substance of God, much less, God Himself:

God Almighty has made good things. But the things made by Him cannot be such as is He who made them. For it is unjust and foolish to believe that works are equal to the workman, things made to the maker.¹³⁷

The bishop of Hippo makes it very clear that God, in the process of creation, “did not engender them (creatures) out of His own nature so that they would be as what He is, but created them out of nothing so that, as is reasonable, they would not be the same as either the One who made them, or the Son through whom they were created”.¹³⁸

John Paul II Implicit in *Laudato Si'*”, in M. Mills – J.A. Orr – H. Schnitker, Reflections on Pope's Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 188-199.

135 Cf. Augustine, *c. Faust.* 20, 20.

136 Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 7, 12.

137 Augustine, *c. Fort.* 21. trans. by Albert H. Newman. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. PL 42, 122-123: Omnipotentem Deum, iustum et bonum, fecisse bona. Sed ea quae ab illo facta sunt, non possunt esse talia, qualis est ipse qui fecit.

138 Augustine, *Gen. adu. Man.* 2, 4. PL 34, 172: “...sed non sic bona sunt, quomodo bonus est Deus, quia ille fecit, haec autem facta sunt: nec ea genuit de seipso, ut hoc essent quod ipse est; sed ea fecit de nihilo, ut non essent aequalia, nec ei a quo facta sunt; nec Filio eius per quem facta sunt”.

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On the other hand, it is wrong to devalue human dignity and place it below other living creatures in the universe. The Bishop of Hippo brings this doctrine to light by giving an extremely illustrative example. In view of the fact that there were slaves in his own days, Augustine defended the dignity of the slaves, and pleaded for the humane treatment they deserved.¹³⁹ Therefore, despite the fact that slaves had a commercial economic value, i.e., they had monetary price, as was customary at his time, and that this price could even be lower than the price of a horse or any other animal, Augustine drew attention to the fact that human dignity is over and above these economic and chrematistic elements, and reminded the slave masters of their duty to care for their slaves, to form them to be good Christians, and to love them in God as neighbors, more valuable than garments and other elements:

For a Christian ought not to possess a slave in the same way as a horse or money: although it may happen that a horse is valued at a greater price than a slave, and some article of gold or silver at much more. But with respect to that slave, if he is being educated and ruled by time as his master, in a way more upright, and more honourable, and more conducing to the fear of God, than can be done by him who desires to take him away, I do not know whether any one would dare to say that he ought to be despised like a garment. For a man ought to love a fellow-man as himself, inasmuch as he is commanded by the Lord of all (as is shown by what follows) even to love his enemies.¹⁴⁰

Hence, the value and dignity of the human person cannot be equated with the animals and other living beings, as some modern environmentalists want to embrace and even accuse those who do not think like they do as “anthropocentric” and “primacist”.¹⁴¹

In the face of this pantheistic worldview, which in some occasions can even be hidden in a Christian or biblically inspired thought, taking the form of a crypto-pantheistic environmentalism, Augustine’s doctrine on creation can shed light on how

139 Cf. G. Corcoran, *Saint Augustin on Slavery*, Roma, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1985; Cf. A. Conley, «Augustine and Slavery. Freedom for the Free», in T. Delgado - J. Doody - K. Paffenroth, *Augustine and Social Justice*, Lanham, Lexington Books, 2015, 131-144.

140 Augustine, *s. dom. m.* 1, 59. trans. by William Findlay. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 6. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888.). PL 34, 1260: “Non enim christianum oportet sic possidere servum quomodo equum aut argentum, quamquam fieri possit ut maiore pretio valeat equus quam servus, et multo magis aliquid aureum vel argenteum. Sed ille servus, si rectius et honestius et ad Deum colendum accomodatius abs te domino educatur aut regitur, quam ab illo potest qui eum cupit auferre, nescio utrum quisquam dicere audeat ut vestimentum eum debere contemni. Hominem namque homo tamquam se ipsum diligere debet, cui ab omnium Domino, sicut ea quae sequuntur ostendunt, etiam ut inimicos diligat imperatur.”

141 Cf. Joseph Kelley “Anthropocene as Empire. An Augustinian Anthropology for ‘Keeping Wild’”, en J. Doody – K. Paffenroth – M. Smillie (ed.), *Augustine and Environment*, Lanham-Boulder-New York-London, Lexington Books, 20116, 55 ; Cf. Eileen Crist, “On the Poverty of Our Nomenclature”, in *Environmental Humanities Journal* 3 (2013), 130.

we should look at creation and discover its proper place in the natural order of things. According to the Bishop of Hippo, the goodness and beauty of creation are primarily signs which reminds us of the Creator. And being signs of something beyond themselves, their splendid beauty and harmony should lead us towards the beauty of God Himself. For this reason, Augustine invites us to strip environmentalism of its pagan elements to be able to transcend towards the Creator. There is no 'goddess nature', nor a 'god Pan', who is nothing but 'pure panic', as Chesterton reminds us.¹⁴² There is only an omnipotent God who, moved by pure love and mercy, has created everything from nothing;¹⁴³ after all, the world is contingent and need not to exist.¹⁴⁴ For this reason, creation is a living and patent sign that must lead man to meet his own maker, as Augustine says: "contemplate the beauty of the world and praise the Creator's design: see what He did and love the One who did it. But remember mainly this: love the One who made it; because you, who love Him, are also made in His image".¹⁴⁵

According to Augustine, it is a shame if one loves the world but fails to love the Creator of the world, or if one loves the goodness and beauty of creation, but has not loved the highest Good, i.e. God Himself, who made all creatures to be beautiful and good:

But whereas other things are not loved, except because they are good, be ashamed, in cleaving to them, not to love the good itself whence they are good. That also, which is a mind, only because it is a mind, while it is not yet also good by the turning itself to the unchangeable good, but, as I said, is only a mind; whenever it so pleases us, as that we prefer it even, if we understand aright, to all corporeal light, does not please us in itself, but in that skill by which it was made.¹⁴⁶

142 G. K. Chesterton, *St. Francis of Assisi*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 2013, p. 20: "Whatever natural religion may have had to do with their beginnings, nothing but fiends now inhabited those hollow shrines. Pan was nothing but panic. Venus was nothing but venereal vice. I do not mean for a moment, of course, that all the individual pagans were of this character even to the end; but it was as individuals that they differed from it".

143 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 2, 4: Also *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 6, 10: "Et ideo Deus rectissime creditur omnia de nihilo fecisse, quia etiamsi omnia formata de ista materia facta sunt, haec ipsa materia tamen de omnino nihilo facta est."

144 Augustine, *ciu.* 11, 4. PL 41, 319: "Sed quid placuit aeterno Deo tunc facere caelum et terram, quae antea non fecisset? Qui hoc dicunt, si mundum aeternum sine ullo initio, et ideo nec a Deo factum videri volunt, nimis aversi sunt a veritate et letali morbo impietatis insaniunt."

145 Augustine, *s.* 68, 5. PL 38, 439: "Vide pulchritudinem mundi, et lauda consilium Creatoris: vide quod fecit, ama qui fecit. Tene hoc maxime, ama qui fecit; quia et te ipsum amatorem suum ad imaginem suam fecit".

146 Augustine, *trin.* 8, 3, 5. trans. by Arthur West Haddan. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 950: "Pudeat autem cum alia non amentur nisi quia bona sunt, eis inhaerendo non amare Bonum ipsum unde bona sunt. Illud etiam, quod animus, tantum quia est animus, etiam nondum eo modo bonus

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Augustine invites us to love the Creator in the creature, knowing that creature reflects the beauty of God, but while its splendor is contingent and temporary, God's beauty is eternal and remains forever:

Let our God be our hope. He who made all things, is better than all! He who made what is beautiful, is more beautiful than all that is such. He who made whatever is mighty, is Himself mightier. He who made whatever is great, is Himself greater. He will be unto you everything that you love. Learn in the creature to love the Creator; and in the work Him who made it. Let not that which has been made by Him detain your affections, so that you should lose Him by whom you yourself were made also.¹⁴⁷

For Augustine, the book of creation has a mediating value as it speaks of the beauty and splendor of God. But even if it can be lavishly beautiful, still the One who made it is far more beautiful. He says: "Now all things are fair that You have made, but behold, You are inexpressibly fairer who hast made all things".¹⁴⁸

Hence, in the mind of Augustine, the contemplative approach on nature must not end and culminate in nature itself, as is the flaw of pantheism and neo-pagan environmental movements which would often end up deifying nature. Contemplation on creation must lead the mind to God; creation serves as medium to discover the eternal beauty of God Himself. For this reason, one of the keys to the Augustinian thought is transcendence—going beyond creatures and ascending towards God. According to the Augustinian world view, the care on the environment and the common planetary home, must be motivated by that eschatological vision where all created things will find its perfection and completion at the moment of recapitulation (Eph 1, 10), in the manifestation of the Son of Man.

2.3.5. The Beauty of Creation.

When confronted with the grandeur of the universe filled with immense beauty and

quo se convertit ad incommutabile Bonum; sed, ut dixi, tantum animus, cum ita nobis placet ut eum omni etiam luci corporeae cum bene intellegimus, praeferamus, non in se ipso nobis placet sed in illa arte qua factus est".

147 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 39, 8. trans. by J.E. Tweed. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 36, 439: "Sit spes nostra Deus noster. Qui fecit omnia, melior est omnibus; qui pulchra fecit, pulchrior est omnibus; qui fortia, fortior est; qui magna, maior est: quidquid amaveris, ille tibi erit. Disce amare in creatura creatorem, et in factura factorem; ne teneat te quod ab illo factum est, et amittas eum a quo et ipse factus es".

148 Augustine, *conf.* 13, 28. trans. by J.G. Pilkington. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 856: "Et pulchra sunt omnia faciente te, et ecce tu inenarrabiliter pulchrior, qui fecisti omnia".

harmony, any human being can be bewildered and amazed. Augustine reflects in his works that the “*coup de beauté*” of the world can arouse the admiration of every human being who has opened the eyes of his heart and has overcome the wall of secularization that “disenchants” nature. The modern trend of secularization turns man into a voracious consumer who cannot see in creation other than a heap of unlimited resources which satisfy his needs and has become indifferent to the fact that creation itself can reach exhaustion and death.

When this contemporary trend of consumerism seeps into the interior and man enters into a state which in Augustine's language is called “dispersion” and “vain curiosity”; man becomes ecstatic before nature, and its captivating beauty leads him to wonder if nature is itself a ‘God’. In a manner typical to Augustine, in his writings he gives a voice to this human restlessness, the restlessness of the eternal man,¹⁴⁹ of the man of all times, as he intellectually undertakes this question on the origin and destiny of beauty. Thus, Augustine asks the creatures if they are ‘God’. The creatures answer him that they are not God, but that it is necessary to rise above them in order to find God. They are a mere sign, a semiotic instrument that invites human being to go beyond, to transcend. Finally, the creatures in harmonic chorus respond to Augustine that the only thing they can tell him about the God he seeks is that God has created them. The Augustinian text is of great eloquence:

I asked the earth; and it answered, I am not He; and whatsoever are therein made the same confession. I asked the sea and the deeps, and the creeping things that lived, and they replied, We are not your God, seek higher than we. I asked the breezy air, and the universal air with its inhabitants answered, Anaximenes was deceived, I am not God. I asked the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars: Neither, say they, are we the God whom you seek? And I answered unto all these things which stand about the door of my flesh, You have told me concerning my God, that you are not He; tell me something about Him. And with a loud voice they exclaimed, He made us.¹⁵⁰

Augustine expressed again this same thought some years later when he preached

149 To paraphrase the celebrated book which bears the very same title by G. K. Chesterton, *The Eternal Man*, Madrid, Cristiandad, 2007.

150 Augustine, *conf. 10, 9*. Trans. by J.G. Pilkington. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 783: “Interrogavi terram, et dixit: “Non sum”; et quaecumque in eadem sunt, idem confessa sunt. Interrogavi mare et abyssos et reptilia animarum vivarum, et responderunt: “Non sumus Deus tuus; quaere super nos”. Interrogavi auras flabiles, et inquit universus aer cum incolis suis: “Fallitur Anaximenes; non sum Deus”. Interrogavi caelum, solem, lunam, stellas: “Neque nos sumus Deus, quem quaeris”, inquirunt. Et dixi omnibus his, quae circumstant fores carnis meae: “Dicite mihi de Deo meo, quod vos non estis, dicite mihi de illo aliquid”. Et exclamaverunt voce magna: Ipse fecit nos.”

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to the people, aware that some of his faithful could have asked the same question, and could have come to believe that nature itself was God or, from a materialistic perspective quite common in North Africa during his days, that the world was the tangible part of God, or a part of His own nature:

Let your mind roam the whole creation: from all sides creation will cry to you, “God made me”. Whatever delights you in art points you to the artist, and all the more so if you go around the whole created order: gazing on it fills you with longing to praise its maker. You see the heavens: they are the mighty works of God. You see the earth: God made the numbers of numerous seeds, the different species of plants, the great multitudes of animals.¹⁵¹

God is the author and creator of everything that exists, and the diversity of creatures and their beauty speak only of their Creator, and when creation is questioned by man, its only reply is that it has been created by God.

The beauty of the world can trigger in man an overwhelming experience that can only be translated into praise. Whoever contemplates the extraordinary beauty of creation with the eyes of the heart cannot remain silent and needs to express his admiration through praise to the Creator. For Augustine, the world and the entire creation is a form of sacrament, a tangible sign of the beauty of God so that when the human heart is open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, it becomes disposed to *confessio laudis*, leading him to recognize and praise the greatness of God, as well as the perfection and goodness of all that He has created:

How powerful is God, who made the earth! How powerful is God, who filled it with good things, who gave their several lives to all its living creatures, who sowed various seeds in the womb of the earth that it might bear so many different shrubs and such beautiful trees! How powerful is God, and how great! It is your calling, you saint of God, to question, and creation’s part to respond to you. Its response is creation’s song of confession, and as you hear it, you bless God and tell of his power.¹⁵²

151 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 26, 2, 12. Trans. by Maria Boulding, OSB. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 15. Edited by J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000), 282. PL 36, 205: “Circumeat animus tuus per universam creaturam: undique tibi clamabit creatura: Deus me fecit. Quidquid te delectarit in arte, artificem commendat; magisque si circumeas universa, consideratio concipit artificis laudem. Vides coelos, magna opera Dei sunt. Vides terram, Deus fecit seminum numeros, diversitates germinum, multitudinem animalium.”

152 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 144, 14. Trans. by Maria Boulding, OSB. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 20. Edited by B. Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 392. PL 36, 1879: “Quam potens Deus, qui fecit terram! quam potens Deus, qui implevit terram bonis! quam potens Deus, qui dedit vitas suas proprias animalibus! quam potens Deus, qui semina diversa dedit visceribus terrae, ut germinarent tantam varietatem fructuum, tantam speciem arborum! quam potens Deus, quam magnus Deus! Tu interroga, creatura respondet; et de responsione,

In the *Confessions*, Augustine praises God for the work of redemption that He himself has accomplished with His own life; but also he praises God for the wonders of creation which manifests His eternal beauty and draws man to ascend to the Creator:

You heavens of heavens, praise him, and let the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord. How can the psalmist hope to unfurl them all? By enumerating them? No, that is impossible, but he summarizes and binds them all together into a tight bundle which contains all the heavenly beings that praise their creator.¹⁵³

On the other hand, in his controversy with Julian of Eclana who accused him of maintaining some Manichean ideas, Augustine tells Julian that frequently he praises God for the goodness of creation, continually elevating his *confessio laudis* to God through creation, and not like the Manicheans, who considered the world as fruit of the god of darkness, or like the Platonists who despised the material world as nothing more than a shadow of the supra-celestial world which is the perfect world. Thus Augustine says to Julian: “the praise of creatures is frequently on my lips”.¹⁵⁴ This phrase has become also an invitation to praise God for the beauty of His creation and through the way of contemplation, be able to encounter Him, the Supreme Beauty.

For the Bishop of Hippo, praise on the lips is giving back to God what He himself has given to man. For this reason, when Augustine makes a commentary on the text of Mt 22, 15-22 (where the Pharisees want to trap Jesus by asking whether it is right to pay tax to Caesar or not, and Christ asks for a coin, and points out that it is necessary give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's), he points out again that it is necessary to give God the praise He deserves. If God has given man the ability to perceive His presence in creation through the Holy Spirit, man ought to give praise to God when he perceives the beauty of everything He created. Caesar must be given his due, but praise and glory is for God and the believer must offer himself completely to God:

As human beings render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar when they hand back the coin that bears his image, so do they render to God what belongs to God when they give themselves back to him whose image they bear and lift the minds above themselves to their designer, to the light from which they

tamquam confessione creaturae, tu, sancte Dei, benedicis Deum, et potentiam loqueris.”

153 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 148, 6. Trans. by Maria Boulding, OSB. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 15. Edited by J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000), 480-81. PL 36, 1941: “Laudate eum coeli coelorum, et aquae quae super coelos sunt, laudent nomen Domini. Quando explicat omnia numerando? Sed tamen summatim et quasi omnia perstrinxit, et conclusit omnia coelestia laudantia Creatorem suum.”

154 Cf. Augustine, *c. Iul. imp.* 4, 121. PL 45, 1416: “Laudationem creaturarum frequentamus et nos”.

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came and (...) as they trustingly raise the eyes of their hearts. Mentally they contemplate the entire world that lies around them: earth, sea, and sky; they see how beautifully all things are disposed, how they pursue their ordered courses, distinguished by their species, preserved by their generative powers, changing, evolving, and surviving through swiftly-running time. When wise people observe creation, they delight in its creator (...) then they exclaim for sheer joy, “How magnificent are your works, O Lord! In wisdom you have created all things”.¹⁵⁵

The beauty of the created beings is their praise that they raise to God; it has become their own unspoken confession:

Question the beauty of the earth, question the beauty of the sea, question the beauty of the air, amply spread around everywhere, question the beauty of the sky, question the serried ranks of the stars, question the sun making the day glorious with its bright beams, question the moon (...), question all these things. They all answer you, “Here we are, look; we’re beautiful.”¹⁵⁶

Tertullian, possibly with a touch of prosopopoeia, recalled that animated beings

155 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 103, 4, 2. Trans. by Maria Boulding, OSB. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 19. Edited by B. Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003), 168. PL 36, 1379: “Homines ergo reddentes Deo quae Dei sunt, si Caesari reddunt quod Caesaris est; id est, reddentes Caesari imaginem suam, et reddentes Deo imaginem suam, erigunt ipsam mentem suam, non ad se, sed ad artificem suum, et ad lumen unde sunt, et ad calorem quemdam spiritalem unde fervescunt, et unde remoti frigescunt, et unde recedentes contenebrantur, et quo revertentes illuminantur: et quia pie illi dixerunt: Tu illuminabis lucernam meam, Domine; Deus meus, illuminabis tenebras meas; discussis tenebris terrenae stultitiae, aperientes os et ducentes spiritum, erigunt, ut dixi, fidentem oculum cordis; et circumspiciunt mente universum mundum, terram, mare et coelum, et videntes omnia pulchre disposita, ordinata currere, digeri generibus, fulciri seminibus, mutari successionibus, currere temporibus placet eis in his artifex, ut et ipsi placeant in artificio artificii; et exclamant prae magno gaudio, quia vere huic laetitiae nihil comparari potest: Quam magnificata sunt opera tua, Domine! Omnia in sapientia fecisti. Ubi est ipsa sapientia in qua omnia fecisti? quo sensu attingitur? quo oculo videtur? quo studio quaeritur? quo merito possidetur? Quo putatis, nisi gratia sua? Qui donavit ut simus, donat ut boni simus. Donat conversis, qui antequam converterentur, et cum aversi irent post vias suas, nonne quaesivit eos? nonne descendit? nonne Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis? nonne accendit lucernam carnis suae, dum penderet in cruce, et quaesivit perditam drachmam? Quaesivit et invenit, vicinis congratulantibus, id est omni creatura spiritali quae Deum proxime attingit. Vicinis laetantibus inventa est drachma; Angelis laetantibus inventa est anima humana. Inventa est, ergo gaudeat, et dicat: Quam magnificata sunt opera tua, Domine! Omnia in sapientia fecisti.”

156 Augustine, *s.* 241, 2. Trans. by Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 7. Edited by J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1993), 71. PL 38, 1134: “Interroga pulchritudinem terrae, interroga pulchritudinem maris, interroga pulchritudinem dilatati et diffusi aeris, interroga pulchritudinem coeli, interroga ordinem siderum, interroga solem fulgore suo diem clarificantem, interroga lunam splendore subsequentis noctis tenebras temperantem, interroga animalia quae moventur in aquis, quae morantur in terris, quae volitant in aere; latentes animas, perspicua corpora; visibilia regenda, invisibiles regentes: interroga ista, Respondent tibi omnia: Ecce vide, pulchra sumus. Pulchritudo eorum, confessio eorum.”

praise God and pray. Thus, he says in *De Oratione*¹⁵⁷ that when creatures soar through the heavens with their wings spread out, they imitate the cross of the Lord, and the four-legged beasts when they come out of their pens and fold their legs as though kneeling on the ground, they pay homage and praise to God.

2.3.6. Eschatological perspective

In the Augustinian ecological thoughts, the beauty of creation has also an eschatological significance. For Augustine, the admiration and praise of creation must not be fixated on earthly things but must lead the human mind to transcend and contemplate on the higher beauty, which in the eschatological vision of St. Paul, the 'beauty' which God prepares in the City of God where "no eye has ever seen nor any ear has ever heard what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor 2, 9). The whole creation is heading towards perfection, towards a consummation beyond this present world. Hence, ecology for Augustine does not only have a historical and temporal meaning. While it recognizes and contemplates the earthly beauty, the Augustinian ecological thinking goes beyond the perceivable; it is in a sense transcendent. This transcendence has two nuances: the eschatological and the sacramental.

The beauty of creation according to Augustine has a transcendent dimension in an eschatological sense, because as St. Paul says "now we only see things as in a mirror; later in the kingdom of heaven, we will be able to see the beauty of God as it truly is" (1 Cor 13, 12). The entire creation will reach its fullness in God. For this reason, Augustine, in his work *the City of God*, invites his readers to allow themselves, on the one hand, 'to be amazed' by the beauty which surrounds them, but on the other hand, to be aware that this earthly beauty is nothing but a foretaste of that 'beauty' prepared by God in the kingdom of heaven. It deals with the text in which Augustine enumerates various creatures and invites his readers to contemplate their inherent beauty and harmony, such as those which may exist in the body of an ant or a bee, which as Augustine confesses, he prefers the perfection of the body of a whale,¹⁵⁸ just as he admires the microscopic perfection of the body of an ant, more than the magnificence of a river when it is being crossed riding on a great donkey.¹⁵⁹ Or perhaps Augustine stops at describing the beauty of the sea and its various colors and shades, to finally point out that this beauty of the present world is nothing compared to the beauty that one day will be manifest in the kingdom of heaven:

157 Cf. Tertuliano, *De Oratione*, 29. CSEL 20, 200: 5-10.

158 Cf. Augustine, *ciu.* 22, 24.

159 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 26.

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How can I tell of the rest of creation, with all its beauty and utility, which the divine goodness has given to man to please his eye and serve his purposes, condemned though he is, and hurled into these labors and miseries? Shall I speak of the manifold and various loveliness of sky, and earth, and sea; of the plentiful supply and wonderful qualities of the light; of sun, moon, and stars; of the shade of trees; of the colors and perfume of flowers; of the multitude of birds, all differing in plumage and in song; of the variety of animals, of which the smallest in size are often the most wonderful — the works of ants and bees astonishing us more than the huge bodies of whales? Shall I speak of the sea, which itself is so grand a spectacle (...) And all these are but the solace of the wretched and condemned, not the rewards of the blessed. What then shall these rewards be, if such be the blessings of a condemned state? What will He give to those whom He has predestined to life, who has given such things even to those whom He has predestined to death?¹⁶⁰

Also, for Augustine, the beauty of the world and the entire creation has a sacramental meaning, a sign which serves as an invitation to discover God as its Creator and to give Him praise. It is a sort of voice which creation directs to every human being. But at times men are so deafened by worldly voices of consumerism or materialism that they cannot recognize the voice of God in creation. Certainly, as one of the classical specialists on ecology Aldo Leopold has pointed out, ecology is a matter of love and respect. In his book, *A Sand County Almanac*, he asserts:

(...) It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration of land, and a high regard for its value. By value,

160 Augustine, *ciu.* 22, 24. trans. by Marcus Dods. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2.* Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. PL 41, 791-792: “Iam cetera pulchritudo et utilitas creaturae, quae homini, licet in istos labores miseriasque proiecto atque damnato, spectanda atque sumenda divina largitate concessa est, quo sermone terminari potest? in caeli et terrae et maris multimoda et varia pulchritudine, in ipsius lucis tanta copia tamque mirabili specie, in sole ac luna et sideribus, in opacitatibus nemorum, in coloribus et odoribus florum, in diversitate ac multitudine volucrum garrularum atque pictarum, in multiforimi specie tot tantarumque animantium, quarum illae plus habent admirationis, quae molis minimum (plus enim formicularum et apicularum opera stupemus quam immensa corpora ballaenarum), in ipsius quoque maris tam grandi spectaculo, cum sese diversis coloribus velut vestibis induit et aliquando viride atque hoc multis modis, aliquando purpureum, aliquando caeruleum est. Quam porro delectabiliter spectatur etiam quandocumque turbatur, et fit inde maior suavitas, quia sic demulcet intuentem, ut non iacet et quatiat navigantem! Quid ciborum usquequaque copia contra famem? quid saporum diversitas contra fastidium, naturae diffusa divitiis, non coquorum arte ac labore quaesita? quid in tam multis rebus tuendae aut recipiendae salutis auxilia! Quam grata vicissitudo diei alternantis et noctis! Aurarum quam blanda temperies! In fruticibus et pecoribus indumentorum conficiendorum quanta materies! Omnia commemorare quis possit? Haec autem sola, quae a me velut in quemdam sunt aggerem coartata, si vellem velut colligata involucra solvere atque discutere, quanta mihi mora esset in singulis, quibus plurima continentur! Et haec omnia miserorum sunt damnatorumque solacia, non praemia beatorum. Quae igitur illa sunt, si tot et talia ac tanta sunt ista? Quid dabit eis quos praedestinavit ad vitam, qui haec dedit etiam eis quos praedestinavit ad mortem?”

I of course mean, something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense.¹⁶¹

The same is true for Augustine. It is important to respect and care for the world so that it can continue to be a sacrament of God, a sign of his love, of his greatness and continue to call on human beings to transcend. In the *Confessions*, Augustine recounts how all the creatures in heaven and on earth cried out to him from everywhere with the voice of their beauty inviting him to love God. The Creatures, for not possessing reason nor a heart into which the Holy Spirit can be poured into, cannot love God the way a human being does. So, for Augustine, they cry to man with their beauty and remind him that he must love and praise God:

You have stricken my heart with Your word, and I loved You. And also the heaven, and earth, and all that is therein, behold, on every side they say that I should love You; nor do they cease to speak unto all, so that they are without excuse.¹⁶²

Moreover, Augustine stresses that creation is tangible and therefore, can be studied scientifically. In fact, there are people who have become deeply knowledgeable of nature, the course of the stars and their natural laws. But such great knowledge does not guarantee they will acknowledge the Creator. At time, too full of themselves, they refuse to acknowledge the 'greater force' they do not see. As St. Paul points out in his first letter to the Corinthians; 'science inflates, and only charity edifies' (1 Cor 8, 1). Augustine adds one more element to this Pauline reflection. He points out that there can be people who approach creation as if it were a mere object of study. They may succeed in knowing rationally so much about the creatures and the universe. They have become so learned on many things but have never become wise. They are foolish because they fail to recognize an essential dimension of nature, i.e., its being a sign or a sacrament of God. As Augustine states:

The man, however, who puts so high a value on these things as to be inclined to boast himself one of the learned, and who does not rather inquire after the source from which those things which he perceives to be true derive their truth, and from which those others which he perceives to be unchangeable also derive their truth and unchangeableness, and who, mounting up from bodily appearances to the mind of man, and finding that it too is changeable (for it is

161 A. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1968, 223.

162 Augustine, *conf.* 10, 8. trans. by J.G. Pilkington. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. PL 32, 782: "Percussisti cor meum verbo tuo, et amavi te. Sed et caelum et terra et omnia, quae in eis sunt, ecce undique mihi dicunt, ut te amem, nec cessant dicere omnibus, ut sint inexcusabiles."

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sometimes instructed, at other times uninstructed), although it holds a middle place between the unchangeable truth above it and the changeable things beneath it, does not strive to make all things redound to the praise and love of the one God from whom he knows that all things have their being — the man, I say, who acts in this way may seem to be learned, but wise he cannot in any sense be deemed.¹⁶³

Another interesting dimension of Augustine's eschatological thought is his projection of the redeemed City of God with the presence of irrational creatures and material realities. It seems that for Augustine, the whole of creation—not just humanity alone—but man along with the animals and the entire physical universe are destined to be transformed in the new City. David Meconi in an interesting article points out that it is highly likely that in the Augustinian thinking, there would be animals or other living beings in the city of God. Meconi makes an analysis of a text from *De ciuitate Dei*, where Augustine speaks, on the one hand, of the bodies of the chosen and saints of God, and on the other hand, the text also indicates that together with them, is the presence of other material bodies (*corporalia*) that will subsist together with the bodies of the elect (*corpora*):

Wherefore it may very well be, and it is thoroughly credible, that we shall in the future world see the material forms of the new heavens and the new earth in such a way that we shall most distinctly recognize God everywhere present and governing all things, material as well as spiritual, and shall see Him, not as now we understand the invisible things of God, by the things which are made, and see Him darkly, as in a mirror, and in part, and rather by faith than by bodily vision of material appearances, but by means of the bodies we shall wear and which we shall see wherever we turn our eyes.¹⁶⁴

163 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 2, 38, 57. trans. by James Shaw. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff. PL 34, 61-62: “Quae tamen omnia quisquis ita dilexerit ut iactare se inter imperitos velit, et non potius quaerere unde sint vera quae tantummodo vera esse penserit, et unde quaedam non solum vera, sed etiam incommutabilia, quae incommutabilia esse comprehenderit, ac sic a specie corporum usque ad humanam mentem perveniens, cum et ipsam mutabilem invenerit, quod nunc docta, nunc indocta sit, constituta tamen inter incommutabilem supra se veritatem, et mutabilia infra se cetera, ad unius Dei laudem atque dilectionem cuncta convertere a quo cuncta esse cognoscit, doctus videri potest, esse autem sapiens nullo modo.”

164 Augustine, *ciu.* 22, 29, 6. Trans. by Marcus Dods. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.). PL 41, 800: “Quamobrem fieri potest valdeque credibile est sic nos visuros mundana tunc corpora caeli novi et terrae novae, ut Deum ubique praesentem et universa etiam corporalia gubernantem per corpora quae gestabimus et quae conspiciemus, quaquaversum oculos duxerimus, clarissima perspicuitate videamus, non sicut nunc invisibilia Dei per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur per speculum in aenigmate et ex parte, ubi plus in nobis valet fides, qua credimus, quam rerum corporalium species, quam per oculos cernimus corporals”.

An in-depth analysis of this text made Meconi reach a conclusion that possibly Augustine projects that in the new heaven there will also be animals and material realities, which in God's mysterious way can also reach their perfection and fullness in the city of God. Having said that, it is also important to consider two other Augustinian ideas. On the one hand, for Augustine, the consummation of all things in the *eschaton* does not imply the total destruction of creation, but rather its transformation, its perfection, the moment of its manifestation, as St. John indicates 'how we shall be in the future, because we will see God as He really is' (1 Jn 3, 2).

On the other hand, Augustine indicates that in the city of God once the earthly pilgrimage comes to an end and the two cities are established forever and definitively, in the city of God, the chosen ones will have everything necessary to achieve perfect happiness and the unnecessary will cease to be. In sermon 242, Augustine comments:

So, we are asked, "If the body's liability to decay is not going to rise again, why did the Lord Christ eat?" Well, you can read that he ate: can you read that he was hungry? That he ate was a matter of his power, not of his need. If he had a craving to eat, he would have been in need. Again, if he hadn't been able to eat, it would have meant he had less capability. Did even angels fail to eat, when they were given hospitality by our ancestors (Gen. 18: 1-9) and yet they were not liable to decay?¹⁶⁵

God governs all things with His infinite wisdom, and He knows what is best for each moment. At times, He allows negative things to happen but so that He can draw goodness out of them. Nothing escapes from His eternal plan, as He is the immutable ruler of the constantly changing world, as Augustine indicates:

For the change suitable to the present age has been enjoined by God, who knows infinitely better than man what is fitting for every age, and who is, whether He give or add, abolish or curtail, increase or diminish, the unchangeable Governor as He is the unchangeable Creator of mutable things.¹⁶⁶

165 Augustine, *s.* 242, 2. Trans. by Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 7. Edited by J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1993), 79. PL 38, 1139-1140: Dicitur ergo nobis: Si corruptio corporis non resurget, quare manducavit Dominus Christus? Legistis quia manducavit, numquid legistis quia esurivit? Quod manducavit, potestatis fuit, non egestatis. Si desideraret manducare, egeret. Rursus si manducare non posset, minus valeret. Numquid et Angeli, quando suscepti sunt hospitio a patribus nostris, non manducaverunt 4, et tamen corruptibiles non fuerunt?

166 Augustine, *ep.* 138, 5. Trans. by J.G. Cunningham. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 33, 527: "quod huic tempori aptum esset, qui multo magis quam homo novit quid cuique tempori accommodate adhibeatur; quid quando impertiat, addat, auferat, detrahat, augeat, minuatve, immutabilis mutabilium, sicut creator, ita moderator".

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And in His provident administration of the universe, guided by his omniscient wisdom, God is likened by Augustine to a great conductor of an orchestra, like a great musician who knows how to integrate the various sounds and quietude, the apparent dissonances and consonances, in order to produce a refined harmony, a soothing music. In the same manner, among those who will be singing praise to God in the *eschaton*, will be the irrational creatures, who by their existence, will participate in contemplating forever the beauty of the Creator:

The component parts of which are the dispensations adapted to each successive age, shall be finished, like the grand melody of some ineffably wise master of song, and those pass into the eternal immediate contemplation of God who here, though it is a time of faith, not of sight, are acceptably worshipping Him.¹⁶⁷

2.3.7. The order and design in the universe

For Augustine, the idea of order is essential, and it occupies a central place when it deals with creation and ecology. God created all things with order according to His eternal design, established natural law, and governs His house which is the entire universe with love and care much more than any human could do in his own household. Hence, for Augustine, order in nature must be another way to reach God, since in the universe everything, from the smallest to the greatest of creatures, is endowed with order and innate design:

God has ordered everything, and made everything: to some He has given sense and understanding and immortality, as to the angels; to some He has given sense and understanding with mortality, as to man; to some He has given bodily sense, yet gave them not understanding, or immortality, as to cattle: to some He has given neither sense, nor understanding, nor immortality, as to herbs, trees, stones: yet even these cannot be wanting in their kind, and by certain degrees He has ordered His creation, from earth up to heaven, from visible to invisible, from mortal to immortal.¹⁶⁸

167 Ibid. PL 33, 527: “cuius particulae sunt quae suis quibusque temporibus apta sunt, velut magnum carmen cuiusdam ineffabilis modulatrix excurrat, atque inde transeat in aeternam contemplationem speciei qui Deum rite colunt, etiam cum tempus est fidei.”

168 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 144, 13. Trans. by J.E. Tweed. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 8. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 36, 1878: “Deus ordinavit omnia, et fecit omnia: quibusdam dedit sensum, et intellectum, et immortalitatem, sicut Angelis; quibusdam dedit sensum et intellectum cum mortalitate, sicut hominibus; quibusdam dedit sensum corporis, nec intellectum, nec immortalitatem dedit, sicut pecoribus; quibusdam vero nec sensum, nec intellectum, nec immortalitatem, sicut herbis, lignis, lapidibus: tamen et ipsa in genere suo deesse non possunt, et gradibus quibusdam ordinavit creaturam, a terra usque ad coelum, a visibilibus ad invisibilia, a mortalibus ad immortalia”.

And this order is at the same time preserved by the Trinitarian God who determined everything and established His law from the simplest part of a tiny worm, to the most complex creatures of the same universe.¹⁶⁹ Despite this, still there are people who, driven by some sort of 'scientism', have trivialized the beauty of nature and even go as far as to argue that human being is just as admirable as a worm made up only of 959 cells, since according to this worldview, all beings came into existence by a process called 'spontaneous generation'. As already mentioned, among these group are Hawking and Mlodinow who affirmed in their writings that human being does not deserve greater admiration than a *Caenorhabditis elegans* since everything was made through spontaneous or accidental production.¹⁷⁰

Thus, apart from the opinions of these scientists—about whom Augustine already warned, that they can be knowledgeable but are not wise,¹⁷¹—all creatures are created with a definite reason or purpose in the mysterious plan of God; from the most useful, to those which are indifferent to human, and including even those which are deemed to be harmful. Man may not be fully aware of the existence of the design, but God has arranged everything with order and harmony according to His eternal wisdom.

Moreover, this order in creation never ceases to inspire and impress humans as creatures follow a series of systems and laws thus creating an orchestrated harmony in the entire universe. However, man can get so accustomed to this natural wonder around him that this beautiful reality in nature may go on its daily course almost unnoticed. But for Augustine the miracle that the vines and branches continue to produce fruit until today, is just as amazing as the miracle at Cana in Galilee when Jesus transformed water into wine (Jn 2, 1-11). With deep theological importance, the Cana miracle happened once; but the miracle which happens every day, in which the seeds and grains grow and continue to bear fruit, is just as admirable according to the Augustinian perspective:

For who is there that considers the works of God, whereby this whole world is governed and regulated, who is not amazed and overwhelmed with miracles? If he considers the vigorous power of a single grain of any seed whatever, it is a mighty thing, it inspires him with awe. But since men, intent on a different matter, have lost the consideration of the works of God, by which they should daily praise Him as the Creator, God has, as it were, reserved to Himself the doing of certain extraordinary actions, that, by striking them with wonder, He might rouse men as from sleep to worship Him.¹⁷²

169 Cf. Augustine, *en. Ps.* 125, 5.

170 Cf. S. Hawking – L. Mlodinow, *The Great Design*, New York, Bantam Books, 2010, 31.

171 Cf. Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 2, 38, 57.

172 Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 8, 1. Translated by John Gibb. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,

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And in this order established by the divine wisdom, the less perfect must obey the more perfect, so that in human nature, the body must submit to the soul, and the soul for its part must submit to God in order to achieve its full happiness.¹⁷³

On the other hand, in creation, as in a living body, the irrational creatures must submit to the rational, so that God's eternal design can be fulfilled, and all creatures can participate in God's rest where the whole of creation can achieve its purpose and full perfection.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, in Augustine's symbolic analogy, the fact that many beasts of the field have their heads bent down towards the earth, while man's head is inclined towards heaven, seem to indicate that human beings should not fix his gaze on earthly things, but rather must aspire for the goods of the kingdom of heaven, as he leads and governs creation in the name of God towards its final destiny.¹⁷⁵

Within the bounds of this order established by the Creator, some creatures serve as food for the other, in an orderly manner. Wild beasts feed on each other. In the same manner, human being can satisfy his needs from the resources which creation offers him, but always with prudence and moderation, and always with the awareness that he is simply an administrator of the earth and not its owner.¹⁷⁶

One more aspect which needs to be underscored in relation to the *ordo* established by God in nature, is that human being has the sublime responsibility to be the custodian and administrator of the goods of creation. But God is the sole owner, as Augustine points out:

Mine are those which you possess not, Mine are these which you possess. For if you are My servant, the whole of your property is Mine. For it cannot be, that is the property of the master which the servant has gotten to himself, and yet that not be the property of the Master which the Master Himself has created for the servant. Therefore Mine are the beasts of the wood which you have not taken; Mine are also the cattle on the mountains which are yours, and the oxen which are at your stall: all are My own, for I have created them.¹⁷⁷

First Series, Vol. 7. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 35, 1450: "Quis est enim qui considerat opera Dei, quibus regitur et administratur totus hic mundus, et non obstupescit obruiturque miraculis? Si consideret vim unius grani, cuiuslibet seminis, magna quaedam res est, horror est consideranti. Sed quia homines in aliud intenti perdidierunt considerationem operum Dei, in qua darent laudem quotidie Creatori; tamquam servavit sibi Deus inusitata quaedam quae faceret, ut tamquam dormientes homines, ad se colendum mirabilius excitaret".

173 Cf. Augustine, *s.* 128, 5.

174 Cf. Augustine, *conf.* 13, 47.

175 Cf. Augustine, *ciu.* 22, 24, 4.

176 Cf. Augustine, *c. Faust.* 20, 20. Also Cf. *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 20, 31.

177 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 49, 17. Trans. by J.E. Tweed. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 36,

In Augustine's perspective, man himself is part of God's creation. But being created in the image of God, he is called to govern the world and may even use its resources to satisfy his needs. However, this does not grant him the authority to harm or destroy creation, for it is God's house,¹⁷⁸ of which he is just an administrator. To drive a point, Augustine uses an image quite typical of his own time, that of the *Villicum*, an administrator of a farm. He is not the owner, but simply the one who governs and manages the property in behalf of the owner. His responsibility is to see to it that order is preserved; the workers carry out their work and the farm is cultivated properly so it may produce copious fruits. But it is not within his authority to exploit and destroy the farm to satisfy his greed, for the simple fact that he does not own the land.

The same is true with man in relation to creation. From an Augustinian point of view, right ecology implies a fundamental awareness on the part of man that he does not have absolute ownership of anything in this world. Not only in the spiritual level—for humility is the foundation of virtues according to Augustine—but also in the global or planetary level. In the common home, we are all administrators who are called to manage rightly what has been placed into our hands. But we are not its owners; we are servants who are called to carry out good management, so that we can leave the farm, that is to say, the earth, in good condition for future generations, and most of all, that we may be able to render and the end an account to the true owner of the farm who is God Himself. This is how Augustine articulates it:

After all, we are all stewards, and we have to do something with whatever has been entrusted to us in this life, so that we can account for it to the great householder. And from the one to whom more has been entrusted, a stricter account will be required (...) whether they are rich, or kings, or princes, or judges, whether they are bishops, or those in charge of churches.¹⁷⁹

579: "Mea sunt illa quae non possides, mea sunt ista quae possides. Si enim servus meus es tu, totum peculium tuum meum est. Neque enim est peculium Domini quod sibi servus comparavit, et non erit peculium Domini quod ipse Dominus servo creavit. Ergo meae sunt bestiae silvae quas tu non cepisti; mea sunt et pecora in montibus quae sunt tua, et boves qui sunt ad praesepe tuum: omnia mea sunt, quia ego creavi ea".

178 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 16, 26.

179 Augustine, s. 359A, 11. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 10. Edited by J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1993), 217. PL 38, 1597: "Omnes enim villici sumus et aliquid nobis in hac vita commissum est agendum unde magno patrifamilias rationem reddamus. Et cui plus commissum est, maior ratio ab illo exigitur. Prima lectio quae recitata est, terruit omnes et maxime eos terruit qui praesunt populis, sive divites sint, sive reges sint, sive principes sint, sive iudices sint, sive episcopi sint, sive praepositi ecclesiarum. Unusquisque de actu suo patri familiae redditurus est rationem".

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2.3.8. The Social dimension of goods

The human person, in addition to having been endowed with reason and understanding,¹⁸⁰ is the only creature made in the image and likeness of God,¹⁸¹ so that he must govern and administer creation in the name of God. But in the government and administration of goods, he must never forget that the things of the earth were created for all men, not just for a selected few. For Augustine, the social dimension of the goods of the earth is not inconsequential, but fundamental. Nature, which is lavish and generous, must be protected and cared for so that it continues to be a sign and living message of God for the poor and needy, not because nature lacks resources, but because of the excessive accumulation of goods in the hands of a few who, motivated by greed, have neglected the social dimension of goods, monopolize its possession, and rob the poor. Thus, says Augustine:

Take stock then: not only can you manage on a few things only, but God himself asks very few from you. Ask yourself how much he has given you and then pick out what you need: all the rest of your things lie there as superfluities, but for other people they are necessities. The superfluity of the rich is necessary to the poor. If you hold onto the superfluous items, then, you are keeping what belongs to someone else.¹⁸²

Creation is rich and bountiful, but it pertains to human being as administrator to make sure that the goods of this earth which belong to God, be beneficial to all men and avoiding every form of greed, avarice or the desire for profit, which hinder the just distribution of riches. The *ordo* of creation is violated when human being, by allowing himself to be seduced by selfishness and pride, seeks his own happiness not in God but in himself and in his self-vested interest, altering the natural order of the universe, the ecological order, the *ordo amoris*, and the order of relation with God and with fellow human beings.

While it is true that in the time of Augustine the situation was not as critical as the one we experience in the present, the exploitation of the poor by rich landowners who would cultivate the land even unto exhaustion, was not unusual in that period. For this reason, the Bishop of Hippo would continually intercede in behalf of the poor and ask

180 Cf. Augustine, *conf.* 13, 22; *trin.* 7, 12.

181 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 3, 20, 30.

182 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 147, 12. Trans. by Maria Boulding, OSB. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 15. Edited by J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000), 454. PL. 36, 1922. “Videte quia non solum pauca sunt quae vobis sufficient; sed nec ipse Deus multa a vobis quaerit. Quaere quantum tibi dederit, et ex eo tollo quod sufficit: caetera quae superflua iacent, aliorum sunt necessaria. Superflua divitum, necessaria sunt pauperum. Res alienae possidentur, cum superflua possidentur”.

that the oppressive situation be avoided, and that the goods of the earth be distributed fairly. Certainly, in Augustine's time, just as in ours, greed and excessive desire for money were the principal obstacles to justice. In the Augustinian correspondence, we find a particular case which illustrates the oppression by a powerful landowner of a simple and poor peasant, named Faventius, who was forced to escape from the farm where he was compelled to work like a slave, and how Augustine intervened to avail for him the right of asylum, in an extraordinary attempt to help him.

The ending of the story could not be more tragic. One night when Faventius had gone out for dinner with a friend, he was apprehended by Faventius, an officer in the service of the governor of the province of Africa, was taken far from Hippo where no one could trace him, and there they punished him for having fled from the farm and denounced the landowner.

Despite Augustine's effort to make an official complaint of the abuses committed against the poor in violation of legal statutes, even sending Florencio himself the text of the law which detailed the right to asylum,¹⁸³ at the end, everything fell on deaf ears. Faventius disappeared and nothing was heard of him again.¹⁸⁴ This was the context of Augustine's letter in *epistle 115*:

For although the integrity of that judge is widely famed as incorruptible, Faventius has for his adversary a man of very great wealth. To secure that money may not prevail in that court, I beg your Holiness, my beloved lord and venerable brother, to have the kindness to give the accompanying letter to the honorable magistrate, a man very much beloved by us, and to read this letter also to him; for I have not thought it necessary to write twice the same statement of the case. I trust that he will delay the hearing of the case, because I do not know whether the man is innocent or guilty.¹⁸⁵

2.3.9. Image of God and Human Dominion

Some critics of Augustine have accused him of having portrayed an image of God who created the universe by arbitrary will.¹⁸⁶ But by looking directly into his writings, we

183 Cf. Augustine, *ep.* 115, the letter was addressed to Fortunato bishop of Cirta.

184 Cf. Augustine, *ep.* 113-116. Cf. S. Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, Paris, Fayard, 1999, 377.

185 Augustine, *ep.* 115. Trans. by J.G. Cunningham. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 33, 430. "Habet enim causam cum homine pecuniosissimo, quamvis iudicis integritas fama clarissima praedicetur. Ne quid tamen apud Officium pecunia praevaleat, peto Sanctitatem tuam, domine dilectissime et venerabilis frater, ut honorabili nobisque carissimo Consulari digneris tradere litteras meas, et has ei legere; quia bis eandem causam insinuare necessarium non esse arbitratus sum; et eius causae differat audientiam, quoniam nescio utrum in ea nocens an innocens sit".

186 See Colin Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study*, 75-76.

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also see that such accusation does not really measure up to Augustine's true doctrine. For Augustine, "God is all-powerful not by arbitrary power but by the strength of wisdom".¹⁸⁷ Thus God's action which brings creation to existence proceeds purely from His wisdom and divine goodness. In response to the act of God, animate and inanimate things shape themselves as a balance whole, seeking all the time what science calls dynamic equilibrium.

But all this is simply the result of the divine wisdom and goodness that is not conditioned by any need or necessity. Rowan Williams points out that in Augustine's theological scheme, creation is viewed as a product of God's pure desire for the good of another; that from God's 'point of view', creation is 'good for nothing' as it doesn't serve a divine need.¹⁸⁸ God creates from the bounty of His goodness and in His divine wisdom governs creation with love that "seeks nothing for itself but the joy of the other".¹⁸⁹ This is the image of God that Augustine portrays in his doctrine of Trinity and creation.

Now for Augustine, the work of human dominion over nature is what makes humanity distinct from among other created beings. Basing his reflection on Genesis 1:26, Augustine argues that God has granted to humanity the dominion over creatures. He understands dominion as the rule by human beings of nonhuman creatures through the exercise of reason. The danger of the concept of dominion from an ecological perspective is identifying dominion with the *domination of human reason* over the world, the license to exercise arbitrary will without restraint. History has stigmatized humanity of abusive kings or political leaders who ruled by arbitrary will, politically motivated ideologies charged with greed and self-vested interest, and the rhetoric of modern science which promises to conquer the world by discovering its mysteries and exposing its secrets.

But this is not the kind of dominion which Augustine teaches in his Trinitarian view of creation. For Augustine dominion must reflect the human vocation of being the image of God in the world: "What gives him authority? The image of God."¹⁹⁰ Then he continued what this image of God means: "We have existence in common with stick and stones, life in common with trees, sense in common with beasts, understanding in common with angels."¹⁹¹ Human being is special and, in a sense, different from

187 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 9, 17, 32.

188 Cf. Rowan Williams, *On Augustine*, 72-73

189 Ibid., 75.

190 Augustine, *s.* 43, 3. (trans. Edmund Hill. Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991). PL 38, 255: "Unde habeat potestatem? Propter imaginem Dei".

191 Ibid. *s.* 43, 4. PL 38, 255: "Habemus ergo, ut cuncta breviter retexamus, ipsum esse cum lignis

other creatures because of his rationality. The image of God in human being lies in his exercise of reason. And it is the right exercise of reason that gives him authority or dominion over other inferior creatures.¹⁹²

Furthermore, to be the image of God, for Augustine, is to seek out God and to cling to Him in the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the particular way that God has made humanity.¹⁹³ All human works over creation must be done in reference to God. Dominion as a reflection of the image of God is the rule of the generosity of love which does not seek its own interest and makes it possible for others to know the love of God.

Keeping in mind Augustine's understanding of God's creative work, the dominion of the land or animals can be viewed as the exercise of human reason not merely in terms of their utility, but with respect to the love of the creature as God's creation and thereby leads one to praise and love God as the creator. If human *domination* of the land and animals instead destroys creation and cause unnecessary harm to the world, then for Augustine, it can hardly be called dominion at all. For God did not create the world to enjoy its destruction and to delight in its abuse.

2.3.10. *Uti et Frui*

Augustine sees the order and beauty of the world as an order of love, *ordo amoris*: 'All natures, then, in as much as they are, and have therefore a rank and species of their own, and a kind of internal harmony, are certainly good.'¹⁹⁴ The diversity of material and spiritual things is divinely intended, and inherently good. But humans have a unique status that derives from creativity, intelligence and self-transcendence.

By reflecting on the natural order established by God in creation, Augustine developed a classic doctrine of *uti et frui*—the *use* and *fruition* of creation by man.¹⁹⁵ In his work *On Christian Doctrine*, Augustine distinguishes 'fruition', which is directed towards the thing itself as the source of love, from 'using', which recognizes a thing, not as the source of love in itself, but points beyond itself to another love:

et lapidibus, vivere cum arboribus, sentire cum bestiis, intellegere cum angelis".

192 A more comprehensive discussion on man as a special creature being created in the image and likeness of God is tackled by Ma. Carmen Dolby Múgica's book: *El Hombre es Imagen de Dios. Visión Antropológica de San Agustín*, (Eunsa, Pamplona 2002).

193 Augustine, *Gn. litt. inp.* 16, 59, trans. Edmund Hill (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 2002). CSEL 28, 1, 499/15-21.

194 Augustine, *ciu.* 12, 5, trans. Marcus Dods, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). CCL 48, 359/1-4.

195 A treatment of Augustine's classic doctrine of *uti et frui* can also be found in Andrew Brian McGowan's "To Use and Enjoy: Augustine and Ecology", *St. Mark's Review* 212/May 2010, 89-99.

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For to enjoy a thing is to rest with satisfaction in it for its own sake. To use, on the other hand, is to employ whatever means are at one's disposal to obtain what one desires, if it is a proper object of desire; for an unlawful use ought rather to be called an abuse.¹⁹⁶

Augustine teaches that earthly things are meant to be 'used' by man because of the inherent goodness that God has endowed them with, but the 'fruition or enjoyment' of all things must lead man to the Creator Himself who is the source of all goodness and the proper object of man's desire. If this order of *use and fruition* is altered and creatures are enjoyed for their own sake without reference to the Creator, for Augustine it is a form of 'abuse'. Augustine identifies God and He alone as the ultimate and proper object of man's enjoyment. Other things are available for 'proper use'.

In the *Trinity*, Augustine explains how a superior creature can 'use' the inferior ones but must 'enjoy' its coequal and that which is superior to it. Concretely, he refers to the fact that being human, i.e. endowed with reason, man can use nonrational creatures for his own needs, may enjoy other human beings like himself, but must encounter always the fullness of happiness in God alone. And if this order of things is reversed, man can be enslaved by temporal things; he is not anymore, a steward of creation but its slave:

“When, therefore, the creature is either equal to us or inferior, we must use the inferior in order to God, but we must enjoy the equal duly in God. For as you ought to enjoy yourself, not in yourself, but in Him who made you, so also him whom you love as yourself. Let us enjoy, therefore, both ourselves and our brethren in the Lord; and hence let us not dare to yield, and as it were to relax, ourselves to ourselves in the direction downwards.”¹⁹⁷

Augustine teaches that proper use is not merely conformity to rules, but the celebratory engagement with other humans that arises from shared participation in the *ordo amoris*. The things thus used are neither neutrally good and hence to be exploited,

196 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 1, 4, 4, trans. J. F. Shaw, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), Simonetti 22/1-4: “Frui est enim amore inhaerere alicui rei propter seipsam. Uti autem, quod in usum venerit ad id quod amas obtinendum referre, si tamen amandum est. Nam usus illicitus abusus potius vel abusio nominandus est”.

197 Augustine, *trin.* 9, 8, 13, trans. Arthur West Haddan, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, vol. 3, ed. Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 968: “Cum ergo aut par nobis, aut inferior creatura sit, inferiore utendum est ad Deum; pari autem fruendum, sed in Deo. Sicut enim te ipso, non in te ipso frui debes, sed in eo qui fecit te; sic etiam illo quem diligis tamquam te ipsum. Et nobis ergo et fratribus in Domino fruamur, et inde nos nec ad nosmetipsos remittere, et quasi relaxare deorsum versus audeamus”.

nor ultimate ends and therefore to be worshipped, but must be approached in relation to their and our highest end, who is of course also their and our origin—God.

However, according to Augustine, because of sin, man's ability to understand the purpose of God's creation has been blurred: "But perhaps the slow hearts of some of you cannot yet receive that light, because they are burdened by their sins, so that they cannot see."¹⁹⁸ For Augustine, sin not only disrupts the order of the world and the harmony among creatures, so that it tends towards nothingness, but also distorts man's ability to see how creation exists in God, just like a blind man standing in the sunlight but is absent from the light because of the lack of eyesight. Pride, sin, and selfishness cause man to turn his back to God, distance himself from other beings equal to him, and enclose himself within himself, thus leading him to alter the *ordo amoris*, abuse and exploit selfishly creation, and create chaos in world.¹⁹⁹

The major cause of much of the ecological trouble we face today is the human use of the world without respect for the complex natural relationships by which it has been composed and the balance that it exhibits. In some respects that use could be described as covetousness and greedy, perhaps even an addiction to consumption without boundaries. This may be an example of using something because it pleases man, finding ultimate love in himself. If this happens, man does not anymore act as steward of creation but its proprietor who lords over and exploits creation unto disorder and destruction.

In the mind of Augustine, man is just part of God's creation, but among all creatures he has the vocation to love others and to love God above all things. The *ordo amoris* which regulates the relationship among creatures, and between the creatures and the Creator dictates that it is necessary to love the Creator for being the Highest Good, and not to love creation independently of its Creator. In accordance to this principle, the right use of the created things must lead man to love God and give Him the praise and glory He deserves, as St. Augustine points out in the exposition of the Psalm (144, 4):

For how great things besides has His boundless Goodness and illimitable Greatness made, which we do not know! When we lift the gaze of our eyes even to the heaven, and then recall it from sun, moon, and stars to the earth, and there is all this space where our sight can wander; beyond the heavens who can extend the eyesight of his mind, not to say of his flesh? So far then as His works are known to us, "let us praise Him through His works" (Romans 1:20). "Generation and generation shall praise Your works" (Psalm 144:4). Every gen-

198 Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 1, 19, 1. PL 35, 1388: "Sed forte stulta corda adhuc capere istam lucem non possunt, quia peccatis suis aggravantur, ut eam videre non possint".

199 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. litt. inp.* 1, 3.

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eration shall praise Your works.²⁰⁰

God's command to subdue the earth is a call to use creation according to the *ordo amoris*, not to exploit it. Our failure in our dealings with one another and with creation, and with God, may have resulted from the confusion or substitution of what is to be used with what is to be enjoyed. In making ourselves gods over creation, we abuse God, ourselves, and the world whose care is our vocation. If we make created things our gods, paradoxically we pursue wealth in such a way that abuses creation, rather than serving or sustaining it.

2.3.11. The divine providence

From the ecological perspective, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that for Augustine, the Scriptural narrative that God, after completing the work of creation on the seventh day, has rested (Gn 2, 1-3), does not imply that God stops His creative activity on the world or leave the world in absolute autonomy, operating on its own, but that the work of creation continues through the divine act of sustaining and conserving the universe. Augustine begins with the concept of 'ontological dependence' on the part of the contingent creatures. Ontologically speaking, every creature tends to nothingness since it was drawn to existence by God from nothing. If the Trinitarian God does not positively sustain creation with His creative power, it would simply regress to non-existence. Only the all-powerful God can preserve it from total annihilation. After creating, as Augustine points out, God administers everything He created and sustains its being:

God can also be understood to have rested from establishing different kinds of creatures, because he did not now establish any new kinds anymore. But he rested like this in such a way as to continue from then on and up till now to operate the management of the things that were then set in place, not as though at least on the seventh day his power was withheld from the government of heaven and earth and of all the things he has established; if that had been done, they would forthwith have collapsed into nothingness.²⁰¹

200 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 144, 4. PL 36, 1872: "Illius enim immensa bonitas et interminabilis magnitudo, quanta alia fecit quae nos non novimus? Quando quidem aciem oculorum nostrorum usque ad coelum extendimus, et a sole et a luna et a stellis rursus revocamus ad terram; et hoc totum spatium est ubi vagatur acies nostra: ultra coelos quis extendat vel aciem mentis, non dicam carnis? Ergo quantum nota sunt nobis opera eius, laudemus eum per opera eius. Invisibilia enim eius, a constitutione mundi, per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur. Generatio et generatio laudabit opera tua. Omnis generatio laudabit opera tua".

201 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 4, 12, 22. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 253. PL 34, 304: "Potest etiam intellegi Deum requievisse a condendis generibus creaturae, quia ultra iam non condidit aliqua genera nova: deinceps autem usque nunc et ultra operari eorumdem generum administrationem, quae tunc instituta sunt; non ut ipso saltem die septimo potentia eius a coeli

Augustine compares God's creative work with that of a mason or an architect. Just as the builder can build a house and leave it there after, and the house will continue to exist on its own since it was produced from pre-existent materials, the same principle cannot be applied with creation. Creation was produced from nothing, i.e., there was no pre-existing matter, hence God's providence must be present continually in creation, sustaining and governing it. The Augustinian phrase is captivating:

It is not, you see, like a mason building houses; when he has finished, he goes away, and his work goes on standing when he has stopped working on it and gone away. No, the world will not be able to go on standing for a single moment if God withdraws from it his controlling hand.²⁰²

Therefore, for Augustine, God continues to be present in creation continually willing its existence. Furthermore, God continues to govern creation and all creatures through divine providence. The common home, which is the entire universe, continues to be governed, administered, and cared for by God Himself. Augustine points out that the care God has for His house, which is the universe, is much greater than the care any father of the house can ever give to his own household:

If you object to their not being of any use, be thankful they do not harm, because even if they are not needed for our homes, at any rate contribute to the completion of this universe, which is not only much bigger than our homes, but much better as well; God manages it after all, much better than any of us can manage our homes.²⁰³

On the other hand, Augustine argues that God's governance and providence are not so imposing as to deprive creatures of their autonomy or active participation in the realization or determination of their being. Contrary to the feminist or post-colonialist criticisms, accusing Augustinian's doctrine—and with it the traditional doctrinal approach of the Church—of being patriarchal, sexist or even “imperialist”, Augustine actually teaches that the power of God is exercised not with force or violence, as is the case with human empires and kingdoms on earth. God's governance of the universe is based on His infinite wisdom. God directs the course of history and the development

et terrae, omniumque rerum quas condiderat, gubernatione cessaret, alioquin continuo dilaberentur”.

202 Ibid. PL 34, 304: “Neque enim, sicut structor aedium cum fabricaverit, abscedit, atque illo cessante atque abscedente stat opus eius; ita mundus vel ictu oculi stare poterit, si ei Deus regimen sui subtraxerit”.

203 Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 16, 26. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 56. PL 34, 360: Si tibi displicet quod non prosunt, placeat quod non obsunt; quia etsi domui nostrae non sunt necessaria, eis tamen completur huius universitatis integritas, quae multo maior est quam domus nostra et multo melior. Hanc enim multo melius administrat Deus, quam unusquisque nostrum domum suam.

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of the universe with divine wisdom and mercy so that everything converges perfectly according to the divine plan. And the ultimate destiny of creation is perfect rest, which is pure joy and happiness, as Augustine succinctly describe it:

The weight without weight to which are drawn, in order to rest there, those whose rest is pure joy is not itself drawn to anything else beyond it.²⁰⁴

According to the Augustinian thought, following the Aristotelian physics, all creatures in the universe are unstable or restless, and they tend towards a place or condition where they settle down and be at rest. Irrational creatures can find temporary rest in some elements. But Man, being created in the image and likeness of God, cannot find rest except in God alone, because as Augustine points out: “You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You”.²⁰⁵ For this reason, along with the entire creation, man seeks the ‘*quies*’, that rest in God. Hence, in Augustine’s thought, ‘protology’ is fundamentally linked with ‘eschatology’. Every being is created and moves in time towards a purpose predetermined by God in eternity.

It is true that in the course of time, as the entire creation progresses towards its fullness, the order of the universe, the ecological order, the intra-historical order, and the *Ordo Amoris*, are all altered by sin. However, for Augustine the world is at the end not determined by the uncertainty of human history, nor is it subject to the vagaries of the world. In ways incomprehensible to men, everything in the world, and in fact the entire universe itself is still guided by the divine order. In mysterious ways, God continues to carry out His plan of salvation and will make everything right in His own time. But God does it not with force or violence, as is typical of human beings, but with the softness or sweetness of His wisdom, since God arranges everything gently, as Augustine points out when commenting on the biblical text of Wis 8: 1:

And then there is what is written about his Wisdom: *she reaches from end to end mightily, and arranges all things sweetly* (Wis 8: 1), about whom it is also written that her movement is swifter and more nimble than all movements (Wis 7: 24); from this it is clear enough to those who look into the matter rightly that she bestows this incomparable and inexpressible and this—if you can grasp it—this motionless movement of hers upon things by disposing them sweetly, so that undoubtedly if this is withdrawn, and she abstains from this activity,

204 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 4, 4, 8. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 247. PL 34, 300. *Pondus sine pondere est, quo referuntur ut quiescant, quorum quies purum gaudium est, nec illud iam refertur ad aliud.*

205 Augustine, *conf. 1, 1*. Trans. by J.G. Pilkington. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 661: “quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te”.

they will perish forthwith.²⁰⁶

And despite the fact that the historical and ecological order may seem to have been altered in the present-day world, everything will finally be set right because the providence of God that governs the universe seeks that all beings in the universe will exist again in harmony; that original harmony which was ruined when the *Ordo Amoris* was altered and caused the rupture of the balance within nature, and within the relationships of men with each other:

From this the eye of the mind can now be raised up to the universe itself as if it were all some huge tree, and this too will be discovered the same twin functioning of providence, partly through natural, partly through voluntary activity; through natural activity indeed is working the hidden management of God, by which he also gives growth to the trees and herbs, while voluntary activity comes through the works of angels and human beings. As regards the first mode celestial things are arrayed up above, terrestrial ones down below, the great lights and constellation shine, day and night are moved around in return, the earth with its foundations in the waters has them washing round it and in amongst it, the air is poured over it at a higher level, shrubs and animals are conceived and born, grow up, grow old and perish, and whatever else happens in things through the inner impulses of nature: while in this other mode signs are given, taught and learned, fields cultivated, communities administered, arts and skills practiced, and whatever else is done, whether in the higher company of the angels or in this earthly and mortal society, in such a way as to be in the interests of the good even through the unwitting actions of the bad. And in the human individual we see the same twin power of providence at work; first with respect to the body, nature provides for its coming to be, its growth, its aging, while the provision of food, clothing, shelter, health care is left to voluntary activity; likewise with respect to the soul, nature insures that it is alive, sentient and conscious, while to learn and give its consent is left to the will.²⁰⁷

206 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 4, 12, 23. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 254. PL 34, 304: "Et quod scriptum est de sapientia eius: Pertingit a fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponit omnia suaviter; de qua item scriptum est, quod motus eius agilior celeriorque sit omnibus motibus: satis apparet recte intuentibus, hunc ipsum incomparabilem et ineffabilem, et si possit intelligi, stabilem motum suum, rebus eam praeberere suaviter disponendis; quo utique subtracto, si ab hac operatione cessaverit, eas continuo perituras."

207 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 8, 9, 17. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 357-8. PL 34, 379-380: "Hinc iam in ipsum mundum, velut in quamdam magnam arborem rerum, oculus cogitationis attollitur; atque in ipso quoque gemina operatio providentiae reperitur, partim naturalis, partim voluntaria. Et naturalis quidem per occultam Dei administrationem, qua etiam lignis et herbis dat incrementum; voluntaria vero, per Angelorum opera et hominum. Secundum illam primam coelestia superius ordinari, inferiusque terrestria; luminaria sideraque fulgere, diei noctisque vices agitari, aquis terram fundatam interlui atque circumlui, aerem altius superfundi, arbusta et animalia concipi et nasci, crescere et senescere, occidere, et quidquid aliud in rebus interiore naturalique motu geritur. In

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2.4. Conclusion

In *Laudato Si* when Pope Francis admonishes that in relation to contemporary ecological crisis, “there is a need to take into consideration deeper and transcendental questions”²⁰⁸, he hinted that the question of ecology is not only a matter of external and environmental issues, it is above all an interior matter—the ecology of the human soul. This is well within the spirit of Pope John Paul II’s vision, who, by pointing sharply to consumerism and man’s failure to look at natural environment far more than its utility as the main culprit, calls for the so-called ‘ecological conversion’.²⁰⁹

Even if during the time of Augustine, the ecological sensitivity which we know today didn’t exist, his thoughts on creation are extremely rich and seemingly ‘futuristic’ that today they can effectively help us understand and discover essential aspects of the universe leading us to reflect with greater profundity on the ecological crisis we face in the present.

One of the important things we have seen in the writings of Augustine is that his thoughts on creation are heavily founded on the Word of God. Augustine’s in-depth reflection on the scriptural story of creation, enabled him to draw a clear picture of the creator as a Triune God whose impact on creation reflects the concrete works of the three divine Persons in the world, of what place and relation man must have with other creatures, and of the fact that the whole of creation has a common orientation towards the fullness of peace and perfection God has designed in all eternity.

On the other hand, the created world for Augustine is like an open book which tells the story of God’s beauty and greatness. It is a book which everybody can read because it is not written with ink and paper, but with living and nonliving, tangible realities which do not cease proclaiming and praising the greatness of their maker. In this Augustinian perspective, the care of nature does not only have a practical and material purpose of satisfying man’s need in the present and for the future, but also above all because the entire universe has a sacred value—it is a form of sacrament that signifies the presence of God and invites us to raise our eyes and hearts to the transcendent truth

hac autem altera signa dari, doceri et disci, agros coli, societates administrari, artes exerceri, et quaeque alia sive in superna societate aguntur, sive in hac terrena atque mortali, ita ut bonis consulatur et per nescientes malos. Inque ipso homine eandem geminam providentiae vigere potentiam: primo erga corpus naturalem, scilicet eo motu quo fit, quo crescit, quo senescit; voluntariam vero, quo illi ad victum, tegumentum, curationemque consulitur. Similiter erga animam naturaliter agitur ut vivat, ut sentiat; voluntarie vero ut discat, ut consentiat.”

208 Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 160.

209 Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 287.

so that we may not remain locked in the material goods of this earth.

Moreover, creation according to Augustine, does not only speak of God through its beauty and harmony. His reflection on Wisdom 11:20 enabled him to conceive how creatures have intrinsic value in themselves as they participate in the divine reality through their measure, number, and weight, thus making them a concrete testimony of God, who is in Himself, a Trinity. Thus, every creature regardless of its usefulness, size, and perfection, is not superfluous and is worthy of respect and care for it has its origin from God, somehow bears the reflection and vestiges of the creator, and is continuously desired and sustained by God.

Finally, in Augustine's doctrine of creation, we are reminded of our special place and what role we must play in the created world. For Augustine, man is the steward of creation—not its owner—because it was God who created and put all things at his service. As steward, gifted with creativity, intelligence and self-transcendence, man has a sublime responsibility to care and guide creation, so that they may remain fruitful and faithful to their ordained purpose; and most importantly, that they may continue to be a sign of God, who created them not out of necessity, but by the outpouring of “the largeness of His bounty” (*abundantiam beneficentiae*).²¹⁰ Hence, creation must not be exploited for selfish and self-centered interest, but must be used moderately and rationally (*uti*), and that only in view of man's love for God that it must be enjoyed (*frui*).

In this theological scheme of Augustine, we may conclude that ‘ecological conversion’ is first and foremost, a ‘conversion of the heart’ as we reflect on nature and our place in it: “Observe the beauty of the world and praise the plan of the creator. Observe what he made, love the One who made it...because He also made you, His lover, in His own image.”²¹¹

210 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 7, 13.

211 Augustine, *s.* 68, 5.

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***Laudato Si'*: Ecological Concerns and Theological Emphasis.**

3.1. Introduction: Contemporary Ecological Concerns.

The years from 1960s to 1970s have seen the increasing sensitivity of the public to the ecological problems brought about by rapid and unrestrained industrialization and agricultural revolution. In 1952, the Guardian reported that “London was hit by the Great Smog which brought the capital to a standstill... and contributed to the deaths of at least 4,000 people”.²¹² In 1966, The New York Times reported a major air-pollution episode in New York City “during which the city’s air reached damaging levels of several toxic pollutants” and “a statistical analysis published in October 1967 found that 168 people had likely died because of the smog.”²¹³

Also recognized was the pollution of lakes and rivers. The top causes were identified as discharge from boats, stormwater drainage, sewage or failing septic systems, wildlife, pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, oil spills, industrial waste, and mining. In the late 1900s, report of pollution in The Great Lakes Basin which encompasses the Great Lakes and the surrounding lands of the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin in the United States, and the province of Ontario in Canada, captured public attention. “Chemicals, toxic pollutants, pesticides and heavy metals entered the Great Lakes; they flowed from thousands of factory discharge pipes and sewage plants, seeped from dumping and disposal sites, escaped from smokestacks, and ran off millions of acres of cities and farmland from states surrounding the lakes.”²¹⁴

Added to those issues was the unchecked use of pesticides and fertilizers as competitive markets increasingly demand for high yield crops. Rachel Carson published a book “Silent Spring” in 1960 that stirred public concern over the adverse environmen-

212 Guardian London Staff, “Third day of London Particular”, *Manchester Guardian* (8 December 1952), A1.

213 D. Bird, “November Smog Killed 168 Here”. *The New York Times* (27 October 1967), D.

214 University of Michigan Television Center/Michigan Media, *Great Lakes: No Free Lunch* (USA; University of Michigan 1981) Box 9, Media Resources Center Films and Videotapes, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

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tal effects caused by the indiscriminate use of pesticides.²¹⁵ Carson argued that pesticides have detrimental effects on the environment; she said these are more properly termed “biocides” because their effects are rarely limited to the target pests.²¹⁶ Carson accused the chemical industry of intentionally spreading disinformation and public officials of accepting industry claims uncritically. While pesticides and fertilizers certainly increased yields in the farming industry and enabled greater predictability of crop production, the side effects of these chemicals were becoming increasingly unacceptable to humans and animals.

All those man-made environmental issues were by then widely recognized by the general public and there seemed to be a consensus that human activities were causing environmental devastation and therefore the trend must change. While it was generally recognized that technological knowledge and economic considerations would be key in the actual solutions, scholars in this era begun to suspect that the unabating disputes related to environmental solutions must have been rooted into more fundamental issues such as how man perceived his lifestyles and how he viewed the world and his environment. In other words, economic and other technological solutions might not be the right starting point if the trend of environmental devastations must stop. It was within this scenario that another trend of radical rethink of philosophical and religious ideas prevalent in the society at that time took place.

3.2. *The Lynn White Theory*

In the gathering of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1966, the historian Lynn White Jr. made a controversial intervention in which he blamed Christianity “for the devastation of nature in which the West has been engaged for centuries.”²¹⁷ Soon after, in 1967, White published his theory as an article in the journal *Science* with the title “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”. In this article, he elaborated why in his view Christianity must bear huge burden of guilt.

First, White pointed out that the marriage of scientific knowledge to technical mastery over nature characteristic of the modern West had created a disturbing environmental crisis. In pointing out the disruption of the environmental order brought about by developing technology, White traced the roots of Western attitudes towards the environment to the fundamental medieval assumptions and developments:

215 Cf. R. Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

216 Cf. R. Carson, *Silent Spring*, 266.

217 Ernest L. Fortin, “The Bible Made Me Do it; Christianity, Science, and the Environment”, *The Review of Politics* 57, no.2 (1995), 207.

Since both our technological and our scientific movements got their start, acquired their character, and achieved world dominance in the Middle Ages, it would seem that we cannot understand their nature or their present impact upon ecology without examining fundamental medieval assumptions and developments.²¹⁸

He traced the origin of the problem to the introduction of a new type of plow to north-western Europe around 6th century after Christ. This new plow, in contrast to the shallow scratch plow native to the Mediterranean area, cut very deep, overturned soil and “attacked the land with such violence...and fields tended to be shaped in long strips.”²¹⁹ White noted that as a result of this plow, the “distribution of land was based no longer on the needs of a family but, rather, on the capacity of a power machine to till the earth.”²²⁰ Man’s relation to the soil was changed profoundly and he became less a part of nature and more of an exploiter of it. All this development, White observed, was intellectually bolstered up by a certain worldview which granted humanity dominion over nature and encouraged new technology of this kind.

What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion.²²¹

For White, religion formed the Western worldview and specifically—Christianity. Behind the apparent issues of “population explosion, the carcinoma of plan-less urbanism, the now geological deposits of sewage and garbage by which “man managed to foul its nest” exists a Christian worldview which occasioned and justified its development.

Our daily habits of action... are dominated by an implicit faith in perpetual progress which was unknown either to Greco-Roman, antiquity or to the Orient. It is rooted in, and is indefensible apart from, Judeo-Christian teleology.²²²

White believed that we continue today to live, as we have lived for about 1700 years, very largely in a context of Christian axioms. Modern Western science was cast in a matrix of Christian theology. Moreover, White accused Christianity as being strongly anthropocentric and argued that modern science is the outcome of Christian theology which placed man at the center of creation.

218 Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”, *Science* vol. 155, no.3767 (10 March 1967), 1204-5.

219 *Ibid.* 1205

220 *Ibid.*

221 *Ibid.*

222 *Ibid.*

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Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. As early as the 2nd century both Tertullian and Saint Irenaeus of Lyons were insisting that when God shaped Adam, he was foreshadowing the image of the incarnate Christ, the Second Adam. Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions (except, perhaps, Zoroastrianism), not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.²²³

White asserted that Christianity's ideological victory over paganism changed man's relationship with nature. Whereas under animistic paganism man was part of nature, Christianity saw man as transcendent. In Christianity, Genesis was largely interpreted as granting man dominion over animals and nature and could exploit them at will. This established a dualism between man and nature which had not existed before, and by desacralizing nature, Christianity made its destruction ideologically justifiable. White pointed out that this change generated "the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture." "By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects."²²⁴

Moreover, White highlighted the fact that "our science and technology have grown out of Christian attitudes toward man's relation to nature which are almost universally held not only by Christians and neo-Christians but also by those who fondly regard themselves as post-Christians."²²⁵ The West's Christian heritage, White argued, meant that these attitudes have had a profound influence up to the modern day, even among non-Christians. And concluded that "we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man."²²⁶

We note however, that White himself was a devout Christian, and he intended his article not as a general attack on Christianity, but as a criticism of a particular strain of Christian thought which he saw as the source of western environmental degradation. In fact, he still held the view that "more science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion or rethink our old one."²²⁷ Despite his thesis which bears negative evaluation of the entrenched Christian roots of the ecological crisis, White still proposed a possible solution in line with his

223 Ibid.

224 Ibid.

225 Ibid.

226 Ibid.

227 Ibid.

own professed Christian faith. He advocated a radical rethinking of Christianity along the lines of Saint Francis of Assisi.

According to White, Saint Francis, who lived around 1200, was the greatest radical in Christian history who, by advocating “the virtue of humility—not merely for the individual but for man as a species,” “tried to depose man from his monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all God’s creatures.”²²⁸ White characterized Saint Francis’ beliefs as a unique sort of pan-psychism of all things animate and inanimate, designed for the glorification of their transcendent creator.²²⁹ Although Saint Francis was a Christian, White believed he had the reverence for nature that the pagan pantheist once had, and that the widespread adoption of Franciscan beliefs would prevent further abuse of nature. White concluded his article with such phrase:

The greatest spiritual revolutionary in Western history, Saint Francis, proposed what he thought was an alternative Christian view of nature and man’s relation to it: he tried to substitute the idea of the equality of all creatures, including man, for the idea of man’s limitless rule of creation... I propose Francis as a patron saint for ecologists.²³⁰

On the 22nd of April 1970, Earth day was celebrated in the United States for the first time. Since then, the debate on environmental issues became prominent not only among environmentalists but even among academic circles. White’s thesis quickly gained fame and called impressive attention to contemporary philosophers and theologians in their search for the intellectual and transcendental roots of the ecological crisis. In the 70s, spurred on by the prominence of the environmental question in this era, the White theory became ubiquitous and so influential that prompted the editors, David and Eileen Spring, of the publication of *Ecology and Religion in History* in 1974, to argue that “to discuss religion and ecology in history is largely to discuss the Lynn White thesis.”²³¹

Reactions to White’s arguments have ranged widely, from accepting his theory that Christianity indeed was the ideological force behind the Western exploitative behavior towards the environment, to arguments that the account in Genesis was wrongly interpreted by White himself, to questioning the real relationship between theology and culture, to arguments that culture does not actually operate in the same manner as White proposed, to outright denials that the West was especially exploitative of the environment.²³²

228 Ibid.

229 Ibid.

230 Ibid.

231 Eileen and David Spring, *Ecology and Religion in History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 3.

232 Cf. D. L. Eckberg, and T. J. Blocker, ‘Varieties of Religious Involvement and Environmental Con-

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While this paper will not tackle in details the arguments which support or oppose White's theory, it may suffice to mention at this point that while White may be correct in saying that science developed within the context of Christian civilization, he could be wrong in pointing a finger at Christianity itself as the culprit of modern-day ecological devastation.²³³ White may have overlooked the advent of the Enlightenment movement which dominated the world of ideas in Europe during the 17th to 19th centuries and represented a departure from orthodox Christianity.²³⁴ In this new trend, God was simply side-lined and ultimately retired from serious consideration. While it is true that Catholic doctrinal tradition holds that man has a special place in creation, it always looks beyond man himself as the center of the universe and holds that God, who is the *Summum Bonum*,²³⁵ is man's ultimate end. When Enlightenment ideologies took away God's proper place in the scene, only man remained at the center. When man takes the place of God at the center of the universe, a completely different worldview begins to surface.²³⁶ This new worldview advocates pragmatism, legitimizes the treatment of the rest of the created order as resources to be exploited for human convenience, and neglects the Biblical insistence on the right order of human beings within the totality of the created order with a mandate to be good stewards of the earth. This secular trend of modernity seems to be the real root of an anthropocentric worldview that proves to bring havoc to ecology.

Moreover, while White may be right in claiming that "the victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture",²³⁷ he may have wrongly gone so far as to conclude that this "faith in perpetual progress" is "rooted in, and is indefensible apart from, Judeo-Christian theology".²³⁸ A closer look into the historical development of the Enlightenment philosophy could lead one to suspect that the so-called "faith in progress" must have developed instead in the ambit of the Enlightenment worldview and the nineteenth century utilitarianism.²³⁹

cerns: Testing the Lynn White Thesis' in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 28 (1989), 509–17.

233 Prof. Pedro Castelao of Comillas University made a more elaborate discussion on this issue in "El cristianismo y la percepción de la naturaleza", *Sal Terrae* 101 (2013), 133-146.

234 Cf. Rusty Roberson, "Enlightened Piety during the Age of Benevolence: The Christian Knowledge Movement in the British Atlantic World", *Church History* 85/2 (2016): 246. Some commentaries on Christianity and the Enlightenment will be tackled in the last part of this Chapter.

235 A Latin expression meaning "the highest good", which was introduced by the Roman philosopher Cicero and was adopted by Christian tradition as referring to God.

236 Cf. Francis Bacon, *Great Instauration*, bk. 1, para. 99 cited in Hiram Caton, *The Politics of Progress*, (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1988), p. 41.

237 Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", 1205.

238 Ibid.

239 Cf. Francis Bacon, *Great Instauration*, bk. 1, para. 129 cited in Hiram Caton *The Politics of Progress*, 44.

The debate surrounding White's thesis became most notable in the early 1970s and extended into the 1980s and in fact continues in the present.²⁴⁰ Some contemporary ecofeminist theologians such as Rosemary Radford Ruether²⁴¹ and Anne Primavasi²⁴² seemed to have revived White's theory in the field of the present-day eco-theological debate. They have attempted to draw out a correlation between dominion and the anthropocentric, androcentric, and patriarchal structures in the Catholic doctrinal tradition that they perceive to have contributed to a negative understanding of nature. They argue that an attempt to form an environmentally sensitive ethics founded upon traditional concepts such as dominion and the doctrine of man's centrality in the theology of creation, faces the problem of also having to overcome such negative structures. Like White, they conclude that because understandings of God are often tied to these oppressive structures of thought and practice, a thorough revision of the traditional understandings of God is necessary so that Christianity can positively contribute to the removal of these destructive structures in contemporary society. Traditional doctrine of God is perceived to be tightly woven into the anthropocentric ideas that have contributed to the ecological crisis about which White wrote. In their estimation, the only alternative to this problematic legacy is a theological ethic founded upon ecologically positive ideas.

It must be admitted that nowadays very few would be familiar with Lynn White. This can be attributed to the fact that through the years up to the present day, too many scholars and theologians participated and weighed in on the debate that Lynn White himself, the origin of the 'bombshell', has been obscured in the background. Recently many Christians turned to "Green Christianity" and "Care for creation" and with the arrival of *Laudato Si'* written by no less than the highest authority of the Catholic church, it seems unpopular nowadays to link Christianity with ideologies hostile to the environment. But White's reflections however have relevance in the present environmental issues for it provides a uniquely deep analysis of the environmental crisis. White was the first to offer a serious, searching analysis of culture and the type of

240 This paper will not deal with the details of the contemporary historical-critical debates on the meaning of dominion in the text of Genesis 1:26-28. It is enough to note that scholars have delved into the substance of these debates and have produced helpful conclusions and ideas on religious approaches to ecology. The biblical command to have dominion, while sometimes interpreted negatively as a license for domination, is understood generally by Christian theologians as a command to exercise care, or stewardship, for the earth. In Chapter II, the biblical dominion is discussed in the light of Augustine's theological conceptions of God and creation.

241 Cf. Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983); idem *New Woman/New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

242 Cf. Anne Primavasi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991).

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worldview which could possibly generate a seemingly incomprehensible destruction of nature. And his proposal for a “radical rethinking” of Christianity, inspired by one whom he described as “the greatest spiritual revolutionary in Western history”—Saint Francis of Assisi—could be the earliest allusion of what would be the first-ever, ecological encyclical “*Laudato Si*’.”

3.3. *The Church’s Response to Ecological Issues*

In the doctrinal sphere, for more than four decades after the publication of the Lynn White thesis, the Catholic Church seemed to have no formal response to the accusation raised against her and to many other similar environment questions posed by modern ecologists. This does not mean however that work is not done ‘on the ground’ by lay people, religious orders, and clerics. The Church has a fine tradition of advocacies, movements, and orders dedicated to social works, including in the area of environmental concern and conservation. But while it is true that there had been personal initiatives even by the highest Church authorities to awaken conscience on environmental concerns through doctrinal means, what seems to be lacking is the ‘coherent teaching on the environment’ in the magisterial level. Their teachings were frequently qualified or somewhat hidden within addresses to particular or specific groups. We mention some of them here.

The first known official Church document produced collectively by Catholic Church leaders that dealt with ecological concerns was issued when Bishops from all over the world gathered in a Second Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome from the 30th of September to the 6th of November in year 1971—the longest Synod to date. Together they read the signs of the times and discerned how the Church should respond to the pressing needs of humanity. The document which bore the title *Justice in the World* contained teaching on social justice and peace which encompasses man’s moral and social responsibility towards the environment. It was not a Papal document nor a social encyclical but was regarded as one of the major international Catholic social teaching documents. It did not tackle squarely on ecology, nevertheless, it served as a turning point towards the development of the Catholic Church’s social teaching on the environment. It highlighted among others the inseparable link between ecology and justice, the geographical division between the rich and the poor, and the irresponsible pollution that may cause damage to our planet.²⁴³

Months earlier before the publication of *Justice in the World* by the synod of Bishops, Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Exhortation published on the 14th of May 1971,

243 Cf. Synod of Bishops: *Justitia Mundo*, (Justice in the World), (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1971), 11.

already warned the faithful of the danger of man's own unchecked activities which create permanent and irreversible damage to the environment which in turn produced a toll on man himself.²⁴⁴ Paul VI's successor Pope John Paul II increasingly became even more preoccupied of the situation that he issued several other Church documents loaded heavily with ecological concerns.

Pope John Paul II, in his first Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* issued in 1979, has warned humanity of the danger of industrialization, military conflicts and wars, the self-destructive use of extremely powerful weapons, and the pollution of the environment.²⁴⁵ In this same encyclical he echoed Paul VI's concern of self-destruction as "man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces...even more so, of the work of his intellect and the tendencies of his will."²⁴⁶ He incorporated important anthropological and philosophical insights as he pointed out that man abused the God-given power to subdue the earth so that "it turns against himself, producing an understandable state of disquiet, ...which in various ways is being communicated to the whole of the present-day human family and is manifesting itself under various aspects".²⁴⁷ One of these manifestations is man's destruction of his own environment.²⁴⁸

Later in 1987, John Paul II wrote another encyclical entitled *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, where he mainly speaks about material as well as population inequality in the world, and about an urgent need to help the poor people in the in underdeveloped world. In a rather more optimistic tone, he acknowledged man's growing awareness of the ecological problems.²⁴⁹ In his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace on the 1st of January 1990, John Paul II draws attention to the unity and interconnectedness of creation; the natural world, world resources and the people of God: "when man turns his back on the Creator's plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order. If man is not at peace with God, then earth itself cannot be at peace".²⁵⁰ Then he proceeds to give a comprehensive teaching on ecology. He proclaimed Saint Francis of Assisi as the heavenly Patron of those who promote ecology because he "offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation" and being a friend of the poor he "invited all of creation - animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon - to give honor and

244 Cf. Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1971), no. 21.

245 Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979), Part II, no. 8.

246 Ibid, no. 15.

247 Ibid.

248 Ibid.

249 Cf. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1987), Part III, no. 26.

250 John Paul II, *Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), Part I, no.5.

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praise to the Lord”.²⁵¹ In *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul II pointed out that unless man respects the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed, he can never effectively address the problem of his environment. Hence another form of ecology is much needed; this he calls “human ecology.”²⁵² Finally, in his General Audience on the 17th of January 2001, John Paul II pointed out how, because of human sin, man has ruined the harmony with his fellow beings, with creation and with God. And thus, he calls for the so-called “ecological conversion.”²⁵³

Pope Benedict XVI contributed to the Church’s teaching on ecology mainly by his Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* and by his message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace held on the 1st of January 2010. In his 2009 Encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict stressed that the environment is “God’s gift to everyone” to satisfy man’s legitimate needs and for that reason, the responsibility to care for the environment comes with the obligation to care for the poor and future generations.²⁵⁴ In this same Encyclical, Pope Benedict draws a clear Christological dimension of the environment which reveals God’s love for humanity soon to be recapitulated in Christ at the end of time, so that the call to “till it and keep it” is itself a sacred vocation.²⁵⁵ Moreover, he warns of the danger of the contemporary lifestyle which is bent towards “hedonism and consumerism” and calls for a shift of lifestyle whose choices are guided by the quest for “truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others.”²⁵⁶ He argued that the Church’s responsibility towards creation has moral implications, i.e., “to protect mankind from self-destruction” and to safeguard “human ecology” which precedes environmental ecology.²⁵⁷ Finally, in this Encyclical, Pope Benedict teaches that there exists unity and interconnectedness of man’s moral obligations towards others and the whole of God’s creation as the “book of nature is one and indivisible.”²⁵⁸

On the 1st of January 2010, celebration of the 43rd World Day of Peace, Pope Benedict delivered a message to Christian communities, international leaders, and people of good will with the theme: “You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation”. He reiterated an old biblical tradition which identifies sin as the ultimate cause of disharmony

251 Ibid. Part V, no. 16.

252 Cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991), no. 38: *AAS* 83, 1991, 841.

253 Cf. John Paul II, *General Audience* (17 January 2001), 4: *Insegnamenti* 41/1, 2001, 179.

254 Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), no. 48: *AAS* 101, 2009, 687.

255 Ibid., Part IV, no. 48.

256 Ibid., Part IV, no. 51.

257 Ibid.

258 Ibid.

in creation and eventually affects man's exercise of dominion over creation and the 'conflict' between man and the rest of creation.²⁵⁹ It was man himself who provoked 'rebellion' in nature when he acts not anymore as God's co-worker and steward of creation, but instead, takes the place of God as Lord and Master of the created world.²⁶⁰

Indeed, the moral and social doctrines of the Catholic Church develop in the course of time as the Church responded to the pressing challenges of every era. We have seen that as early as the year 1971 there had already been evolving doctrines and multi-faceted Catholic views on ecological issues advocated by highest Church leaders. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is another rich source of teachings that can embolden authentic environmental concern. It is intended to serve as a full, complete exposition of Catholic doctrine, enabling everyone to know what the Church professes, celebrates, lives, and prays in her daily life.²⁶¹ Thus, it contains the fundamental Christian truths, formulated in a clear way so that their understanding, apprehension, and lively reception are made easier. As a doctrinal text, the Catechism provides a comprehensive view on how the Catholics should perceive the world, its origin, man's rightful place in creation, and God as the Creator of the entire universe. However, as sheer general guideline for the Catholic doctrine, it does not offer specific pastoral or catechetical orientations preparing the faithful to take responsibilities in response to the present urgencies. Hence, in reference to the recent "ecological crisis", it does not present a specific theological viewpoint on ecological issue in terms of today's data and thought patterns. The urgency of the present crisis and the scientific data provided over the past decades would require a more appropriate articulation of the Christian faith in terms of the issue.

Unfortunately, the void left by the absence of a 'coherent Catholic teaching in the ecological sphere' until the second decade of the twenty-first century, has left a spiritual space which has been filled by alternative religions, new age practices, and secular humanism which are more aligned with 'pantheism' and 'panentheism', thus straying further away from correct Christian doctrinal parameters. What Pope Francis offers in his Encyclical *Laudato Si'* should be an example of how to articulate clearly and boldly the Christian faith in response to a particular issue, and specifically this time on ecological concerns. For a particular social issue to gain prominence in the Catholic Church, it requires a document of the standing of *Laudato Si'*, which being an encyc-

259 Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, Message of his holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010), no. 6.

260 Ibid.

261 John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Laetatum Magnopere*, 15 August 1997 (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), § 5.

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lical is next only to an Apostolic Constitution in terms of importance and authority. For the future of the environment, social justice and for the Church, this document represents an important step in terms of teaching, action, and for modern-day evangelization.

3.4. *Laudato Si'*: An Overview

Laudato Si', the title which Pope Francis has chosen for his encyclical which deals with the ecological concerns, was taken from the invocation of Saint Francis of Assisi, “Praise be to you, my Lord” in the *Canticle of the Creatures*. The reflection begins by situating man in his proper place among God’s creatures. The earth is likened to a “beautiful mother” who opens her arms to embrace us, it is our home, it is where we belong. But more than just a spatial reality where we live, the earth is also likened to a sister with whom we share our life,²⁶² we are part of its reality and it is part of us. We are made of its dust (cf. Gen 2:7); our bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe its air and receive life and refreshment from its waters.²⁶³

Unfortunately, with our own life-style, we persistently inflict harm to our own home and this sister-earth “now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her”.²⁶⁴ The damage we create not only affects the physical world *per se*, it is also affecting our neighbors, especially the poor and the vulnerable among us so that the ecological issues we face today have moral implications: “her cry, united with that of the poor, stirs our conscience to “acknowledge our sins against creation”.²⁶⁵ Pope Francis quoted the “beloved” Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: “For human beings... to destroy the biological diversity ... by causing changes in its climate ...; to contaminate the earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life – these are sins”.²⁶⁶ The ecological issues which we deal today have something to do with morality and specifically with sin.

Since the ecological problem is a moral issue and is intricately linked to sin, the appropriate response is penitence which brings to light what St John Paul II already called a “global ecological conversion”.²⁶⁷ In this context, St. Francis of Assisi is “the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out

262 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 1.

263 Ibid., 2.

264 Ibid.

265 Ibid., 8.

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid., 5.

joyfully and authentically.... He shows us just how inseparable is the bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace”.²⁶⁸

Within this backdrop, *Laudato Si'* is developed around the concept of integral ecology—a paradigm to be used in order to articulate the fundamental relationships of the person with God, with one's self, with other human beings, and with the rest of creation. These four-dimensional movement of contemplation opens the door to the findings of natural sciences as well as to the reflections of non-Catholic theologians and philosophers—an unprecedented approach by any encyclical prior to *Laudato Si'*. As Pope Francis himself explains that this movement starts by listening spiritually to the results of the best scientific research on environmental matters available today, “letting them touch us deeply and provide a concrete foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows”.²⁶⁹ Science is the best tool by which we can listen to the cry of the earth.

The next step is to employ the wealth of Judeo-Christian tradition (Chapter II). From the lens of the said tradition, particularly in biblical texts and in theological reflection, an analysis is then directed towards “the roots of the present situation, so as to consider not only its symptoms but also its deepest causes” (chapter III). The purpose is to develop an integral ecological worldview which, in its multifaceted dimensions, includes “our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings” (chapter IV). Pursuing the path of transparent and inclusive dialogue, Pope Francis proposes a series of guidelines for the renewal of international, national and local policies, for decision-making processes in the public and business sector, for the relationship between politics and economy and that between religion and science (chapter. V).

The dialogue that Pope Francis proposes as a tool for understanding and resolving the environmental problems is followed throughout the Encyclical. It refers to contributions by philosophers and theologians, not only Catholic but also Orthodox (the already cited Patriarch Bartholomew) and Protestant (the French thinker Paul Ricoeur) as well as the Islamic mystic Ali Al-Khawas. In the theme of collegiality, Pope Francis employed what he proposed to the Church since the beginning of his ministry: alongside the references to the teachings of his predecessors and of other Vatican documents (in particular of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace), there are many taken from numerous Episcopal Conferences from all continents.

Finally, based on the conviction that “change is impossible without motivation and

268 Ibid., 10.

269 Ibid., 15.

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a process of education”, *Laudato Si’* proposes “some inspired guidelines for human development to be found in the treasure of Christian spiritual experience” (chapter VI). Along this line, the Encyclical offers two prayers, the first to be shared with believers of other religions and the second among Christians. The Encyclical concludes, as it opened, in a spirit of prayerful contemplation.

3.4.1. The Concept of Integral Ecology.

3.4.1.1. Integral Ecology as a set of beliefs.

One of the most original contribution of *Laudato Si’* in the contemporary ecological crisis is the development of the concept of integral ecology. The underlying metaphysics of this approach is the truth and conviction that the whole of reality is interrelated, and all created entities are interdependent. This understanding is based upon specific doctrines, beliefs, and scriptural themes that teach these interconnections. Francis traces this understanding to the Hebrew Scriptures:

The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality. They suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself.²⁷⁰

This vision is rooted in the doctrine that God is the creator of all things and that all created things are members of the one universal family in God. The catechism recalls that the confession of faith begins with the creation of heaven and earth, reiterating the goodness of all creation. Contemplation of the Creator, of his beauty and goodness, invites us to “thank him for all his works”²⁷¹ and to discover both “the interdependence of creatures”²⁷² and the “solidarity among all creatures because they all have the same Creator.”²⁷³ Creation, therefore, is not ultimately intended for mere instrumental use by man, but “is made with a view to the Sabbath and, therefore, to the worship and adoration of God.”²⁷⁴ Pope Francis cites St. Thomas Aquinas’s (1224-76) argument that the diversity of creatures manifests the immensity and goodness of God “whose greatness could not be represented fittingly by any one creature.” The diversity of

270 Ibid., 66.

271 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano, 1993), 283.

272 Ibid., 340.

273 Ibid., 344.

274 Ibid., 347. Also cf. Jaime Tatay Nieto, “De la Cuestión Social (RN) a la Cuestión Socio-ambiental (LS): La Recepción Católica del Reto de la Sostenibilidad: 1891-2015”, 155.

creatures in their multiple relationships together convey the goodness of the creator.²⁷⁵ Thus, “each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.”²⁷⁶

The ultimate foundation of this vision of the interrelatedness of all things is the triune God who creates all things. In a passage that can be read as the spiritual core of the encyclical, the Pope connects the three levels of integral ecology with the relational nature of the triune God.

The divine Persons are subsistent relations, and the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships. Creatures tend towards God, and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things, so that throughout the universe we can find any number of constant and secretly interwoven relationships.²⁷⁷

We learn from the triune God and the created world that our fulfillment, and indeed our sanctifications, is found not in isolation, but in embracing and deepening relationship through human solidarity and care for creation. Our tendency to alienate ourselves from this trinitarian truth of our being is not simply a matter of ignorance or confusion. It also arises from sin: the brokenness of the world in which we all share. We are born into a world marked by division, domination, and exploitation. Thus, the fullness of relationship to which we are called requires both conversion of heart and appropriate education. On the positive side, the triune God is not simply a distant model of relationship or a lost truth that we must search for. God is so close to us and to the entire creation, actively working in the world, drawing all things in communion in the love and unity of the Holy Spirit. Salvation is God’s gracious opening of our hearts to see, love, and care for all of creation.

3.4.1.2. Integral Ecology as a specific worldview.

These definitive beliefs about God and the created world led to a specific way of looking at realities, a certain worldview, a kind of gaze that perceives the interconnections in creation. Pope Francis speaks of it as “an attitude of the heart that approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone.” Jesus is the supreme example of this gaze:

275 Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 86.

276 *Ibid.*, 84.

277 *Ibid.*, 240.

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Jesus taught us this attitude when he invited us to contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness, “he looked at him with love” (Mk 10:21). He was completely present to everyone and to everything, and in this way, he showed us the way to overcome that unhealthy anxiety which makes us superficial, aggressive, and compulsive consumers.²⁷⁸

This gaze of Jesus is especially important. The scene of Jesus contemplating the beauty of the plants and animals, his encounter with the rich young man, the call of Matthew the tax collector, etc., reveals the attitude of Jesus who looks upon people and things with love that sees the fullness of what they are and might be. There is always more to someone or something than sheer vision of presence. In Matthew’s case, the ‘something more’ is that a wealthy tax collector, condemned as sinner and traitor by his fellow Jews for serving the Roman occupiers, might become a great apostle and evangelist. In the case of integral ecology, it is the patient openness to imagine and to understand the many interconnections among the other creatures with whom we share the world. All things around us; the trees, the animals, the soil, are so much more than sheer objects of experience. They are interconnected in ways that they have profound impact in our lives. The soil for example, in the vision of an ecologist, Aldo Leopold, is the foundation of “a fountain of energy” that flows from the sun through plants and animals which gives us life and is a community to which we give back through care as well as our own death and decay.²⁷⁹ No soil, no human. Integral ecology inspires us to gaze with the patient openness to learn these connections.

This type of worldview was exemplified by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) when in 1988 it addressed the ecological problem of the country in its landmark pastoral letter “What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?”²⁸⁰ Aware of the critical situation of the Philippine Islands’ ecosystems (deforestation, destruction of mangroves, loss of soil and biodiversity) and its repercussions on the country’s most impoverished populations (especially the indigenous peoples), the bishops invited everyone to reflect on one of the important reasons for the political instability, economic decline and a growth in armed conflict suffered by the people in the archipelago. In analyzing the problem however, the approach adopted by the bishops is neither technical nor economic, but theological, aesthetic, and sacramental. The bishops stated: “We, the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines, ask Christians and all people of goodwill in

278 Ibid., 226.

279 Aldo Leopold, *A Sound County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 216.

280 CBCP, “What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?” (29 January 1988), 1.

the country to reflect with us on the beauty of the Philippine land and seas which nourish and sustain our lives.” Then they proposed a new vision to develop a new attitude towards the natural world: “This vision must blossom forth from our understanding of the world as God intends it to be. We can know the shape of this world by looking at how God originally fashioned our world and laid it out before us.” Then they brought into the picture the aesthetic dimension of the natural world: “As you read this letter... scenes from your barrio may come to mind. In your mind’s eye you may see well laid out rice paddies flanked by coconuts with their fronds swaying in the breeze. Or you may hear the rustle of the cogon grass on the hills behind your barrio. These scenes mean so much to us and are beautiful. Yet they do not represent the original vegetation with which God has blessed our land. They show the heavy hand of human labor, planning and sometimes short-sightedness.” Then they pointed out that the those who suffered most in the destruction of the environment in the name of “progress” are the poor, since everything is interconnected: “The poor are as disadvantaged as ever, and the natural world has been grievously wounded. We have stripped it bare, silenced its sounds and banished other creatures, from the community of the living. Through our thoughtlessness and greed, we have sinned against God and His creation.” The contemplation of the beauty of the natural world, guided by the light of the Gospel, and in dialogue with the data of natural history, is an invitation to consider creation as a “community of mutual support” in an evolutionary horizon where men “are not strangers to this community.”²⁸¹

Another model for integral ecology is St. Francis of Assisi, whose prayer-poem, the “Canticle of the Sun,” has been the reference of the encyclical’s title:

Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human. Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them “to praise the Lord, just as if they were endowed with reason.”²⁸²

St. Francis’s biography is full of stories in which he joyfully engaged other creatures, such as by preaching the Gospel to fish and birds. But for Pope Francis, there is more here than mere “naïve romanticism.” Our attitude of love and care affect what we

281 Cf. Jaime Tatay Nieto, “De la Cuestión Social (RN) a la Cuestión Socio-ambiental (LS): La Recepción Católica del Reto de la Sostenibilidad: 1891-2015” (Tesis de doctorado, Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, 2016), 101.

282 *Laudato Si'*, 11.

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see and, thus, what we value. Awareness of our relationships is a path to moral transformation. Seeing can precipitate moral conversion. “If we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously.”²⁸³ On the other hand, “if we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs.”²⁸⁴ But when we see the world with an eye to these connections, we see more and differently. Integral ecology is a way of seeing that opens our eyes to the myriads creatures with whom we are interrelated. It helps us to understand our interdependence and thus to value the rest of creation.

3.4.1.3. Integral Ecology as the determining concept of *Laudato Si'*.

Pope Francis opted to use the concept of integral ecology as an approach “capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis”.²⁸⁵ Integral ecology, opens its door to all possible sources of knowledge for “if we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out”.²⁸⁶ The integral approach runs throughout the encyclical like a bond that holds together the main premises and arguments. This becomes evident when insights from all branches of human wisdom are considered: from theological and philosophical disciplines, from social and political studies, from natural and human sciences. In the encyclical, Pope Francis attempts to make a synthesis of what his predecessors as well as other religious leaders, local bishop’s conferences, the catechism, theologians, philosophers, scientists, sociologists, and other individual thinkers have said in relation to the crisis and how to respond to it. He quotes from a wide range of sources, from the ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew to the Sufi mystic Ali al-Khawwas, from Dante to Teilhard de Chardin, etc. This holistic and integral approach makes possible a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary ecological crisis and a proportionate or well-balanced response to it, for we cannot treat “the environment in isolation; the issue cannot be approached piecemeal”.²⁸⁷

Throughout the development of the encyclical, Pope Francis makes copious references to his predecessors who already echoed the worldwide ecological concerns. In their own encyclicals and apostolic letters, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, and

283 Ibid.

284 Ibid.

285 Ibid., 137.

286 Ibid., 63.

287 Ibid., 160.

Benedict XVI, occasionally warned and even offered doctrinal reflections on the ecological deterioration and man's responsibility to prevent it. John Paul II called for a global ecological conversion,²⁸⁸ trying to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology.²⁸⁹ Benedict XVI warns of the danger of the contemporary lifestyle which is bent towards "hedonism and consumerism" and calls for a shift of lifestyle whose choices are guided by the quest for "truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others".²⁹⁰ He argued that the deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture which shapes human coexistence and insists that we should recognize that the natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behavior.²⁹¹ The Popes echo the reflections and warnings of numerous theologians, philosophers, scientists, and civic groups, all of which have enriched the Church's thinking on the complexity of the ecological problem.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis brings up again and reexamines important questions already dealt with in the previous documents of the church but this time on specific issues in the context of an integral ecology. This is particularly the case with a number of themes which are continually taken up and enriched: the conviction that everything in the world is connected, the intrinsic value proper to every creature, the human meaning of ecology, the intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet, the critique of the new paradigms and forms of power derived from technology, the throwaway culture and the proposal of a new lifestyle, the call to seek other ways of understanding the economy and progress, the serious responsibility of international and local policy, and the need for the forthright and honest debate. These themes spread throughout the encyclical and are carefully interwoven in the different approaches or methods employed by Pope Francis.

The integral approach adopted by *Laudato Si'* widens the horizons of the ecological discourse. Integral ecology demands that the protection of nature and the care of the weaker members of human family must be inextricably linked. In the past, the ecological discourse ran the risk of being concerned mainly with the physical environment, dealing with issues like the protection of endangered or exotic species and the conservation of pristine ecosystems. Integral ecology essentially entails human and social dimensions. Pope Francis recalls the vision of Pope Benedict XVI in this regard as he writes that "the world cannot be analyzed by isolating only one of its aspects,

288 John Paul II, *General Audience* (17 January 2001), 4: *Insegnamenti* 41/1, 2001, 179.

289 John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1991), no. 38: AAS 83, 1991, 841.

290 Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2019), no. 48: AAS 101, 2009, 687.

291 Cf. *Ibid.*, no. 51.

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since “the book of nature is one and indivisible”,²⁹² and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations, and so forth.²⁹³ Hence, any dialogue on environmental issues needs to include humanity in the first place:

When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it.²⁹⁴

3.4.2. *Methods or Approaches Employed in Laudato Si’.*

In this study, the researcher identifies specific methods or approaches which seem to stand out in every chapter, namely: the phenomenological, theological, analytical, the practical and the educational-spiritual approach. Even if some of the chapters in the Encyclical are classified under a specific approach, this does not suggest exclusivity in the use of a single method. The classification is based on what seems to be the dominant method employed in the presentation of a certain theme.

3.4.2.1. Phenomenological Approach to the Ecological Crisis

The very first chapter of the encyclical which bears the title “What is happening to our common home” is a presentation which is largely phenomenological, i.e., an exposition of the crisis as perceived and experienced in real-life situation. Pope Francis begins with a physical description of the crisis of our common home, based on solid scientific evidence and careful study of empirical data, as he himself described it as being drawn “on the results of the best scientific research available today”.²⁹⁵ He elaborated on the main challenges facing our common home, all of which have a perturbing impact on the quality of human life and the security of human communities all over the world. He calls humanity to face “those questions which are troubling us today and which we can no longer sweep under the carpet”.²⁹⁶

3.4.2.1.1. “Rapidification.”

First, the encyclical observes the rapid pace of change for which it coins the term “rapidification”. Even if change is necessary for complex systems to work, “the speed

292 Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 51: AAS 101 (2009), 687.

293 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 6.

294 *Ibid.*, 139.

295 *Ibid.*, 15.

296 *Ibid.*, 19.

with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution”.²⁹⁷ Graphically, Pope Francis speaks of pollution and waste: “the earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth”.²⁹⁸ Interestingly, the Pope also observes the recurrence schemes of nature: “it is hard for us to accept that the way natural ecosystems work is exemplary: plants synthesize nutrients which feed herbivores; these in turn become food for carnivores, which produce significant quantities of organic waste which give rise to new generations of plants”.²⁹⁹ This order is what the human world of production and consumption is missing: “but our industrial system, at the end of its cycle of production and consumption, has not developed the capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by-products”.³⁰⁰ By reflecting on this natural cycle found in the environment, it should come clear to our senses that: “we have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting as much as possible the use of non-renewable resources, moderating their consumption, maximizing their efficient use, reusing and recycling them”.³⁰¹

3.4.2.1.2. Climate Change and its Effects

The encyclical then takes up the most important of the challenges to our common home today, namely, climate change, which “is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods”.³⁰² The observation is based on scientific studies which “indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity”.³⁰³ It also points to a model of development which aggravates the problem; a development which is “based on the intensive use of fossil fuels, which is at the heart of the worldwide energy system. Another determining factor has been an increase in changed uses of the soil, principally deforestation for agricultural purposes”.³⁰⁴

The encyclical then proceeds to enumerate the more conspicuous impacts of climate change: “an increase of extreme weather events”, “a constant rise in the sea level”,³⁰⁵ pressure on the “availability of essential resources like drinking water, en-

297 Ibid., 18.

298 Ibid., 21.

299 Ibid. 22.

300 Ibid.

301 Ibid. 22.

302 Ibid. 25.

303 Ibid. 23.

304 Ibid.

305 Ibid.

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ergy and agricultural production in warmer regions”, “the extinction of part of the planet’s biodiversity”, “the melting of the polar ice caps and in high altitude plains”, “the loss of tropical forests”, “the acidification of the oceans” with consequences for the marine food chain.³⁰⁶ Pope Francis warns that if the “present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us”.³⁰⁷

3.4.2.1.3. Depletion of Natural Resources.

Added to the alarming ecological situation, the encyclical moves on to the question of the fast depletion of the limited natural resources. Pope Francis does not mask his staunch critique of current levels of consumption by the rich that have led to the exploitation of our home planet beyond acceptable limits: “We all know that it is not possible to sustain the present level of consumption in developed countries and wealthier sectors of society, where the habit of wasting and discarding has reached unprecedented levels”.³⁰⁸

The encyclical takes up particularly the question of fresh water, the most critical of earth’s natural resources since “since it is indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Sources of fresh water are necessary for health care, agriculture and industry”.³⁰⁹ There is particular concern of “the quality of water available to the poor” which if unsafe would result “in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases”.³¹⁰ The encyclical affirms the universal right to accessible drinking water and is critical toward “the growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market”.³¹¹ In here Pope Francis alludes to the danger of “the control of water by large multinational businesses” which may lead to conflict in the future.³¹²

3.4.2.1.4. The Loss of Biodiversity.

The last of the physical manifestations of the crisis of our common home is the current loss of biodiversity to which the encyclical dedicates relatively ample space. Pope Francis manifests his concern of the fact that “each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children

306 Ibid. 24.

307 Ibid.

308 Ibid. 27.

309 Ibid. 28.

310 Ibid. 29.

311 Ibid. 30.

312 Ibid. 31.

will never see, because they have been lost forever".³¹³ While the species are extremely important resources for meeting human needs and maintaining the equilibrium of the ecosystem, Pope Francis invites us not to overlook "the fact that they have value in themselves".³¹⁴ He notes that "some less numerous species, although generally unseen, nonetheless play a critical role in maintaining the equilibrium of a particular place".³¹⁵ While discussing biodiversity, the encyclical also refers to the oceans which "not only contain the bulk of our planet's water supply, but also most of the immense variety of living creatures, many of them still unknown to us and threatened for various reasons".³¹⁶ Pope Francis is especially sensitive to the alarming state of the world's coral reefs and uses an appropriate quote from the pastoral letter of the conference of the bishops of the Philippines:

In tropical and subtropical seas, we find coral reefs comparable to the great forests on dry land, for they shelter approximately a million species, including fish, crabs, molluscs, sponges and algae. Many of the world's coral reefs are already barren or in a state of constant decline. "Who turned the wonderworld of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of colour and life?"³¹⁷

In this pastoral letter, the Catholic bishops' Conference of the Philippines invited everyone of goodwill to address the ecological problem not only from the point of view of economics and politics but also from the aesthetic and sacramental dimension:

We, the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines, ask Christians and all people of goodwill in the country to reflect with us *on the beauty* of the Philippine land and seas which nourish and sustain our lives. As we thank God for the many ways He has gifted our land we must also resolve to cherish and protect what remains of this bounty for this and future generations of Filipinos. We are well aware that, for the vast majority of Filipinos, the scars on nature, which increasingly we see all around us, mean less nutritious food, poorer health and an uncertain future. This will inevitably lead to an increase in political and social unrest.³¹⁸

This phenomenological presentation of the contemporary ecological crisis succeeds in driving home a strong message on the magnitude of the ecological problem. The crisis of our common home is not just about climate change or any other singular phenomenon. Our common home is threatened by several physical crises which are all interconnected.

313 Ibid. 33.

314 Ibid.

315 Ibid. 34.

316 Ibid. 40.

317 The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *A Pastoral Letter on Ecology: What is happening to our beautiful land* (Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 29 January 1988), 1.

318 Ibid.

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3.4.2.2. The Theological Approach.

Notwithstanding that the theological vision of *Laudato Si'* is imbued throughout the encyclical, the entire second chapter entitled “The Gospel of Creation” is dedicated to the laying down of its theological foundation. Denis Edwards observes that “one of the key contributions of *Laudato Si'* to contemporary theology, and to Christian ecological practice, is its theology of the natural world”.³¹⁹ Some theological criteria were developed to examine and make informed judgment on the ecological crisis of our common home.

Chapter II begins by reflecting on the importance of a theological perspective on the contemporary ecological crisis. It begins with a question “why should this document, addressed to all people of good will, include a chapter dealing with the convictions of believers?”³²⁰ In the next paragraph, Pope Francis himself gives a comprehensive explanation:

“Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realize that the solutions will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality. Respect must also be shown for the various cultural riches of different peoples, their art and poetry, their interior life and spirituality. If we are truly concerned to develop an ecology capable of remedying the damage we have done, no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it.”³²¹

Implied in this statement is the vision that the ecological crisis we face today is not only about the physical collapse of the planet’s ecosystem and biochemical cycles, which generates tremendous impact on humanity, especially on the poor and vulnerable sector, but is also in fact, symptomatic of a deeper spiritual crisis. In other words, contemporary ecological problem would ultimately redound to a theological issue. As Jostrom Isaac Kureethadam rightly observes that the contemporary ecological crisis points to the ‘amnesia’ (or forgetfulness) of a deeper truth, namely, that the physical world is above all God’s creation and is permeated with the divine presence.³²²

In this section of the study, the main theological perspective of *Laudato Si'* relevant to creation will be presented in a thematic order.

319 Denis Edwards, “Everything is Interconnected: The Trinity and the Natural World in *Laudato Si'*”, *The Australasian Catholic Record* 94 (2017), 83.

320 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 62

321 *Ibid.*, 63.

322 Cf. Jostrom Isaac Kureethadam, *Creation in Crisis: Science, Ethics, Theology* (New York; Orbis, 2014), 288-291.

3.4.2.2.1. Truth of Creation.

In the wake of modern scientific revolution, a secular trend has emerged that tends to reduce the natural world into a mere inert matter—the Cartesian *res extensa*, or merely as a storehouse of resources as in the case of the neo-liberal economy. The encyclical revives into the picture the fundamental truth of the Judeo-Christian faith that the natural world is above all God's creation and such, is in itself “good news”. *Laudato Si'* founded its theology of the natural world on the biblical doctrine of creation. The world was brought into being by God *ex nihilo*—not from any pre-existent or primordial matter but from complete void.

The encyclical elaborates that creation is “good news” on account of two fundamental truths of faith: first, is based on the account of the book of Genesis which affirms the basic goodness of creation, and secondly, the physical world has been brought into existence as an act of love on the part of the triune God.

The intrinsic goodness of creation proceeds from God's own appreciation of every created reality. If God created the world and sees how good His creation was, then the world and every single creature in it must have a value, regardless of its utility or usefulness in relation to other creatures. The encyclical presents quite succinctly this view:

We are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes: “by their mere existence they bless him and give him glory”,³²³ and indeed, “the Lord rejoices in all his works” (Ps 104:31). By virtue of our unique dignity and our gift of intelligence, we are called to respect creation and its inherent laws, for “the Lord by wisdom founded the earth” (Prov 3:19). ... The Catechism clearly and forcefully criticizes a distorted anthropocentrism: “Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection... Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things”.³²⁴

The encyclical makes clear also that the earth was here before us and has been given to us as a gift. We are not proprietors of the earth but its stewards. This fundamental doctrine allows us to counter the charge hurled against the Judeo-Christian tradition on the basis of the Genesis account which grants dominion to man over the earth, accusing Christianity to have encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by man, paint-

323 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2416.

324 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 69.

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ing him as domineering and destructive by nature.³²⁵ Pope Francis explicitly claims that “this is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church” and calls to “forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures”.³²⁶

The command to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15) “means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving”.³²⁷ “Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures”.³²⁸ For this reason, man has “no unlimited right to trample his creation underfoot”.³²⁹ Pope Francis teaches that along this vision “God rejects every claim to absolute ownership: ‘The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me’” (Lev 25:23).³³⁰ “The best way to restore men and women to their rightful place, putting an end to their claim to absolute dominion over the earth, is to speak once more of the figure of a Father who creates and who alone owns the world. Otherwise, human beings will always try to impose their own laws and interests on reality”.³³¹

Secondly, the encyclical asserts that creation is an act of God’s unconditional love characterized by perfect freedom. The world is not a result of chance or accident as claimed by secular thought and culture. Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, the word “creation” has a broader meaning than “nature”, as nature can be scientifically studied, understood, and controlled. The created world in its entirety is “God’s loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance”, “a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion”.³³²

The whole of creation and every creature reveals God’s overflowing love. God’s self-sharing love is what animates every creature:

Every creature is thus the object of the Father’s tenderness, who gives it its place in the world. Even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence, God enfolds it with his affection. Saint Basil the Great described the Creator as “goodness without measure”,³³³ while Dante Alighieri spoke of “the love which moves the sun and the stars”.³³⁴

325 The encyclical here responds to the renowned article of Lynn White Jr. in 1967 which laid the blame for our environment crisis largely on Christianity. See the previous article on Lynn White in this chapter.

326 Ibid., 67.

327 Ibid.

328 Ibid., 68.

329 Ibid., 75.

330 Ibid., 67.

331 Ibid., 75.

332 Ibid., 76.

333 Saint Basil the Great, *Hom. in Hexaemeron*, I, 2, 10: PG 29, 9.

334 Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, 77. Cf. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Paradiso*, Canto XXXIII, 145.

Thus, creation is perceived as a tangible expression of the love that overflows from the inner love of the triune God. This truth is even made manifest in man—the crowning glory of God’s creation. As John Paul II had pointed out, God “confers upon him or her an infinite dignity”.³³⁵ Each man has been willed and continuously loved by God:

“How wonderful is the certainty that each human life is not adrift in the midst of hopeless chaos, in a world ruled by pure chance or endlessly recurring cycles! The Creator can say to each one of us: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you” (Jer 1:5). We were conceived in the heart of God, and for this reason “each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary”.³³⁶

In the context of God’s creative love, the entire creation is perceived in the encyclical as “open to God’s transcendence, within which it develops”.³³⁷ But God’s transcendence does not make Him remote from creation itself because He is also deeply immanent in it. To stress this point, Pope Francis quotes the bishops of Brazil who “have pointed out that nature as a whole not only manifests God but also a locus of his presence”.³³⁸ God’s immanent presence to every being in the physical universe is through the Holy Spirit who indwells and guides the whole of creation so that it moves towards its definite purpose like a piece of art:

(God’s) divine presence, which ensures the subsistence and growth of each being, “continues the work of creation”. The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge: “Nature is nothing other than a certain kind of art, namely God’s art, impressed upon things, whereby those things are moved to a determinate end. It is as if a shipbuilder were able to give timbers the wherewithal to move themselves to take the form of a ship”.³³⁹

The persistent and guiding presence of the Holy Spirit in creation is the ultimate cause of the fruitfulness of human effort to care for the increasingly threatened planetary home. As Pope Francis notes, by quoting John Paul II,³⁴⁰ that “the Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, including the most complex and inscrutable”.³⁴¹

335 Ibid., 65.

336 Ibid.

337 Ibid., 79.

338 Ibid., 88. Cf. National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil, *A Igreja e a Questão Ecológica* (1992), 53-54.

339 Ibid., 80.

340 Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesis*, 140.

341 Ibid.

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3.4.2.2.2. Interconnectedness and Interdependence of all Beings.

Behind the integral ecology of Pope Francis is the theological conviction that the entire creation is interrelated, and all creatures are interdependent. “We are all connected” appears to be the recurring mantra of *Laudato Si’*.³⁴² At the very introduction of the encyclical, while presenting the main themes to be treated, Pope Francis already speaks of “the conviction that everything in the world is connected”.³⁴³ Yet, this reality is not just a plain scientific fact. It is also a revealed truth found in the very first chapters of the book of Genesis. While referring to the biblical narrations of the story of Cain and Abel, the pope said: “These ancient stories, full of symbolism, bear witness to a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others”.³⁴⁴ The Catechism of the Catholic Church also shows that the conviction of interdependence among creatures is at the core of Christian belief. Quoting the Catechism, Pope Francis writes:

As the Catechism teaches: “God wills the interdependence of creatures. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle, and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other”.³⁴⁵

The relational ontology of the interrelatedness of all creatures is ultimately based on the very relational nature of the Creator Himself, the Source of all being. With profound insight, *Laudato Si’* highlights the doctrine that the fundamental theological foundation for the interrelatedness of all reality, of all forms of life, and all social structures, is the very trinitarian communion, which has “left its mark on all creation”.³⁴⁶ Just as the divine Persons are subsistent relations, so is the universe—patterned after the divine model—is a conglomeration of relationships among creatures. But not only that the triune God is the basis or the point of reference for interrelatedness in creation, He himself desired it for his creation. This is made explicit in the Covenant He established with his people, as the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines had pointed out:

342 Cf. Vincent J. Miller, “Integral Ecology: Francis’ Spiritual and Moral Vision of Interconnectedness”, in *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si’: Everything is Connected*, ed. Vincent J. Miller (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 11-28.

343 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 16.

344 Ibid., 70.

345 Ibid., 86. Cf. also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 340.

346 Ibid., 239.

The relationship which links God, human beings and all the community of the living together is emphasized in the covenant which God made with Noah after the flood...This covenant recognizes the very close bonds which bind living forms together in what are called ecosystems. The implications of this covenant for us today are clear. As people of the covenant, we are called to protect endangered ecosystems, like our forests, mangroves, and coral reefs and to establish just human communities in our land. More and more we must recognize that the commitment to work for justice and to preserve the integrity of creation are two inseparable dimensions of our Christian vocation to work for the coming of the kingdom of God in our times.³⁴⁷

In the biological order of the universe, interrelatedness and interdependence are the law of life of all living things. Living species are to be understood only as part of an enormous network, as “the different aspects of the planet—physical, chemical and biological—are interrelated”.³⁴⁸ In the world of living organisms, “different creatures relate to one another in making up the larger units which today we term ‘ecosystem’”.³⁴⁹ In scientific terms, ecosystems are basically the intricate interrelationship between species, the “harmonious ensemble of organisms existing in a defined space and functioning as a system”³⁵⁰ so that life on earth is sustained and perpetuated. “Although we are often not aware of it, we depend on these larger systems for our own existence.”³⁵¹ Pope Francis elaborates that “ecosystems interact in dispersing carbon dioxide, purifying water, controlling illnesses and epidemics, forming soil, breaking down waste”, etc. “We live and act on the basis of a reality which has previously been given to us, which precedes our existence and our abilities”.³⁵² Quoting John Paul II, Pope Francis warns that “we cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention to the consequences of such interference in other areas”.³⁵³

3.4.2.2.3. Human Ecology.

Human ecology is a term first used by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* referring to the moral condition within the human environment.³⁵⁴ In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reused the expression in order to establish the link between the degradation of the physical environment and the deterioration of the human environment. He says that “the destruction of the human environment is extremely serious, not only

347 CBCP. What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land? (29 January 1988).

348 Ibid., 138.

349 Ibid., 140.

350 Ibid.

351 Ibid.

352 Ibid.

353 Ibid., 131. Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace*, 6: AAS 82 (1990), 150.

354 John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (1 May 1991), 38: AAS 83 (1991), 841.

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because God has entrusted the world to us men and women, but because human life is itself a gift which must be defended from various forms of debasement.”³⁵⁵

Human beings are not exempted from the intricate web of relationships among creatures. *Laudato Si'* highlights man's nature as both *imago mundi*³⁵⁶ and *imago Dei*.³⁵⁷ At the very beginning of the encyclical, Pope Francis reminds humanity that “we are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters”.³⁵⁸ And at the same time, referring to the Genesis account of creation, he points out that “very man and woman is created out of love and made in God's image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26)”.³⁵⁹ “This shows us the immense dignity of each person, ‘who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons.’”³⁶⁰ For this reason man has a “unique place in this world”³⁶¹ and his relationship to the surroundings. In view of this reality, Pope Francis claims that “there can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology.”³⁶² He says: “Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.”³⁶³

Laudato Si' stresses that the human environment is not only the natural world but also the concrete settings “in which people live their lives” and which “influence the way we think, feel and act”.³⁶⁴ It can be “our rooms, our workplaces and neighborhood”.³⁶⁵ When this human environment “is disorderly, chaotic or saturated with noise and ugliness, such overstimulation makes it difficult to find ourselves integrated and happy.”³⁶⁶

Laudato Si' then proceeds to speak of a deeper level of human ecology which is the recognition of the moral law inscribed in human nature:

355 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 5.

356 Ibid., 2.

357 Ibid., 65.

358 Ibid., 2.

359 Ibid., 65.

360 Ibid.

361 Cf. Ibid., 15.

362 Ibid., 118.

363 Ibid., 92.

364 Ibid., 147.

365 Ibid.

366 Ibid.

Human ecology also implies another profound reality: the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment. Pope Benedict XVI spoke of an “ecology of man”, based on the fact that “man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will”.³⁶⁷

Another essential element of human ecology is the acceptance and care of the human body which establishes “a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings.”³⁶⁸ Pope Francis writes:

The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology.³⁶⁹

Since man is social by nature, human ecology has also an indispensable social dimension. For this reason, *Laudato Si'* also speaks of “social ecology”. It points out that “the analysis of environmental problems cannot be separated from the analysis of human, family, work-related and urban contexts, nor from how individuals relate to themselves, which leads in turn to how they relate to others and to the environment.”³⁷⁰ The social organization of human communities has a direct influence on the environment. The pope asserts that “we are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.”³⁷¹

Under human ecology, Pope Francis further widens the concept as to include “cultural ecology”. The ecological crisis is linked also with the cultural crisis of our times. The pope warns that along with the destruction of species, we are also witnessing in our time the disappearance of cultures and traditions. And “the disappearance of a culture can be just as serious, or even more serious, than the disappearance of a species of plant or animal.”³⁷² Pope Francis singles out in this regard the tragic plight of indigenous communities in many parts of the world, who continue to be evicted from their ancestral homelands often under the disguise of the development projects. *Laudato Si'* holds the view that the deterioration of the human ecology in all its dimensions has great impact on the well-being of the physical environment and vice versa.

367 Ibid., 155.

368 Ibid.

369 Ibid.

370 Ibid., 141.

371 Ibid., 139.

372 Ibid., 145.

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3.4.2.2.4. Creation as a Form of Sacrament.

Creation is perceived in *Laudato Si'* as a form of sacrament because it is God's first and primordial manifestation of his reality in a visible and tangible manner. Pope Francis writes: "The Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life".³⁷³ Created realities are ultimately symbols of God and his work. According to Pope Francis, God has written a precious book, "whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe". Quoting the Canadian bishops, he added "that no creature is excluded from this manifestation of God: 'From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine'".³⁷⁴

Creation is the very first epiphany of God. Citing John Paul II,³⁷⁵ he points out that "for the believer, to contemplate creation is to hear a message, to listen to a paradoxical and silent voice"; and that "alongside revelation properly so-called, contained in sacred Scripture, there is a divine manifestation in the blaze of the sun and the fall of night".³⁷⁶ He also quotes the bishops of Japan who made a thought-provoking observation: "To sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God's love and hope".³⁷⁷ Along this trend, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines in 1988 addressed the ecological devastation of the country by drawing on the tradition of the "two books"—that of Scripture and that of nature—to elaborate a narrative that is intelligible and capable of mobilizing the response of the faithful. The theocentrism that emerges from the vision of the Philippine episcopate promotes a virtue of humility which will be the guiding principle of the ecclesial stance both to approach with wonder and gratitude the created beauty and to recognize in the wisdom of the "tribal peoples"—after a period marked by Western technological and epistemological arrogance—an indispensable intermediary and an anthropological model in solving the ecological crisis.³⁷⁸

Laudato Si' develops a symbolic view of creation. Creation's value lies precisely in its symbolism, in its capacity to link the finite with the infinite. It communicates through visible signs the invisible reality of the creator. As symbols of God, created

373 Ibid., 235

374 Ibid., 85.

375 John Paul II, *Catechesis*, 123.

376 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 85. Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesis*, 112

377 Ibid., 85. Cf. Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan, *Reverence for Life. A Message for the Twenty-First Century* (1 January 2000), 89.

378 Cf. Jaime Tatay Nieto, "De la Cuestión Social (RN) a la Cuestión Socio-ambiental (LS): La Recepción Católica del Reto de la Sostenibilidad: 1891-2015", 102.

realities are *vestigia Dei*, signs and symbols of God's presence and work in creation. As they communicate God through visible signs, all creatures, taken singly and collectively, are a form of sacrament. Pope Francis highlights this point when he asserts "that each creature reflects something of God and has a message to convey to us".³⁷⁹ He based this view on the doctrine of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which states that "each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection... Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things".³⁸⁰

In view of the transcendental value of every creature, Pope Francis laments the extinction of species and with profound theological insight states that "each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever...because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us".³⁸¹

This religious world view however is not unique to the Christian faith. In fact, there have been countless sages and spiritual men and women in various religious traditions who were able to see the created realities as tangible symbols of the divine. But in the Catholic tradition the most attractive and compelling figure, the one whom Pope Francis described as "the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically",³⁸² is St. Francis of Assisi. To give light to what he meant, Pope Francis writes:

Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. "Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker" (Wis 13:5); indeed, "his eternal power and divinity have been made known through his works since the creation of the world" (Rom 1:20). For this reason, Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wildflowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty.³⁸³

379 Ibid., 221.inter

380 Ibid., 69. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 339.

381 Ibid., 33.

382 Ibid., 10.

383 Ibid., 12. Cf. Thomas of Celano, *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, II, 124, 165, in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 2, New York-London-Manila, 2000, 354.

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In the spirituality of St. Francis, created things, regardless of their size and perfection, are *vestigia Dei* so that creation becomes an authentic act of God communicating through his work in creation. Just as in every act of communication no single word is sufficient to convey a message, so also in God's communication in creation, no one creature, not even a human being, is sufficient to represent God's message in creation. The multitude of living species somehow represent the infinite fecundity of the creator. As Pope Francis writes: "the universe as a whole, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible riches of God."³⁸⁴ Then citing the angelic doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, he adds "that multiplicity and variety 'come from the intention of the first agent' who willed that 'what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another',³⁸⁵ inasmuch as God's goodness 'could not be represented fittingly by any one creature.'³⁸⁶ Hence, the diversity of creatures and their multiple relationship conglomerate in unison to manifest the goodness of the creator, and the importance and meaning of every creature can be better understood if contemplated within to the entirety of the creator's plan.

Finally, faithful to the Christian tradition, *Laudato Si'* looks on Christ as the archetype of the sacramental vision of creation. As Hans Urs Von Baltasar densely articulated such a view: "The Incarnation expressed in a concentrated form the sacramental worldview of the Christian tradition in which creation is the very medium through which God is revealed."³⁸⁷ Along this thought, Pope Francis writes:

For Christians, all the creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word, for the Son of God has incorporated in his person part of the material world, planting in it a seed of definitive transformation. "Christianity does not reject matter. Rather, bodiliness is considered in all its value in the liturgical act, whereby the human body is disclosed in its inner nature as a temple of the Holy Spirit and is united with the Lord Jesus, who himself took a body for the world's salvation".³⁸⁸

By the mystery of the Incarnation, God embraced the whole of creation, and sanctified every created reality so that "the Church does not hesitate to bless and make generous use of the earth's materials in liturgical celebrations and sacraments".³⁸⁹ This

384 Ibid., 86.

385 Ibid. Cf. also *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 47, art. 1.

386 Ibid.

387 Matthew T, Eggemeier, "A Sacramental Vision; Environmental Degradation and the Aesthetics of Creation", *Modern Theology* 29 (2013), 352.

388 Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, 235. Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Oriente Lumen* (2 May 1995), 11: AAS 87 (1995), 757.

389 Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, "You Love All That Exists... All Things Are Yours, God, Lover of Life..." A Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative from the Social Affairs Commission, (4 October 2003), 7.

sacramental activity finds its apex in the Eucharist. *Laudato Si'* affirms:

It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation. Grace, which tends to manifest itself tangibly, found unsurpassable expression when God himself became man and gave himself as food for his creatures. The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter.³⁹⁰

When Christians gather for the Eucharist, they bring the earth and all its creatures in an act of cosmic worship to the Creator of all things. As Pope Francis graphically writes:

The Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration: in the bread of the Eucharist, "creation is projected towards divinization, towards the holy wedding feast, towards unification with the Creator himself."³⁹¹

3.4.2.2.5. Creation bears the Imprint of the Trinity.

In the light of creation as a form of sacrament which reflects God's presence and His works, *Laudato Si'* teaches that the three Persons are also manifested in the created world. Pope Francis argues that for "Christians, believing in one God who is trinitarian communion suggests that the Trinity has left its mark on all creation."³⁹² Following the doctrine of Saint Bonaventure who claimed that man's vision was blurred by sin and hence cannot see clearly the image of the Trinity in creatures, Pope Francis writes:

The reflection of the Trinity was there to be recognized in nature "when that book was open to man and our eyes had not yet become darkened"³⁹³. The Franciscan saint teaches us that each creature bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure, so real that it could be readily contemplated if only the human gaze were not so partial, dark and fragile. In this way, he points out to us the challenge of trying to read reality in a Trinitarian key.³⁹⁴

Pope Francis points out that "the divine Persons are subsistent relations" and our world is "a web of relationships" precisely because it is "created according to the divine model".³⁹⁵ He describes how a trinitarian God is the origin and the sustaining

390 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 236.

391 Ibid. Cf. also Benedict XVI, Homily for the Mass of Corpus Domini (15 June 2006): AAS 98 (2006), 513.

392 Ibid., 239.

393 Cf. Bonaventure, *Quaest. Disp. de Myst. Trinitatis*, 1, 2 concl.

394 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 239.

395 Ibid., 240.

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principle of creation, and how each of the three Persons in their relational nature is intimately and uniquely present in the world:

The Father is the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self-communicating foundation of all that exists. The Son, his reflection, through whom all things were created, united himself to this earth when he was formed in the womb of Mary. The Spirit, infinite bond of love, is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways. The world was created by the three Persons acting as a single divine principle, but each one of them performed this common work in accordance with his own personal property. Consequently, “when we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity”.³⁹⁶

God’s work of creation, redemption, and sanctification are realized by one divine principle though by the doctrine of appropriation, the origin of all things is appropriated to the Father, the act of redemption to the incarnated Son, and the act of sanctification to the Holy Spirit who flows from the Father and the Son as the bond of the divine love. The full manifestation of this Trinitarian activity in creation happens in Christ’s Incarnation, the Logos becoming Flesh, the intimate meeting and inextricable intertwining of the spiritual and the material.³⁹⁷ Jesus’ entire life is a revelation of God, one and triune. At the beginning of Christ public life, at his Baptism, which is also the inauguration of his works of redemption, the Father himself testifies to the world that Christ is his beloved Son (cf. Mt 3:13-17 and parallels), and the Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove. This is the first explicit revelation of the Trinity in the New Testament. It is then paralleled by the scene of the Transfiguration, which introduces the Paschal mystery (cf. Mt 17:1-5 and parallels). Finally, when departing from his disciples, Jesus sends them to baptize in the name of the three divine Persons, so that the whole world may come to share in the eternal life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (cf. Mt 28:19).

The trinitarian communion is reflected in the relational ontology of the interrelatedness of all created reality. John Bayer write in this regard: “Against a worldview that privileges the autonomous and unattached individual, Pope Francis says that reality, a creation of the Holy Trinity, mirrors its Creator as a network of interdependent relations, a locus of communion”.³⁹⁸ Ecological interrelatedness in the created world also reveals man’s vocation to create bonds of unity and foster relationships. Building relationship is the path for authentic human fulfillments for being also made after the

396 Ibid., 238. Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesis* (2 August 2000), 4: *Insegnamenti* 23/2 (2000), 112.

397 Philip Sherrard, *The Rape of Man and Nature: An Inquiry into the Origins and Consequences of Modern Science* (Suffolk: Golgonooza Press, 1987), 92.

398 John Bayer, “A Voice Crying in the Desert: *Laudato Si’*, as Prophecy”, *The Way* 54 (2015), 79.

image of the Trinity, it is the way by which humans “make their own that trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created.”³⁹⁹ This global solidarity in the midst of diversity “flows from the mystery of the Trinity”⁴⁰⁰, who despite the Threeness of persons, remains one, undivided triune God.

3.4.2.2.6. Creation in *statu viae* towards Universal Communion.

In the study of the world of nature, one of the most important findings of natural science is that in the ecosystem no living creature is autonomous and self-sufficient. All creatures are interrelated and interdependent to each other. In *Laudato Si'*, this reality is perceived as part of the eternal design of the creator of the universe. Quoting *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the encyclical asserts that “God wills the interdependence of creatures. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle, and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other”.⁴⁰¹ This interdependence of creatures is naturally geared towards unity. Thus, the entire creation is in constant movement, in a word, in *statu viae* towards universal communion.

A contemplation on this aspect of creation could reveal man’s symbolic communion with the Divine. But also, in the larger context, creation is seen as a concrete means of communion within the human family and within the larger biotic community. Pope Francis speaks of this universal communion when he asserts that “as part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect.”⁴⁰² Human life is a pilgrimage in communion along with the rest of God’s creatures, bonded together by God’s unifying love: “everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.”⁴⁰³ And it is precisely because of this profound communion and closeness to the earth that should make us “feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement”.⁴⁰⁴

399 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 240

400 Ibid.

401 Ibid., 86. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 340.

402 Ibid., 89.

403 Ibid., 92.

404 Ibid., 89. Cf. also Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 215: AAS 105 (2013), 1109.

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In this context of universal communion, *Laudati Si'* warns of the immergence of some extreme ecological ideologies which, instead of promoting a well-balanced and sound ecological concern, would actually create “new imbalances which would deflect us from the reality which challenges us”.⁴⁰⁵ Pope Francis is especially critical of the tendency to deny any preeminence to the human person and show more zeal “in protecting other species than in defending the dignity which all human beings share in equal measure.”⁴⁰⁶ Equally disturbing is the trend among contemporary ecologists “to divinize the earth” which, instead of contributing positively to the care of the environment, “would prevent us from working on it and protecting it in its fragility.”⁴⁰⁷ Some pantheistic inclinations are getting rampant among modern ecologists alienating them from real ecological issues.

In view of the integral ecology, the Pope is also critical of the “enormous inequalities in our midst, whereby we continue to tolerate some considering themselves more worthy than others”⁴⁰⁸ which is obviously against the doctrine of universal communion. Humanity cannot truly live in communion with the rest of creation when among themselves there is no real communion:

A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted. This compromises the very meaning of our struggle for the sake of the environment.⁴⁰⁹

An authentic universal communion of the entire creation begins with a common fraternity that opens its arms to every person regardless of race, sex, age, and social status. Man cannot be at peace with creation if within the human society there is no peace. With profound psychological shrewdness, the Pope states: “we have only one heart, and the same wretchedness which leads us to mistreat an animal will not be long in showing itself in our relationships with other people. Every act of cruelty towards any creature is “contrary to human dignity”.”⁴¹⁰

Finally, part of the concrete implications of universal communion is the common destination of the earth’s goods which are meant to benefit the common good of hu-

405 Ibid., 90. Cf. also Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 14: AAS 101 (2009), 650.

406 Ibid.

407 Ibid.

408 Ibid.

409 Ibid., 91

410 Ibid., 92. Cf. also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2418.

manity. *Laudato Si'* brings into light the teaching of his predecessor Pope John Paul II who wrote in 1991: “God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring anyone”.⁴¹¹ This doctrine is based firmly on a theological truth that from the very beginning God created the world for everyone. For this reason, the church’s social doctrine includes the common destination of goods:

The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and “the first principle of the whole ethical and social order”.⁴¹² The Christian tradition has never recognized the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property.⁴¹³

Following the magisterial teaching of John Paul II, *Laudato Si'* affirms “that there is always a social mortgage on all private property, in order that goods may serve the general purpose that God gave them”.⁴¹⁴ Hence, “it is in accord with God’s plan that this gift be used in such a way that its benefits favor only a few”.⁴¹⁵

3.4.2.2.7. The Entire Creation recapitulates in Jesus Christ.

As the entire creation in *statu viae* moves towards universal communion, its ultimate destiny is the final communion with the Creator—the *telos* of all creation to be recapitulated in Christ when God will be all in all. *Laudato Si'* took the Christian traditional understanding of the world which is profoundly Christocentric. It looks at all creation as destined and “bound up with the mystery of Christ present from the beginning as ‘all things have been created through him and for him’ (Col 1:16).⁴¹⁶ Echoing the insight of Fr Teilhard de Chardin, Pope Francis writes: “the ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things.”⁴¹⁷ It is important to note here that it is the whole of creation—not just humanity alone—but man along with the entire physical universe that is destined to be redeemed and transformed in Christ.

411 Ibid., 93. Cf. also John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (1 May 1991), 31: AAS 83 (1991), 831.

412 Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), 19: AAS 73 (1981), 626.

413 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 93.

414 Ibid., 93. Cf. also John Paul II, *Address to Indigenous and Rural People*, Cuilapán, Mexico (29 January 1979), 6: AAS 71 (1979), 209.

415 Ibid. Cf. also John Paul II, *Homily at Mass for Farmers*, Recife, Brazil (7 July 1980): AAS 72 (1980): AAS 72 (1980), 926.

416 Ibid., 99.

417 Ibid., 83. In this horizon we can set the contribution of Fr Teilhard de Chardin; cf. Paul VI, *Address in a Chemical and Pharmaceutical Plant* (24 February 1966): *Insegnamenti* 4 (1966), 992-993; John Paul II, *Letter to the Reverend George Coyne* (1 June 1988): *Insegnamenti* 11/2 (1988), 1715; Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Celebration of Vespers in Aosta* (24 July 2009): *Insegnamenti* 5/2 (2009), 60.

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This Christological dimension of the destiny of the creation has inherent doctrinal implications especially on the concept of dominion. Contrary to the accusation hurled against it by many contemporary scholars, Christian doctrinal tradition rejects all forms of tyrannical domination by man over other creatures. Rather, it envisages humanity's role as one who lovingly accompanies the entire creation in their eschatological journey. As *Laudato Si'* clearly states:

Here we can add yet another argument for rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other creatures. The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator.⁴¹⁸

Christian tradition looks at Jesus Christ as the Alpha and the Omega of all created realities. Creation begins through him, and with him, it moves towards universal communion, and in him, it will find its completion. But also, according to this tradition, Christ is not someone who guides creation from without. He lived within the world. With Christ, the "Word became flesh and lived among us" (John 1:14), the earth is not anymore home only for humanity and other living creatures; it has also become God's home. With profound theological nuance, *Laudato Si'* states:

The prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18) reveals Christ's creative work as the Divine Word (Logos). But then, unexpectedly, the prologue goes on to say that this same Word "became flesh" (Jn 1:14). One Person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross. From the beginning of the world, but particularly through the incarnation, the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole, without thereby impinging on its autonomy.⁴¹⁹

The Incarnate Word lived and walked on earth like any ordinary man would. *Laudato Si'*, in an article which bears the title "the Gaze of Christ" took interest on how the Word-made-flesh had looked at the physical world. It contemplated on the 'gaze' of the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world".⁴²⁰ His way of looking at the world should teach humanity how to value and deal with creation. Three elements are highlighted:

418 Ibid.

419 Ibid., 99.

420 Ibid., 100.

First, Jesus invited his disciples “to recognize the paternal relationship God has with all his creatures.” He reminded them of how the Father himself would care for his creatures with “moving tenderness” for “each one of them is important in God’s eyes: “Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God” (Lk 12:6). He positively preserves and sustains them; “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them” (Mt 6:26).⁴²¹

Secondly, the gaze of Jesus on creation is one of contemplation. Pope Francis pointed out that Jesus “was able to invite others to be attentive to the beauty that there is in the world because he himself was in constant touch with nature, lending it an attention full of fondness and wonder. As he made his way throughout the land, he often stopped to contemplate the beauty sown by his Father and invited his disciples to perceive a divine message in things: ‘Lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest’” (Jn 4:35).⁴²²

Finally, according to *Laudato Si'* “Jesus lived in full harmony with creation: ‘What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?’” (Mt 8:27). He also enjoyed the good things of the world around him. “His appearance was not that of an ascetic set apart from the world, nor of an enemy to the pleasant things of life.” He did not despise the body or any form of materiality. “He was far removed from philosophies which despised the body, matter and the things of the world”. Jesus valued and sanctified human labor. He “worked with his hands, in daily contact with the matter created by God, to which he gave form by his craftsmanship. It is striking that most of his life was dedicated to this task in a simple life which awakened no admiration at all: ‘Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?’” (Mk 6:3). Every human effort to care for our common planetary home is not only in accord with what Christ wants; it is a form of collaboration with Christ’s in his work of redemption. “As Saint John Paul II taught, ‘by enduring the toil of work in union with Christ crucified for us, man in a way collaborates with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity’”.⁴²³

The Christological presentation of *Laudato Si'* concludes with the eschatological reflection on creation. As Pope Francis writes in the encyclical: “this leads us to direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father, so that “God may be everything to everyone” (1 Cor 15:28). Indeed, the gaze of Jesus has profoundly transformed the whole of creation:

421 Ibid., 96.

422 Ibid., 97.

423 Ibid., 98. Cf. also Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), 27: AAS 73 (1981), 645.

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Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence.⁴²⁴

The earth is truly man's common home with the rest of God's creatures. But over and above this truth, is the mystery of the Incarnation which made the universe God's own *oikos* (house), as it is now imbued with his divine presence. God lives with us. He is the Emmanuel—God with us. The glory of God encompasses the whole of creation in and through the risen Christ whose life and saving works flow throughout the cosmos through the life-giving Spirit.

3.4.2.3. Analysis of the Deeper Roots of Ecological Crisis.

After an objective examination of the phenomenological data of the crisis and the development of the theology of natural world, the third (The human Roots of the Ecological Crisis) and the fourth (Integral Ecology) chapters are dedicated to the analysis of the deeper or metaphysical roots of the environmental problem. Pope Francis announces already in the introduction that he will “attempt to get to the roots of the present situation, so as to consider not only its symptoms but also its deeper causes.”⁴²⁵ Equipped with an objective data of the problem drawn from the results of the best scientific research available and analyzing them against a theological backdrop of the natural world, *Laudato Si'* goes deeper into identifying the transcendental roots of the planetary crisis. In doing so, it demonstrates the significant link between human sin and the ecological devastation of the physical world.

3.4.2.3.1. Effects of Human Sin on the Physical World.

The theology of *Laudato Si'*, shades light on the inconspicuous link which exists between human sin and the state of the physical world. Pope Francis notes that the rupture of humanity's relationship with God “distorted our mandate to have dominion over the earth (see Gen. 1:28), to till and keep it (Gen. 2:15). As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (see Gen. 3:17-19)”⁴²⁶ This recalls Pope Paul II's message for the celebration of the world day of peace on the 1st of January 1990:

424 Ibid., 100.

425 Ibid., 15.

426 Ibid., 66.

Made in the image and likeness of God, Adam and Eve were to have exercised their dominion over the earth (Gen 1:28) with wisdom and love. Instead, they destroyed the existing harmony by deliberately going against the Creator's plan, that is, by choosing to sin. This resulted not only in man's alienation from himself, in death and fratricide, but also in the earth's "rebellion" against him (cf. Gen 3:17-19; 4:12).⁴²⁷

Sin against one's own fellow humans can have negative repercussions for the land and for creation as whole. The biblical story of Cain and Abel exemplified this case for which Pope Francis offers an ecological exegesis:

In the story of Cain and Abel, we see how envy led Cain to commit the ultimate injustice against his brother, which in turn ruptured the relationship between Cain and God, and between Cain and the earth from which he was banished. This is seen clearly in the dramatic exchange between God and Cain. God asks: "Where is Abel your brother?" Cain answers that he does not know, and God persists: "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground" (Gen 4:9-11). Disregard for the duty to cultivate and maintain a proper relationship with my neighbour, for whose care and custody I am responsible, ruins my relationship with my own self, with others, with God and with the earth.⁴²⁸

Cain's fratricide has direct backlash on the land: the field, the ground where bushes and plants grow (Gen 2:5), the garden entrusted to humanity to till and keep (Gen 2:15) is now soaked with the innocent blood of Abel that cries out to the Creator. Because of sin, the land becomes barren.

The sins of humanity committed in the form of social injustice can also have serious impact on man and on all other forms of life. Pope Francis underscores this truth in his interpretation of the biblical story of Noah and the Great Flood:

We see this in the story of Noah, where God threatens to do away with humanity because of its constant failure to fulfil the requirements of justice and peace: "I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them" (Gen 6:13). These ancient stories, full of symbolism, bear witness to a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others.⁴²⁹

427 Pope John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator; Peace with all of Creation*, Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace (January 1, 1990), 3.

428 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 70.

429 Ibid.

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In Pope Francis' reading, the Noah story demonstrates how the defilement of creation through human sin has repercussions on the rest of creation, with even innocent animals caught up in the punishment inflicted on guilty humans. This graphic story in Genesis illustrates that as sin multiplied on Earth, the water which originally was a symbol of life (see Gen 1: 20-22) turned into a devastating cause of death, so that all human beings, all flesh that moved on the earth, birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all swarming creatures, and everything on dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life had died (Gen 7:21-22).

Laudato Si' interprets the contemporary ecological crisis, which is anthropogenic in character, as consistent with the biblical symbolic message so that ecological problems are ultimately sin problems. Every human sin has an ecological consequence as Pope Francis points in the encyclical, "here we see how environmental deterioration and human and ethical degradation are closely linked".⁴³⁰

3.4.2.3.2. The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis.

The most striking feature of the contemporary ecological crisis is arguably its anthropogenic character, i.e., it is caused by human activities. *Laudato Si'* elaborates this observation with strong scientific backing. Referring to climate change, for example, it states that "a number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity."⁴³¹ Today there is nearly unanimous consensus among scientists on the anthropogenic effect on the climate change. Also, Pope Francis mentions the problem of the mass extinction of species. He echoes the scientific consensus about human-induced biodiversity loss: "Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity."⁴³²

The dramatic transformation of the home planet on account of human activities in recent times has led many scientist to claim that the earth is now entering into a new geographical epoch for which the Nobel Laureate Paul J. Crutzen coined the term *Anthropocene*, namely, the age of the humans.⁴³³ The International Conference Planet Un-

430 Ibid., 56.

431 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 23.

432 Ibid., 33.

433 Cf. P.J. Crutzen and E. F. Stoermer, "The Anthropocene", *Global Change Newsletter* 41 (2000),17-18. The Anthropocene is distinguished by the scientists as a new period either after or within

der Pressure in 2012 also noted that “humans have become a prime driver of change, at the planetary level, significantly altering earth’s biological, chemical, and physical processes.” Indeed, Lynn White was right when as early as 1967, in his epoch-making thesis, he states that “surely no creature other than man has ever managed to foul its nest in such short order.”⁴³⁴

3.4.2.3.3. The Dominant Technocratic Paradigm.

Pope Francis, in analyzing the current ecological problem, notes that while the roots can be multiple and complex, ultimately, they all would redound to a certain mind-set, a worldview, a particular way of looking at the world and relating to it; this he calls “the dominant technocratic paradigm” of the modern age:

A certain way of understanding human life and activity has gone awry, to the serious detriment of the world around us. Should we not pause and consider this? At this stage, I propose that we focus on the dominant technocratic paradigm and the place of human beings and of human action in the world.⁴³⁵

Pope Francis explains that “humanity has entered a new era in which our technical prowess has brought us to a crossroads.”⁴³⁶ He does recognize the contribution of “technoscience” to improve the quality of human life so that “it is right to rejoice in these advances and to be excited by the immense possibilities which they continue to open up before us”.⁴³⁷ He even recalls the positive outlook of his predecessors on scientific technology: Pope John Paul II who said that “science and technology are wonderful products of a God-given human creativity”⁴³⁸ and Pope Benedict XVI who teaches that technology itself “expresses the inner tension that impels man gradually to overcome material limitations”.⁴³⁹ However, he is concerned precisely of the risk as technology has given man a seemingly unlimited and unprecedented power and cites occasions when this power was abused in the past:

Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely, particularly when we consider how it is currently being used. We need but think of the nuclear bombs dropped in the middle of the twentieth century, or the array of technology which Nazism, Communism and other

the Holocene, the current epoch, which began approximately 10,000 years ago (about 8000 BC) with the end of the last glacial period.

434 Cf. Lynn White, “The Historic Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”, *Science* 155 (1967), 1204.

435 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 101.

436 *Ibid.*, 102.

437 *Ibid.*

438 Cf. John Paul II, *Address to Scientists and Representatives of the United Nations University, Hiroshima* (25 February 1981), 3: AAS 73 (1981), 422.

439 Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 69: AAS 101 (2009), 702.

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totalitarian regimes have employed to kill millions of people, to say nothing of the increasingly deadly arsenal of weapons available for modern warfare. In whose hands does all this power lie, or will it eventually end up? It is extremely risky for a small part of humanity to have it.

Following the view of his favorite intellectual master, Romano Guardini, Pope Francis criticizes the tendency to believe “that every increase in power means an increase of ‘progress’ itself”, an advance in ‘security, usefulness, welfare and vigor; ...an assimilation of new values into the stream of culture’⁴⁴⁰, as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such”.⁴⁴¹ The contemporary man has not been trained rightly on how to use power and the “immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience.”⁴⁴²

What is even more alarming is the reality that this technocratic paradigm has become more and more global and is entirely dominant in human affairs. Technology controls and “lords over” both human beings and the natural world. *Laudato Si’* states:

The technological paradigm has become so dominant that it would be difficult to do without its resources and even more difficult to utilize them without being dominated by their internal logic. It has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology, of its costs and its power to globalize and make us all the same.⁴⁴³

Pope Francis warns that the modern technocratic paradigm is dominating in various spheres of human life: social, economic, ethical, and so forth and “tends to absorb everything into its ironclad logic”.⁴⁴⁴ Technological products are not neutral, “for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups.”⁴⁴⁵ This new paradigm ends up determining “the kind of society we want to build”.⁴⁴⁶

Indeed, the dominant technocratic paradigm is clearly at the bottom of the planetary crisis and endangers the traditional values of our common human family. However, in *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis goes even deeper as to discern the conceptual roots

440 Cf. Romano Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit*, 9th ed., Würzburg, 1965, 87 (English: *The End of the Modern World*, Wilmington, 1998, 82).

441 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 105.

442 Ibid.

443 Ibid., 108.

444 Ibid.

445 Ibid., 107

446 Ibid.

behind the very technocratic paradigm which holds in its “ironclad logic” the modern man’s mode of living. These ‘conceptual roots’ are identified as the ‘modern anthropocentrism’ and the ‘mechanic vision of the natural world’.

3.4.2.3.4. The Problem of Modern Anthropocentrism.

Laudato Si' observes that “modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism”.⁴⁴⁷ In the pope’s view, the man-made ecological disaster has something to do with modern man’s tendency to make himself the absolute center of all things. The abuse of creation begins when man thinks that he can do everything in nature for his own personal benefit. Pope Benedict XVI already warned that creation is harmed “where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves”.⁴⁴⁸ The ecological crisis is seen as a sort of rebellion from the part of nature to humanity’s lordship over it. Citing Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis writes:

Once the human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble, for “instead of carrying out his role as a cooperater with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature”.⁴⁴⁹

In modern anthropocentrism, the physical world is seen to exist only at man’s disposal and is completely passive and helpless before man’s quest for control and mastery. This kind of worldview leads to man’s voracious and exploitative attitude towards it. *Laudato Si'* warns that “a misguided anthropocentrism leads to a misguided lifestyle” and “when human beings place themselves at the center, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative,” that is, man “sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one’s own immediate interests.”⁴⁵⁰

Modern anthropocentrism is ultimately based on a false anthropology and a distorted view of man’s rightful place in the world. On this regard, Pope Francis writes:

An inadequate presentation of Christian anthropology gave rise to a wrong understanding of the relationship between human beings and the world. Often,

447 Ibid., 116.

448 Benedict XVI, *Address to the Clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone* (6 August 2008): AAS 100 (2008), 634.

449 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 117. Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (1 May 1991), 37: AAS 83 (1991), 840.

450 Ibid., 122.

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what was handed on was a Promethean vision of mastery over the world, which gave the impression that the protection of nature was something that only the faint-hearted cared about. Instead, our “dominion” over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship.⁴⁵¹

Moreover, Pope Francis warns that modern anthropocentrism poses danger to humans themselves:

When human beings fail to find their true place in this world, they misunderstand themselves and end up acting against themselves: “Not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given, but, man too is God’s gift to man. He must therefore respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed”.⁴⁵²

However, the Pope also warns that the reaction to excessive anthropocentrism cannot be biocentrism which swings the pendulum to the extreme by placing the natural world at the center and denying human uniqueness altogether:

There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology. When the human person is considered as simply one being among others, the product of chance or physical determinism, then “our overall sense of responsibility wanes”.⁴⁵³ A misguided anthropocentrism need not necessarily yield to “biocentrism”, for that would entail adding yet another imbalance, failing to solve present problems and adding new ones. Human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued.⁴⁵⁴

Biocentrism is another trend of environmental philosophy like deep ecology adopted by many modern ecologists that places man at par with other beings in the universe thus denying man of his unique status in the natural hierarchy within the order of the universe. *Laudato Si’* holds on the church’s doctrinal tradition which looks at man as steward of the God-made universe.

3.4.2.3.5. The Problem of the Mechanistic Vision of the Natural World.

The modern mechanistic vision of the natural world seems to be a natural ‘byproduct’

451 Ibid., 116. Cf. Asian Bishops’ Conferences, *Love for Creation. An Asian Response to the Ecological Crisis*, Declaration of the Colloquium sponsored by the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (Tagaytay, Philippines, 31 January-5 February 1993), 3.3.2.

452 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 115. Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Centesimus Annus* (1 May 1991), 38: AAS 83 (1991), 841.

453 Benedict XVI, *Message for the 2010 World Day of Peace*, 2: AAS 102 (2010), 41.

454 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 118.

of the modern anthropocentrism which, in exalting the human subject to a position of absolute centrality, tends to look down on the physical reality as nothing more than a gigantic reservoir of objects or raw materials destined for human consumption. Modern anthropocentrism and the mechanistic vision of the natural world are two worldviews which are dialectically linked. These modern worldviews had led to the depreciation and abuse of the surrounding natural world. Pope Francis recalls the warning which Pope John Paul II emphasized in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* that human beings frequently seem “to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption”.⁴⁵⁵ Following the critic of Romano Guardini, Pope Francis points out that “modern anthropocentrism has paradoxically ended up prizing technical thought over reality, since “the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere ‘given’, as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape; it views the cosmos similarly as a mere ‘space’ into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference”.⁴⁵⁶ Thus, in this new mechanistic worldview, the ontological value of the physical world is reduced to sheer utility.

In modern and neoliberal economies, such modern mechanistic view of the natural world is largely adopted. Pope Francis precisely criticizes “the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology” but compromises the wellbeing of our common home. The concept of unlimited growth is “based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth’s goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit. It is the false notion that “an infinite quantity of energy and resources are available, that it is possible to renew them quickly, and that the negative effects of the exploitation of the natural order can be easily absorbed”.⁴⁵⁷

Such dominant technocratic paradigm is developing into a subculture the modern anthropocentrism and the mechanistic vision of the natural world so that *Laudato Si'* sees “the urgent need for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution.”⁴⁵⁸ The Pope, however, sees in humanity a glimpse of hope as “an authentic humanity, calling for a new synthesis, seems to dwell in the midst of our technological culture, almost unnoticed, like a mist seeping gently beneath a closed door.”⁴⁵⁹

455 Ibid., 5. Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979), 287.

456 Ibid., 115. Cf. Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit*, 63 (The End of the Modern World, 55).

457 Ibid., 106. Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 462.

458 Ibid., 114.

459 Ibid., 112.

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If the ultimate roots of the degradation of the environment are ultimately human, the reparation of the ecological harmony can also be human, so that what is needed today is a new humanism. *Laudato Si'* states: “there can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself.”⁴⁶⁰ This new humanity demands nothing short of an integral ecology for “our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God.”⁴⁶¹

3.4.2.4. The Practical Approach to Ecological Crisis.

Laudato Si' proposes that part of the strategies for a solution must deal with the human concrete settings in which people live their lives and which influence the way they think, feel, and act.⁴⁶² Pope Francis speaks of existing problems like the lack of housing in many parts of the world and its negative consequences of on the quality of people’s lives.⁴⁶³ Extreme poverty can lead to incidents of brutality and exploitation of the people by criminal organizations.⁴⁶⁴ Furthermore, respect for the totality of nature presupposes respect for human nature. Citing Benedict XVI who spoke of an “ecology of man”⁴⁶⁵, Pope Francis asserts that “man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will.”⁴⁶⁶

Within the framework of integral ecology, the protection of the natural world is intimately linked with other aspect of human existence like economy, social, political, and cultural life and has concrete implications for the common good:

If everything is related, then the health of a society’s institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life. Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment. In this sense, social ecology is necessarily institutional, and gradually extends to the whole of society, from the primary social group, the family, to the wider local, national and international communities.⁴⁶⁷

These lines bring to mind the exhortation of John Paul II to the pastors of the Church. Towards the end of his pontificate, in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*,⁴⁶⁸ he pointed out to them that in the new cultural context of the 21st

460 Ibid., 118.

461 Ibid., 119.

462 Cf. Ibid., 147.

463 Cf. Ibid., 147 and 152.

464 Cf. Ibid., 149.

465 Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address to the German Bundestag*, Berlin (22 September 2011): AAS 103 (2011), 668.

466 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 155.

467 Ibid., 142.

468 John Paul II, *Pastores Gregis* (16 October 2003), 69-71.

century, it is necessary to universalize charity and solidarity in order to counteract the most pernicious effects of economic, financial and cultural globalization. He then goes on to address the ecological question, pointing out that, in terms of its dimensions, its origins and possible solutions, it can no longer be separated from the complex phenomenon of globalization.⁴⁶⁹ In our time, solidarity and the common good must be expanded to include urgently creation. This requires an understanding of ecology—physical and human—“that protects the fundamental good of life in all its manifestations and prepares future generations for an environment that comes as close as possible to the Creator’s plan.”⁴⁷⁰ Concern for the environment needs to be accompanied by a sincere love for fellow human beings, especially the most vulnerable among them. “When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities – to offer just a few examples – it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself.”⁴⁷¹ A society deaf to the cry of the poor will also be de equally deaf to the cry of the mother earth.

Against this backdrop of human ecology, Pope Francis made his guidelines for possible solutions to the crisis. Moving forward with the different approaches in our reading of *Laudato Si'*—the phenomenological, theological, analytical, and the practical—the last three chapters of the encyclical seem to deal with the practical or workable proposals made by Pope Francis in response to the ecological crisis. The integral approach of *Laudato Si'* enables Pope Francis to make elaborate proposals. In here, we only mention the major ones, namely: the importance of a collective response as humanity faces a global ecological crisis with considerable magnitude, the development of an ecological economics respectful of the ecosystems, the need of a new political culture not subservient to vested economic interests, the call for ecological education capable of reconciling humanity with the natural world, and the advocacy of an ecological spirituality which could lead to communal ecological conversion.

3.4.2.4.1. A Call for a Collective Response to the Ecological Crisis.

According to Pope Francis, the truth of “interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan.”⁴⁷² Given the scale of the devastation done on the planet, comprehensive solutions are needed. “It is no longer possible to find a specific, discrete answer for each part of the problem. It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with

469 Ibid., 69.

470 Ibid., 70.

471 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 117.

472 Ibid., 164.

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social systems.”⁴⁷³ The Pope therefore proposes that concrete action must be done at various levels, as individuals and communities, at the local, regional, national, and international levels to respond to the crisis of our common home. He calls for dialogue among people of goodwill.

First, *Laudato Si'* highlights the role of the international community in addressing the ecological crisis. It presents an overview of what has been achieved so far as well as the shortcomings of the international community. There had been significant advances in the arena of ecological protection. Pope Francis mentions the Basel Convention on hazardous wastes, the Convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora, the Vienna Convention for the protection of the ozone layer which was subsequently implemented through the famous Montreal Protocol.⁴⁷⁴ However, there was also a notable shortcoming: “recent World Summits on the environment have not lived up to expectations because, due to lack of political will, they were unable to reach truly meaningful and effective global agreements on the environment.”⁴⁷⁵

Laudato Si' then provides mainly ethical guidelines for common action at the international level. One of these is the so-called “principle of common but differentiated responsibilities” enshrined in the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Pope Francis defended the poorer countries who risk burdensome commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.⁴⁷⁶ The poor countries should not be coerced at the High Table of international negotiations on climate change to accept emission reduction targets that will affect their struggles to overcome poverty. For poor countries, the priority “must be to eliminate extreme poverty and to promote the social development of their people.”⁴⁷⁷ “A more responsible overall approach is needed to deal with both problems: the reduction of pollution and the development of poorer countries and regions.”⁴⁷⁸

Laudato Si' also recommends that poorer nations develop less-polluting forms of energy production like solar energy. But in doing so, it requires “the help of countries which have experienced great growth at the cost of the ongoing pollution of the planet.”⁴⁷⁹ Such assistance would mean “the establishment of mechanisms and subsidies which allow developing countries access to technology transfer, technical assistance

473 Ibid., 139.

474 Cf. Ibid., 168.

475 Ibid., 166.

476 Cf. Ibid., 170.

477 Ibid., 172.

478 Ibid., 175.

479 Ibid., 172.

and financial resources".⁴⁸⁰ This is in line with the principle of solidarity between all peoples. The pope also calls for international agreement and governance on a whole range of the so-called "global commons" like the oceans, the problem of marine waste, etc.⁴⁸¹

With all these concerns, *Laudato Si'* calls for all peoples to contribute in the national and local levels. In promoting the welfare of humanity and the rest of the biotic community, "individual states can no longer ignore their responsibility for planning, coordination, oversight and enforcement within their respective borders."⁴⁸² The pope sees room for creativity and positive action in this regard. He makes a special mention of the important contribution of local ecological movements and many organizations of civil society around the world for the protection of our common home. They "show concern for a public place (a building, a fountain, an abandoned monument, a landscape, a square), and strive to protect, restore, improve or beautify it as something belonging to everyone." "These community actions, when they express self-giving love, can also become intense spiritual experiences."⁴⁸³

3.4.2.4.2. Development of Ecological Economics.

After the call for concrete actions on the part of humanity at international, national, local, and personal levels for the stewardship of the earth, what is urgently needed is a radically new economy, one that is "ecological", i.e. respectful of the ecosystem and natural cycles of the planetary home.

In the analytical part of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis observes the existence of the overarching belief guiding modern economic capitalism that could have led to the precarious state of our common home. Modern economics has one-dimensional view of the natural world as a storehouse of resources for human consumption and isolated from social and environmental concerns. He states that "the principle of the maximization of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy. As long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment". Accordingly, the natural world is reduced to a heap of commodities, meticulously calculated in terms of their monetary value, to be used, stored, and battered.⁴⁸⁴ A quantitative paradigm in the perception of nature continues to condition contemporary

480 Ibid.

481 Cf. Ibid., 174.

482 Ibid., 177.

483 Ibid., 232.

484 Cf. David Toolan, *At Home in the Cosmos* (New York:Orbis, 2001), 43-44.

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social values and thinking and development is seen in terms of the capacity to exploit the resources of the earth. Pope Francis observes:

Where profits alone count, there can be no thinking about the rhythms of nature, its phases of decay and regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems which may be gravely upset by human intervention. Moreover, biodiversity is considered at most a deposit of economic resources available for exploitation, with no serious thought for the real value of things, their significance for persons and cultures, or the concerns and needs of the poor.⁴⁸⁵

The current economic system largely excludes the poor and vulnerable sections of society. In *Laudato Si*'s vision of integral ecology, economy, equity, and the care of the environment are inextricably interlinked. As Anthony Annett rightly observes, "the economic vision of Pope Francis is a human vision".⁴⁸⁶ The pope indicates the need of an ecological economy capable of appealing to a broader vision of reality.

Laudato Si' criticizes the dogma of the reigning economic paradigm which "exalts the concept of a subject who, using logical and rational procedures, progressively approaches and gains control over an external object."⁴⁸⁷ This way of thinking champions "the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology. It is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit."⁴⁸⁸ Ecological economics rejects the myth of infinite economic growth. Hence, according to the pope, there is a need of "redefining our notion of progress".⁴⁸⁹ "A technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress."⁴⁹⁰

Laudato Si' also criticizes the current throwaway culture and notes with regret that we have not develop a "circular model" of economic production as the natural ecosystems does:

"Plants synthesize nutrients which feed herbivores; these in turn become food for carnivores, which produce significant quantities of organic waste which give rise to new generations of plants. But our industrial system, at the end of its cycle of production and consumption, has not developed the capacity to

485 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*', 190.

486 Anthony Annett, "The Economic Vision of Pope Francis", in *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si': Everything is Connected*, ed. Vincent J. Miller (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 160.

487 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*', 106.

488 Ibid.

489 Ibid., 194.

490 Ibid.

absorb and reuse waste and by-products. We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations...”

The Pope courageously proposes also to move away from fossil fuels and adopt renewable forms of energy: “We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels – especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay. Until greater progress is made in developing widely accessible sources of renewable energy, it is legitimate to choose the less harmful alternative or to find short-term solutions.”⁴⁹¹

Along the vision of *Laudato Si'*, we conclude this part with the words of Naomi Klein who writes: “It is a civilizational wake-up call. A powerful message—spoken in the language of fires, floods, droughts, and extinctions—telling us we need an entirely new economic model and a new way of sharing this planet.”⁴⁹²

3.4.2.4.3. The Call for a new Political Culture.

The habitability of the earth is the most important of all common goods and politics whose primary task is to serve the common good has an important and indispensable role to play. *Laudato Si'* is critical of the present political culture in relation to the protection of the natural environment. Modern politics lacks a long-term vision for the protection of the environment as it is mostly dominated by the consumerist trend of immediate gratification and prioritizing “short-term gain and private interest”.⁴⁹³ Pope Francis observes:

A politics concerned with immediate results, supported by consumerist sectors of the population, is driven to produce short-term growth. In response to electoral interests, governments are reluctant to upset the public with measures which could affect the level of consumption or create risks for foreign investment. The myopia of power politics delays the inclusion of a far-sighted environmental agenda within the overall agenda of governments.⁴⁹⁴

Global politics loses power and authority when it has become too subservient to economic interests. Such a situation impedes efforts to resolve ecological problems around the world. This reality is manifested in the failure of international summits on climate change to implement resolutions. Pope Francis attributes such failures to “powerful interests” of certain sectors and to the fact that politics “are subject to tech-

491 Ibid. 165.

492 Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (London: Penguin Books, 2015), 21.

493 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 184.

494 Ibid., 178.

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nology and finance”: “There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that their own plans will not be affected”.⁴⁹⁵

Laudato Si' also criticizes a situation in which multinational companies essentially have a stranglehold on established political structures. Pope Francis observes that “the twenty-first century, while maintaining systems of governance inherited from the past, is witnessing a weakening of the power of nation states, chiefly because the economic and financial sectors, being transnational, tends to prevail over the political.”⁴⁹⁶ Some of these economic entities are exercising more power than the state governments themselves.⁴⁹⁷ Big multinational business companies hold unprecedented power in the global political and economic spheres.

Against this backdrop of the current political culture which is subservient to vested economic interests, Pope Francis proposes a politics which is at the service of the common good: “Society as a whole, and the state in particular, are obliged to defend and promote the common good”.⁴⁹⁸ The principle of subsidiarity which is enshrined in the Catholic social teachings demands “a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power”.⁴⁹⁹ Then he calls for a new political culture “which is farsighted and is capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis”.⁵⁰⁰ The pope goes on to explain that a long-term perspective is vital to resolving the crisis facing our common home “because policies related to climate change and environmental protection cannot be altered with every change of government.”⁵⁰¹

Echoing the call of Pope Benedict XVI⁵⁰², Pope Francis proposes a more centralized and stronger world political authority:

It is essential to devise stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed fairly by agreement among national governments, and empowered to impose sanctions...to manage the global economy; to revive economies hit by the crisis; to avoid any deterioration of the present crisis and the greater imbalances that would result; to bring about integral and timely disarmament, food security and peace; to guarantee the protection of the environment and to regulate migration.

495 Ibid., 54.

496 Ibid., 175.

497 Cf. Ibid., 196.

498 Ibid., 157.

499 Ibid., 196.

500 Ibid., 197.

501 Ibid., 181.

502 Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 67.

Laudato Si' insists that politics has an indispensable role to play in efforts to protect the environment for “unless citizens control political power – national, regional and municipal – it will not be possible to control damage to the environment.”⁵⁰³

Finally, *Laudato Si'* draws clear criteria in line with the Catholic social teaching that politics and economics should be both at the service of the common good and of human life in particular:

Politics must not be subject to the economy, nor should the economy be subject to the dictates of an efficiency-driven paradigm of technocracy. Today, in view of the common good, there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life, especially human life.⁵⁰⁴

In *Laudato Si'*, then concept of the common good is not limited only to the present generation of people; rather it extends just as well to future generations:

We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others.⁵⁰⁵

The greatest of all common goods is the welfare of the planetary home where human beings lives along with the rest of the biotic community. Its care and protection become the greatest task to be pursued on the part of all humanity in this current era of planetary environmental crisis.

3.4.2.5. The Call for Ecological Education and Spiritual Advocacy.

The current trend of the man-made destruction of the environment demands a radical and courageous change of lifestyle which, according to *Laudato Si'*, could even be “counter-cultural”.⁵⁰⁶ The current lifestyles of excessive consumption boosted by the techno-economic paradigm has become a global trend. Against such unhealthy consumption patterns which is squeezing dry the resources of the planet, Pope Francis calls for a radical change of lifestyle which “could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power.”⁵⁰⁷ To realize this, education has a vital role to play.

503 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 179.

504 Ibid., 189.

505 Ibid., 159.

506 Ibid., 108.

507 Ibid., 206.

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3.4.2.5.1. Ecological Education.

Laudato Si' indicates that in the face of the imminent collapse of our common home and the increasing breakdown of social relationships, “we are faced with an educational challenge”.⁵⁰⁸ Education is the path on which to accompany all, especially young people, to become responsible stewards of the earth. Young people are most vulnerable to the contemporary consumerist culture, but they can also be guided to make responsible ecological choices in terms of lifestyle. Pope Francis then proposes a holistic model of ecological education, capable of “establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God. Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning.”⁵⁰⁹ Such a holistic approach toward education is vital for the protection of the planet in the context of the contemporary ecological crisis.

Laudato Si' then proposes variety of settings where a holistic ecological education can be realized, namely, families, various social groups, schools, Christian communities, and houses of religious formation. It insists on imparting such education right from an early stage for “good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life.”⁵¹⁰

Pope Francis underscores the role of the family in the arena of ecological education. The womb of the family is where one receives integral education. According to the pope, the family is:

the place in which life – the gift of God – can be properly welcomed and protected... In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life. In the family we first learn how to show love and respect for life; we are taught the proper use of things, order and cleanliness, respect for the local ecosystem and care for all creatures. In the family we receive an integral education, which enables us to grow harmoniously in personal maturity. In the family we learn to ask without demanding, to say “thank you” as an expression of genuine gratitude for what we have been given, to control our aggressivity and greed, and to ask forgiveness when we have caused harm.⁵¹¹

Pope Francis points to the importance of educating toward the responsible stewardship of creation within the Catholic Church and in all Christian communities as

508 Ibid., 209.

509 Ibid., 210.

510 Ibid., 213.

511 Ibid.

they “have an important role to play in ecological education.”⁵¹² Interestingly, the pope makes explicit the paramount role of seminaries and house of formation in ecological education, something which has never been seen before in previous encyclicals. For so long, in the formation programs of seminaries, ecological questions do not receive due attention in the formation of clergy and religious leaders around the world. Against the backdrop of this institutional ‘shortcoming’ in the ecological formation of the clergy, the pope writes in the context of ecological education:

It is my hope that our seminaries and houses of formation will provide an education in responsible simplicity of life, in grateful contemplation of God’s world, and in concern for the needs of the poor and the protection of the environment.⁵¹³

Moreover, *Laudato Si’* appeals to every human person to do his part in the safeguarding of the common home for no matter how small is the effort, it can be a precious contribution to save the mother earth:

We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread. Furthermore, such actions can restore our sense of self-esteem; they can enable us to live more fully and to feel that life on earth is worthwhile.⁵¹⁴

Finally, *Laudato Si’* widens the scope of ecological education by emphasizing the importance of aesthetic education. Echoing the wisdom of John Paul II, it states that “the relationship between a good aesthetic education and the maintenance of a healthy environment cannot be overlooked”.⁵¹⁵ It indicates that “by learning to see and appreciate beauty, we learn to reject self-interested pragmatism”. Then it proceeds with a warning that “if someone has not learned to stop and admire something beautiful, we should not be surprised if he or she treats everything as an object to be used and abused without scruple.”⁵¹⁶ In the vision of Pope Francis, educating oneself to appreciate the beauty of the natural world can be a big step leading to the wholehearted care for the planetary home. In the care of the increasingly imperiled planet, the role of education is indeed vital and indispensable.

512 Ibid., 214.

513 Ibid.

514 Ibid., 212.

515 Ibid., 215. Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace*, 14: AAS 82 (1990), 155.

516 Ibid.

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3.4.2.5.2. Spiritual Advocacy.

To bring about profound ecological conversion which is essential for a long-term solution to the ecological crisis, *Laudato Si'* advocates an authentic creation spirituality, or better called “ecological spirituality”. It refers to a spirituality that centers on respect and love for the totality of God’s creation. It needs to be acknowledged that in the past, spiritual exercises were associated with detachment from the body and other worldly concerns in order to grow in spiritual life. Pope Francis acknowledges this deficiency when he states that “admittedly, Christians have not always appropriated and developed the spiritual treasures bestowed by God upon the Church, where the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us.”⁵¹⁷ Hence, along with ecological education, the pope offers in the encyclical a spirituality that can motivate and nourish our actions toward the care of the environment:

Here, I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living. More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world.⁵¹⁸

Firstly, the ecological spirituality envisioned by the pope is that which is deeply incarnational as it finds expression in concrete attitudes and gestures of care and concern for the physical world as well as for fellow human being. It is a spirituality grounded in the theology of the natural world developed in the encyclical. Fundamental to ecological spirituality is man’s awareness of his profound communion with the rest of creation; that he is in the world and an integral part of it. As Pope Francis states:

It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings.⁵¹⁹

The pope points out further that man’s superiority, having been gifted with reason and freewill, does not empower him to seek “personal glory or irresponsible dominion”, but rather a “different capacity”⁵²⁰ which entails serious responsibility to care for each other and the rest of creation.

517 Ibid., 216.

518 Ibid.

519 Ibid., 220.

520 Cf. Ibid.

Pope Francis explains that ecological spirituality is essentially an attitude of the heart, “one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full.”⁵²¹ This type of spirituality imitates Jesus who would often “contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness has looked at him with love.”⁵²² It is a spirituality of living to the full the present moment, being available to anyone and to everything, trusting in the loving providence of God, and overcoming unhealthy anxiety for the future. This is to counter the destructive anxiety of the aggressive and compulsive consumers who find security in superficial and passing goods.

Such a lifestyle is particularly relevant in our era of ruthless consumerism which is draining the earth’s natural resources and destroying its life-sustaining ecosystems. Christian spirituality is a real alternative in this regard as it “encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption” and “proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little.”⁵²³ Living out this ecological spirituality can motivate people to “return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack.”⁵²⁴

Secondly, ecological spirituality also leads to a deep reconciliation with oneself for “no one can cultivate a sober and satisfying life without being at peace with him or herself.”⁵²⁵ Pope Francis indicates that “inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life.”⁵²⁶ In a world of widespread restlessness and frenetic activity such a deeper inner peace alone can guarantee harmony with the rest of creation. Being created by God out of overflowing love, nature itself is filled with love and is constantly communicating love. But amid “constant noise, interminable and nerve-wracking distractions”,⁵²⁷ it is exceedingly difficult to listen to it. Hence, ecological spirituality calls for contemplative rest where man can recover his strength and heal his relationship with God, with himself, with fellow humans, and with the rest creation.

521 Ibid., 226.

522 Cf. Ibid., 226.

523 Ibid., 222.

524 Ibid.

525 Ibid., 225.

526 Ibid.

527 Ibid.

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Since ecological spirituality is basically incarnational, it has to be lived out in space and time. *Laudato Si'* highlights two important institutions in the millennia-long Judeo-Christian tradition, namely, the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday observance. Both traditions are intended to commemorate the seventh day on which God rested and contemplated on the goodness of creation. The Sabbath came to be realized in the temporal order, spanning the rhythm of the days of the week, the cycle of seven years, and the great jubilee cycle of forty-nine years. Sabbath assumes the definite contours in the history of the people of God. Pope Francis notes:

This law came about as an attempt to ensure balance and fairness in their relationships with others and with the land on which they lived and worked. At the same time, it was an acknowledgment that the gift of the earth with its fruits belongs to everyone. Those who tilled and kept the land were obliged to share its fruits, especially with the poor, with widows, orphans and foreigners in their midst.⁵²⁸

To celebrate Sabbath is to be at peace with fellow humans, especially the poor, the *anawim* of Yahweh, and with the whole of creation.

The Christian observance of Sunday as the Day of the Lord has also profound ecological significance. *Laudato Si'* indicates that “like the Jewish Sabbath, [Sunday] is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world. Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the “first day” of the new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord’s risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality. It also proclaims “man’s eternal rest in God”⁵²⁹ The Sunday celebration is truly the epitome of an incarnate ecological spirituality as it occasions a contemplative rest where man finds deeper meaning in his earthly life and endeavors. Human work includes the dimension of receptivity and gratuity as man’s success depends also in God’s providence. The Sunday rest protects man from “empty activism” and from “unfettered greed which seeks personal gain” at the expense of others. It “opens his eyes to the larger picture and gives him renewed sensitivity to the rights of others”.⁵³⁰ “And so the day of rest, centered on the Eucharist, sheds its light on the whole week, and motivates us to greater concern for nature and the poor.”⁵³¹

Moreover, ecological spirituality is founded on the theology of *Laudato Si'* that is profoundly sacramental, i.e. it seeks to “discover God in all things”. Echoing the wisdom of the Sufi mystic Ali al-Khawwas, *Laudato Si'* affirms that “the universe unfolds in

528 Ibid. 71.

529 Ibid., 237. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2175.

530 Cf. Ibid.

531 Ibid.

God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face."⁵³² In an authentic creation spirituality "encountering God does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature."⁵³³ St. Bonaventure teaches that as "contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God's grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves".⁵³⁴ Pope Francis makes mention of the great Catholic mystic St. John of the Cross who "taught that all the goodness present in the realities and experiences of this world 'is present in God eminently and infinitely, or more properly, in each of these sublime realities is God'".⁵³⁵ "This is not because the finite things of this world are really divine, but because the mystic experiences the intimate connection between God and all beings, and thus feels that "all things are God".⁵³⁶

Since the archetype of all sacramental activity is Christ's Incarnation, the Logos becoming flesh, the intimate meeting and inextricable intertwining of the spiritual and the material,⁵³⁷ ecological spirituality is ultimately Christ-centered and finds its apex in the Eucharist, as "it is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation."⁵³⁸ Pope Francis offers a profound reflection on the mystery of the Eucharist in relation to creation:

In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living center of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life. Joined to the incarnate Son, present in the Eucharist, the whole cosmos gives thanks to God. Indeed, the Eucharist is itself an act of cosmic love: "Yes, cosmic! Because even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world".⁵³⁹

Finally, ecological spirituality directs its gaze toward the eschatological destiny of all creation to be recapitulated in Christ. As already mentioned previously in the theology of *Laudato Si'*, the entire creation is in *statu viae* towards universal communion, its ultimate destiny is the final communion with the Creator—the *telos* of all creation to be recapitulated in Christ when God will be all in all. This type of spirituality envisions that the whole creation, the entire physical universe, and not just humanity alone, is destined to be redeemed and transformed in the risen Christ. Humanity's role, as

532 Ibid., 233.

533 Ibid., 235.

534 Ibid., 233. Cf. Bonaventure, *In II Sent.*, 23, 2, 3.

535 Ibid., 234. Cf. John of the Cross, *Cántico Espiritual*, XIV, 5.

536 Ibid.

537 Cf. Philip Sherrard, *The Rape of Man and Nature*, 92.

538 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 236.

539 Ibid.

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Pope Francis indicates is “to lead all creatures back to their creator.”⁵⁴⁰

3.4.2.5.3. The Concept of Ecological Sin.

Transcending the traditional concept of sin, which is couched largely in individual terms, *Laudato Si'* offers a holistic understanding of sin as the rupture of basic relationships: (1) with the creator, (2) with fellow human beings, and (3) with creation itself. Traditionally, sin has been understood in a rather personal sense, i.e., limiting the connotation exclusively to one's personal relationship with God. In recent times, there has been a growing awareness of the societal structures of sin and condemnations of them in the teachings of the church, including in papal magisterium. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis broadens this concept of sin within a planetary perspective. Any human action that damages our common home and endangers the life and survival of our common household, especially the most vulnerable and the poor, becomes a sin. The ecological crisis is a consequence of man's perverted values, beliefs, and conscious choices, and ultimately of sinful behavior.

On this theme, *Laudato Si'* referred to the ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew I, the religious leader, who, more than anyone else, has spoken copiously of ecological sin. For him, “each human act that contributes to the destruction of the natural environment must be regarded as a very serious sin.”⁵⁴¹ In the preamble, *Laudato Si'* cited the patriarch:

Patriarch Bartholomew has spoken in particular of the need for each of us to repent of the ways we have harmed the planet...He has repeatedly stated this firmly and persuasively,...“For human beings... to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life – these are sins”. For “to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God”.⁵⁴²

In the context of integral ecology which is the paradigm used in analyzing the planetary crisis, Pope Francis defines sin as the rupture of fundamental relationships in life. In this regard, he recalls the accounts in the book of Genesis:

The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic

540 Ibid., 83.

541 Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, “Greeting during the Symposium at the Holy Trinity Monastery, Halki, June 1, 1992,” in *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer*, ed. John Chryssavgis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 84.

542 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 8.

and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality. They suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin.⁵⁴³

It is only in the context of a world view where everything is interrelated and interdependent that the concept of ecological sin makes sense. Nothing in the created world is autonomous, nothing exists in absolute isolation. There exists a physical and spiritual connectedness between all creatures. Sin is precisely the straining of this inherent and all-embracing relational integrity of creation. The devastation of the planet is sin which ruptures the bonds of divine, human, and cosmic fellowship. What follows is the discussion of the 'triad effects' of ecological sin.

First, ecological sin is a sin against God, the creator of the world. In his homily at the fiftieth anniversary of the dedication of a Greek Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara, Patriarch Bartholomew said: "All that was created good by the All-Good Creator participates in His sacredness. Conversely, disrespect towards nature is disrespect toward the Creator, just as the arrogant destruction of a work of art is an insult to the artist who created it."⁵⁴⁴ In the book of Genesis, this truth has been evident in the original sin of Adam and Eve. When the first men disobeyed God's commandment to respect a limit imposed on them regarding a tree in the garden, it shattered above all their relationship with the Creator. Adam and Eve broke God's friendship and hid among the trees when they heard God walking in the garden. In a clear reference to this bible story, Pope Francis notes in *Laudato Si'*:

The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted our mandate to "have dominion" over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), to "till it and keep it" (Gen 2:15). As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (cf. Gen 3:17-19).⁵⁴⁵

The ecological crisis caused by man's refusal to accept and respect his creaturely limitations and the natural order of things is a sin against the Creator. In his longing to be 'like God', man substitutes God's rightful place as the Creator. This ancient an-

543 Ibid., 66.

544 Bartholomew I, "Homily at the Fiftieth Anniversary Dedication of St, Barbara Greek Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara, California, November 8, 1997," in *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer*, ed. John Chryssavgis, 214.

545 Ibid.

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thropocentric inclination of the first man, as graphically described in the bible, is made manifest today in a society which regards humanity and the world as autonomous and without the need of God.

Secondly, the ecological crisis is a sin against fellow human being. To pollute the land, water, and the atmosphere and to endanger the health of others especially the poor and the vulnerable is clearly a sin against the entire human race. In the phenomenological presentation of the ecological crisis, it is made evident how the anthropogenic climate change, excessive emissions of greenhouse gases, especially by the rich countries, are directly impacting the poorer and vulnerable communities, endangering their health and forcing mass migration. All this man-made disruption of the natural order creates a rupture in the invisible bonds of human fellowship. It is a sin against humanity. Citing a passage from the statement of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of New Zealand, Pope Francis writes:

The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. If we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. If we do not, we burden our consciences with the weight of having denied the existence of others. That is why the New Zealand bishops asked what the commandment "Thou shall not kill" means when "twenty percent of the world's population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive".⁵⁴⁶

Laudato Si' noted also that the contemporary ecological crisis is a sin against the future generation as it leaves them a home with polluted land, water, and atmosphere, a planet scarce in resources as the present generation consumes the natural resources at a totally unsustainable rate and causing an unprecedented climate change. The Pope writes: "The global economic crises have made painfully obvious the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny, which cannot exclude those who come after us. We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity."⁵⁴⁷ And asks: "Is it realistic to hope that those who are obsessed with maximizing profits will stop to reflect on the environmental damage which they will leave behind for future generations?"⁵⁴⁸

Finally, the ecological sin is an offence against creation itself. On this theme, Pope Francis recalls the decisive teaching of the Patriarch Bartholomew in this regard:

546 Ibid., 95. Cf. New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, *Statement on Environmental Issues* (1 September 2006).

547 Ibid., 159.

548 Ibid., 190.

“For human beings... to destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life – these are sins”.⁵⁴⁹

Hence, *Laudato Si'* strongly reminds us that man, being the only one among earthly creatures endowed with rationality, has responsibility protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations:

This responsibility for God’s earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence, must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between the creatures of this world, for “he commanded, and they were created; and he established them for ever and ever; he fixed their bounds and he set a law which cannot pass away” (Ps 148:5b-6). The laws found in the Bible dwell on relationships, not only among individuals but also with other living beings. “You shall not see your brother’s donkey, or his ox fallen down by the way and withhold your help... If you chance to come upon a bird’s nest in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting upon the young or upon the eggs; you shall not take the mother with the young” (Dt 22:4, 6). Along these same lines, rest on the seventh day is meant not only for human beings, but also so “that your ox and your donkey may have rest” (Ex 23:12). Clearly, the Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures.⁵⁵⁰

The multiple manifestations of the ecological crisis—from pollution and profligate consumption to biodiversity loss and climate change—are clear expressions of humanity’s sin against God’s creation. The anthropocentric tendency of modernity blurs the biblical mandate of man to become stewards of creation. When man takes the place of God at the center of the universe, and assumes an absolute ownership of the earth, he is bound to abuse it and commits a sin against creation.

3.4.2.5.4. The Notion of Ecological Conversion.

According to the old Christian tradition the only valid response to sin is deep repentance or *metanoia* which will culminate in the radical conversion of the heart to God. Applying the same principle to ecological sin—man’s rupturing of the bonds of union with his Creator, with his fellow human beings, and with the rest of creation—*Laudato*

549 Ibid., 8. Cf. *Address in Santa Barbara, California* (8 November 1997); cf. John Chryssavgis, *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, Bronx, New York, 2012.

550 Ibid., 68.

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Si' calls to “acknowledge sins against creation”⁵⁵¹ and make a deep and personal repentance which may lead to the so-called ecological conversion. Hence, in the theological nuance of *Laudato Si'*, ecological conversion is understood as a sort of radical change of heart or *metanoia* after a sincere repentance for sins committed against creation, leading to a universal reconciliation with God, fellow human, and the created world. Pope Francis cites Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in the need for repentance:

Patriarch Bartholomew has spoken in particular of the need for each of us to repent of the ways we have harmed the planet, for “inasmuch as we all generate small ecological damage”, we are called to acknowledge “our contribution, smaller or greater, to the disfigurement and destruction of creation”.⁵⁵²

Since the deeper cause of the current ecological crisis is human sin, a sort of ‘ecological *metanoia*’ is also needed. Clemens Sedmark observes that the encyclical “does not so much ask for changes in terms of ‘fixing problems’, but for changes in terms of ‘converting the hearts’”.⁵⁵³

The call to ecological conversion was first made by John Paul II who, in his message for the World Day of Peace in 1990, already warned of “the seriousness of the ecological issue lays bare the depth of man’s moral crisis” and called for “a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behavior,”⁵⁵⁴ by learning how to co-dwell in the Earth, our common home, with God the Creator, and with fellow creatures, including humans. Hence, basically ecological conversion is about establishing peace with the Creator and the rest of creation.⁵⁵⁵

First of all, ecological conversion calls for a return to the Creator. Faith traditions have always emphasized how in order to have peace and harmony with the natural world, one must be in harmony and equilibrium with heaven, and ultimately with God who is the source and origin of all things.⁵⁵⁶ Pope Benedict XVI drove a point on this regard when in his audience in 2009, he emphasized:

Is it not true that an irresponsible use of creation begins precisely where God is

551 Ibid., 8

552 Ibid. Cf. Bartholomew I, *Message for the Day of Prayer for the Protection of Creation* (1 September 2012).

553 Clemens Sedmark, “Traditional Concerns, New Language? Reflection on *Laudato Si'*”, *The Heythrop Journal* 58 (2017), 949.

554 John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*, 13.

555 Cf. Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, *Creation in Crisis: Science, Ethics, Theology* (New York: Orbis, 2014), 359-362.

556 Cf. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (Boston: Unwin, 1990), 136.

marginalized or even denied? If the relationship between human creatures and the Creator is forgotten, matter is reduced to a selfish possession, man becomes the “last word”, and the purpose of human existence is reduced to a scramble for the maximum number of possessions possible.⁵⁵⁷

In the biblical account, when people convert to God and observe His covenant, not only would God forgive their sins; He would also heal their land. In the second book of the Chronicles, Yahweh said: “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicle 7:14).

Secondly, ecological conversion calls for a reconciliation to creation itself. *Laudato Si'* speaks of a sort of universal reconciliation that needs to follow personal repentance for sins against creation. Pope Francis cites as example the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi who seeks harmony with all creatures as a means of healing from the ruptures of relationships caused by sin and even the recovery of the man's original innocence. He proposes St. Francis as a model on this path: “Saint Bonaventure held that, through universal reconciliation with every creature, Saint Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence.”⁵⁵⁸ He also recalled the words of the Australian bishops who, speaking of the importance achieving reconciliation with creation, claimed: “To achieve such reconciliation, we must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God's creation through our actions and our failure to act. We need to experience a conversion or change of heart”.⁵⁵⁹

Finally, ecological conversion starts with the individual in the personal level. In fact, a conversion of one person can make a decisive difference. Pope Francis refers to the biblical account of the story of Noah in the Old Testament whose personal righteousness saved not only himself and his family from the destruction of the flood, but also the rest of the biotic community: “Although the ‘wickedness of man was great in the earth’ (Gen 6:5) and the Lord ‘was sorry that he had made man on the earth’ (Gen 6:6), nonetheless, through Noah, who remained innocent and just, God decided to open a path of salvation. In this way he gave humanity the chance of a new beginning. All it takes is one good person to restore hope!”⁵⁶⁰

However, Pope Francis stressed that given the gravity and bulk of destruction which men had made to the planetary home; individual efforts cannot be sufficient. A

557 Pope Benedict XVI, General audience (26 august 2009).

558 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 66.

559 Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, *A New Earth – The Environmental Challenge* (2002).

560 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 71.

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collective and communitarian ecological conversion is needed:

Nevertheless, self-improvement on the part of individuals will not by itself remedy the extremely complex situation facing our world today...Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds. This task “will make such tremendous demands of man that he could never achieve it by individual initiative or even by the united effort of men bred in an individualistic way...The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion.”⁵⁶¹

Pope Francis calls for “all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion” and wishes that they “will help nurture that sublime fraternity with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied.”⁵⁶²

3.5. Conclusion.

Laudato Si' sits within the context of an important body of Church teaching on social issues and within a wider body of doctrine relating to themes as seemingly varied as the theology of creation, Christian anthropology, Christology, spirituality, salvation history and eschatology, amongst others. It is a piece of pastoral guidance and to some degree a political document, produced by one of the most important and influential world leaders, someone capable of inspiring very real change in the lives of over one billion people in the first instance and beyond.

It must be acknowledged that the Catholic Church as an institution was generally perceived to have little credibility in this sphere of environmental protection. In terms of initiatives to awaken consciences on environmental issues, the Church is a late comer and has a lot of catching up to do. *Laudato Si'* is a vital step, which, if accepted and implemented by the faithful, will have an important role in preventing the already precarious state of our common home from deteriorating further before it is too late. Some critics and observers argue that from the theological and ecological perspectives, there is nothing in the encyclical that has not been said before and perhaps many decades before. But this does not imply that *Laudato Si'* is not significant, important, or even revolutionary in some respect. The revolutionary aspect of the encyclical lies not so much in its identification of the environmental crisis, or perhaps, not even in the practical proposals that Pope Francis puts forward to confront the crisis, but primarily in the fact that it has been written at all as an “encyclical”—one of the highest forms of

561 Ibid., 219.

562 Ibid., 221.

papal magisterium and next only to the Apostolic Constitution—that dedicates its entirety to the question of the care of our common home. Before *Laudato Si'*, there were already teachings with strong environmental concerns in many of the documents of the Church. John Paul II and Benedict XVI both taught rigorously on environmental matters, and many of their teachings are referred to by Pope Francis in the encyclical. But their teachings were frequently qualified or somewhat hidden within the addresses to specific groups or other related themes. It is *Laudato Si'* with its status as an encyclical that brings the ecological teachings of the Church to an unprecedented prominence.

Laudato Si' is founded firmly within the tradition of Catholic Social Teachings as expressed in Papal encyclicals and other documents reaching back to Leo XIII, and his 1891 call to social action in *Rerum Novarum*. Since then, other encyclicals have developed upon the tradition established by Leo XIII and some can be as equally revolutionary in their own way. As an encyclical which deals with ecological concerns, *Laudato Si'* has been considered by many critics as long overdue. As early as the 1960's, there had already been increasing sensitivity of the public to the ecological problems. It seemed that the Church was so slow to interpret the signs of the time. The fact that a coherent teaching on the environment has been delayed until the second decade of the twenty-first century shows that such is the case. But this is just the way the Church teachings developed through time. Similar pattern can be observed also in some other revolutionary encyclicals before it, like for example, the *Rerum Novarum* and *Pacem in Terris*. The issues raised in *Rerum Novarum* regarding justice for the workers follows behind the pioneering works of many others in the Church and even beyond, figures such as Dorothea Dix, John Bosco, Robert Owen, among others. They fought for labor law changes long before Leo XIII later identified them to be necessary. Similarly, the postwar peace movement and the growth of equality movements for women and oppressed minorities were already mounting long before John XXIII wrote in 1963 the *Pacem in Terris*, which raised important social questions and, in particular, the question on the accepted worldview amongst governments regarding the arms race. As the priesthood in Scriptures has always been slow to react to the message of the prophets, so the magisterium of the Church has always been slow to consolidate new and radical ideas into teaching. But it seems to be right and proper as it allows for deeper discernment and consolidation of ideas.

Laudato Si''s adoption of integral ecology as a paradigm which guides the development of the encyclical can be groundbreaking in some sense. This approach is based on the metaphysical truth and conviction that the whole of reality is interrelated, and all created entities are interdependent. In the past, the ecological discourse ran the risk

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of being concerned mainly with the physical environment dealing with issues like global warming, protection of endangered or exotic species and the conservation of pristine ecosystems. With integral ecology, the protection of nature and the care of the weaker members of human family have become inextricably linked so that the care for the environment must essentially entail human and social dimensions. It is based on Benedict XVI's vision that "the world cannot be analyzed by isolating only one of its aspects, since "the book of nature is one and indivisible".⁵⁶³ Hence, any dialogue on environmental issues needs to include human ecology in the first place.

Moreover, integral ecology entails an integral approach that opens the door to some "unconventional sources"⁵⁶⁴ of knowledge while holding strongly onto the Judeo-Christian tradition. This approach has proven also to be revolutionary and original. *Laudato Si'*, as Pope Francis himself acknowledges, is the outcome of "the reflections of numerous scientists, philosophers, theologians, and civic groups that enriched the church's thinking"⁵⁶⁵ on the issue. This becomes evident when in the encyclical, Pope Francis attempts to make a synthesis of what his predecessors as well as other religious leaders, local bishop's conferences, the catechism, theologians, philosophers, scientists, sociologists, and other individual thinkers have said in relation to the crisis and how to respond to it. It draws from a huge range of sources on ecological matters within the Catholic and Christian communities, in other religions, and in the wide spectrum of empirical, human, and social sciences. It is a distinctive characteristic of an encyclical eager to dialogue with all people of good will on the destiny of the planet. Its rich and varied sources make it very comprehensive and wide-ranging, surveying a sweeping range of issues, spanning from climate change to creation theology and covers a wide range of ecological, social, political, economic, theological, anthropological, cultural, and other related questions. To date it is by far the longest of encyclicals.

Laudato Si''s development of the theology of natural world—another novel feature of the encyclical—answers unresolved questions which linger among ecologists and theologians for quite a long time. Since the epoch-making Lynn White Thesis which blamed Christianity—being "the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen"⁵⁶⁶—for the devastation of nature, the Catholic Church has no official response until the advent of *Laudato Si'*. First, by exposing the richness of the true doctrine of Judeo-Christian tradition, Pope Francis proves that such tradition has never been

563 Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, 687.

564 "Unconventional" in the sense that Encyclicals prior to *Laudato Si'* do not make frequent citations to sources related to physical and natural sciences.

565 Cf. *Ibid.*, 7.

566 Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", 1205.

anthropocentric, as White would suggest. The Pope explicitly claims that “this is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church” and calls to “forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God’s image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures”.⁵⁶⁷ The fundamental truth held by the Judeo-Christian faith that the natural world is above all God’s creation, shows that it is God who is the ultimate source and center of the universe and not man. While not denying man’s special place in the universe, Pope Francis states that: “the best way to restore men and women to their rightful place, putting an end to their claim to absolute dominion over the earth, is to speak once more of the figure of a Father who creates and who alone owns the world”.⁵⁶⁸ Secondly, in the analysis of the current ecological problem, Pope Francis is able to trace the deepest roots of the ecological crisis to a certain mind-set, an existential worldview which he labeled as “the dominant technocratic paradigm” of the modern age. He observes that modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism in which human beings place themselves at the center of the universe, usurping the primacy of the Creator and ruthlessly pillaging the rest of creation. In modern anthropocentrism, the physical world is seen to exist only at man’s disposal and is completely passive and helpless before man’s quest for control and mastery. This attitude leads to man’s voracious and exploitative attitude towards nature. Moreover, this kind of worldview is accompanied by the modern mechanistic vision of the natural world. This is a natural ‘byproduct’ of the modern anthropocentrism which, in exalting the human subject to a position of absolute centrality, tends to look down on the physical reality as nothing more than a gigantic reservoir of objects or raw materials destined for human consumption. Modern anthropocentrism and the mechanistic vision of the natural world are two worldviews which are dialectically linked, and they are the underlying roots of the modern-day depreciation and abuse of the common planetary home.

Laudato Si' is also innovative in translating abstract theological concepts into practical proposals based on man’s concrete setting in which he lives, and in turn influences the way he thinks, feels, and acts. The concept of integral ecology which proceeds from the truth of interrelatedness and interdependence of ecosystems leads to the proposition of solidarity between all peoples; one world with a common plan. It calls for concrete actions on the part of humanity at international, national, local, and personal levels for the stewardship of the earth. The conception of a healthy human ecology as vital for the wellbeing of the entire planetary system results to the proposal of ecological economics respectful of the ecosystem and natural cycles of the plane-

567 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 67.

568 *Ibid.*, 75.

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tary home, and a new political culture not subservient to vested economic interests. Modern-day politics lacks a long-term vision for the protection of the environment as it is mostly dominated by the consumerist trend of immediate gratification and prioritizing short-term gain and private interest. Pope Francis proposes a politics which is at the service of the common good.

Laudato Si' calls also for an authentic ecological conversion. For this to happen, an ecological education and a spirituality of creation would play a vital role. Hence Pope Francis proposes an ecological education which must happen in a concrete human setting like families, various social groups, schools, Christian communities, and houses of religious formation, and is capable of establishing harmony with God, within one's self, with others, with nature, and with other living creatures. The pope also advocates an authentic creation spirituality where the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with others. This type of spirituality imitates Jesus who would often contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness has looked at him with love. Ecological spirituality is strongly incarnational and therefore, must be profoundly Christ-centered. Its concrete expression finds its apex in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Finally, *Laudato Si'* proposed a concrete saint whom humanity can look up to as the model of integral ecology—St. Francis of Assisi. This saint who once prayed “*Laudato si' mi Signore*” (praise be to you, my Lord), loves creation, the poor, and the Creator of the universe; the triple loves merged into a sublime unity. St. Francis is at times reduced to a romanticized nature mystic, in whom many contemporary environmentalists would find inspiration. But this is too simplistic. The conversion of young Francis of Assisi was indeed an example of a real-life triple conversion: to the whole of creation, to the poor, and ultimately to the Creator of all. He was simple, compassionate, and saintly—indeed a beautiful and shining example of integral ecology for our times.

Chapter 4

A Nexus of Augustine's doctrine on Creation and *Laudato Si'*.

4.1. Introduction.

Since Pope Francis published the encyclical *Laudato Si'* on May 24, 2015, there was a remarkable surge or multiplication of works and studies dedicated to ecology from various points of view. However, in this first-ever so-called 'ecological encyclical', a notable name is absent—Augustine. In stark contrast to Pope Benedict's first encyclical entitled: *Deus Caritas Est* (December 5, 2005) which bears a great deal of Augustinian citations, *Laudato Si'* does not bear a single citation of Augustine. Even in the works of those who followed and studied the encyclical, the bibliographical references linking Augustine with ecology and the environment are rather discreet and reduced.⁵⁶⁹ In many cases, the studies do not really make an in-depth exploration of the Augustinian thoughts on the subject, but use only the name of Augustine as a pretext to deal with other purely environmental or ecological issues.⁵⁷⁰ It seems that in current theological discussions on ecological issues, Augustine is

569 Cf. A. Sartori, *Le pere di Agostino: ecologia e sanità tra Africa e Italia, en L'Africa Romana* 12 (1998), 439-445; E. Horski, "Augustine on Environment: Abiding in the Tranquility of Order", College of St. Benedict and St. John's University, Licentiate Thesis, 1998; A. McGowan, "To use and to Enjoy. Augustine and Ecology", in *St. Mark's Review* 212 (2010), 89-99; S. Dunham, "Trinity and Creation in Augustine. An Ecological Analysis", New York, State University New York Press, 2008, 198 pp.; Doody – K. Paffenroth – M. Smillie (ed.), "Augustine and Environment", Lanham-Boulder-New York-London, Lexington Books, 2016.

570 Cf. M. E. Sacchi, *Ecología y cristianismo*, en *Ars Brevis* 4 (1998), 247-270. It is a general study, as its very title indicates, without a detailed study of Augustinian thought. In the rather generic article, Augustine is quoted to endorse the doctrine of the Catholic Church that the world has been created by the God Trinity from nothing. To this end, the author makes use of a text from *Gn. litt.*, which is cited in a very generic way (he only points to the first book), and of a text from the *De Trinitate*: "Ad creaturam vero Pater et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus unum principium, sicut unus creator et unus Dominus." Later, Augustine is quoted in a footnote to endorse the *creatio ex nihilo*, making reference to a series of texts: *Gn. adu. Man.* 16, 34; *uera rel.* 18; *uera rel.* 137; *Gn. litt.* 1; *c. Fel.* 11, 18. He is quoted again at the bottom of the page to point out that God is the creator of everything, and as such, he had not given anyone, not even the human being the ability to create, since God is the only creator. The following Augustinian texts are cited as proofs: *Gn. litt.* 9, 15; *c. Fel.* 11, 18; *qu.* 11, 21. Finally, in the body of the text of the article, the words of Augustine from *De ciuitate Dei* 11, 4 are cited to justify that God does not create out of necessity, but out of a desire for His own will: "For no need, for no want of any usefulness, but only for [his] goodness God made what has been made, that is, because it is good." The article, therefore, does not present a structured reflection on Augustinian thought regarding ecology, but rather the Augustinian doctrine serves the author as a support for presenting various points of the

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not a favored source or reference. Among contemporary theologians with strong ecological inclinations, it seems that he is “not a name of good omen”, as Rowan Williams observed.⁵⁷¹

Augustine, however, is one of the most important figures in Western theology. He exercised an enormous influence on the Christian tradition in the Western world. Scholasticism of the middle ages was informed by and permeated with his doctrines. Even at the present time, Augustine is widely quoted in catechesis, papal encyclicals, or in any important pastoral or theological discourse. Augustine’s doctrine continues to influence the minds and hearts of many theologians, pastors, and laymen and he is certainly one of the central figures among the Church Fathers who continue to influence modern thoughts and worldviews. However, it is highly possible that while the Pope values the figure of Augustine as a great source of wisdom to address other issues of traditional or theological nature, ecology is deemed to be beyond this category.

It is true that it would be anachronistic to apply the practical criteria of current ecology to the thought of Augustine, or to pretend to find in the writings of the Bishop of Hippo reflections on environmental pollution, global warming, or the extinction of species. Nevertheless, an impartial reading of the writings of Augustine could lead one to discover a rich source of essential and indisputable doctrines⁵⁷² that should guide the praxis of a true Christian ecology. For Augustine, creation, its care and its purpose, are not disassociated from the triune God, nor from the plans of God and the final destiny of the whole universe, as well as from the social function of the goods of creation. In the thoughts of the Bishop of Hippo, all these concepts are interconnected and inter-related. Therefore, regardless of the interpretations that can be made of the thought of Augustine, his works are full of suggestions and basic principles that must not be disregarded, if ecology has to be situated within the correct Christian parameters, and to avoid all forms of ‘perverted ecology’ tainted with concealed pantheism or panentheism—a counter-cultural activism or simply a passing fashion.

Because the Augustinian thought touches on the essential and basic principles of Christian ecology, it is conceived in this study that his thought can be of great value for today’s ecology. For this reason, in this chapter of the study, we present a nexus of Augustine’s doctrine on Creation and *Laudato Si’* and comment on those points where the thought of the Pontiff could have been augmented and deepened by the ideas of Augustine and on the other side, we will be able to appreciate the value and relevance of the Augustinian teachings in the light of the contemporary ecological

Church’s doctrine on creation, rather than ecology.

571 Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 60.

572 Many of those we have seen already in chapter II of this research.

concerns highlighted by the encyclical. With this at the backdrop, we now intend, as we pointed out earlier, to present some of the riches of the Augustinian thought on this very current topic and to see how the thought of Augustine is “so present despite its absence in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*.”⁵⁷³

To facilitate the course of the presentation, we classify the items according to themes in the following order: on creation, on human being, on God the creator, and on ecological spirituality.

4.2.1. *On Creation.*

4.2.1.1. The Common Home.

From the very beginning of the encyclical, Augustine is already inconspicuously present as his vision of the world as a ‘common home’ is incorporated in the very title of the encyclical itself. While it is true that the first two words, “*Laudato Si'*” (praised be to you) make a clear and univocal allusion to St. Francis of Assisi, the subtitle, “On the care of the common home” may not. At first glance, the added phrase seems to signal a paradigm shift, because for so long, we have been so accustomed to perceiving the environment as a space or spatial reality in which we happened to exist but something so external and outside of ourselves so that it has remained a peripheral and secondary concern. The encyclical reminds us above all else that more than just the mere “environment” which surrounds us, Mother earth is our home; we belong to her as much as she is to us. This worldview which looks at the planet earth as a “common home” advocates an attitude of openness to relation and dialogue with all people of all races, religions, and cultures. Life, human life, civilization, religion, philosophy, art, music, literature, science and technology, and a thousand other artifacts of human culture have been possible because there is the common home to dwell in. The encyclical then warns us of the possible collapse of this very home, with dire implications for the members of our common household. This vision of the world as a “common home”, however, while it is very much in tune with the modern trend, is not actually a novel concept.

When the universe is spoken of as a home or a house (*domus*), as is the subtitle of the encyclical “the care of the common home”, it should be noted that Augustine in his commentary on Genesis against the Manichaeans (*De Genesi aduersus Manicheos*),⁵⁷⁴

573 Cf. Mauricio Saavedra y Enrique Eguarte, *San Agustín y la encíclica ‘Laudato Si’*, *Una presencia en la ausencia*, in *AVGVSTINVS* (Madrid), vol. 63 (2018), p. 193-194.

574 It should be noted that the title of this work, as stated by D. Weber in his brilliant article on

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had already used this idea or concept in the year 388-389.⁵⁷⁵ In this way the Bishop of Hippo says that everything has been created by God, and that God takes care of the order of the universe as if “it were his own home”, in such a way that there are beings whose purpose and function we do not understand, but they contribute to the perfection of the order determined by the great “*Paterfamilias*” who is God, who governs and orders His house, which is the universe, better than any *paterfamilias* in the world could ever do:

If you object to their not being of any use, be thankful they do not harm, because even if they are not needed for our homes, at any rate contribute to the completion of this universe, which is not only much bigger than our homes, but much better as well; God manages it after all, much better than any of us can manage our homes.⁵⁷⁶

This phrase “common home” appears in the text of the encyclical nine times,⁵⁷⁷ being therefore a concept that coincides with the Augustinian thought. The earth is our home, and we are earthlings, *imago mundi*, formed from the dust of the earth, inhabitants of the common home of Earth. In this way, the allusion to Augustine would have enriched the encyclical itself by broadening its connotative context and giving it a broader projection, as it echoes a theological thought with long historical roots.⁵⁷⁸ For its part, this Augustinian concept of a universe as a home will have a renewed significance in our contemporary context where the care of the universe is largely neglected by those who perceive the earth as nothing more than a heap of resources which can be exploited at will. Seen in this lens, we are immediately conscious that the environmental crisis is not something external or marginal to us; rather, we are grappling with the

the *De Genesi aduersus manicheos* in the *Augustinus Lexikon*, oscillated in the codicological tradition between *De Genesi aduersus manicheos* or *De Genesi contra Manicheos*. As stated by D. Weber, the current scientific tradition, for various reasons, has opted for the title *De Genesi aduersus Manicheos*, although J. P. Migne in his famous and celebrated edition of the work in the mid-nineteenth century opted for the title *De Genesi contra Manicheos*, which is how it appears in the complete works of St. Augustine in Latin on the web www.augustinus.it. Cf. D. Weber, «*Genesi aduersus Manicheos, De*», in *AL*, 3, Basel, Schwabe, 2004, col. 131.

575 Cf. D. Weber, “*Genesi aduersus Manicheos, De*”, in *AL*, 3, Basel, Schwabe, 2004, col. 131.

576 Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 16, 26. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 56. PL 34, 360: “Si tibi displicet quod non prosunt, placeat quod non obsunt; quia etsi domui nostrae non sunt necessaria, eis tamen completur huius universitatis integritas, quae multo maior est quam domus nostra et multo melior. Hanc enim multo melius administrat Deus, quam unusquisque nostrum domum suam.”

577 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 1, 3, 13 (x2), 17, 53, 61, 155, 232,

578 It is true that Saint Augustine refers to the world more as the work or construction, the work of God. For this he often uses the syntagma “*fabrica mundi*” (or “*mundi fabricates*”). It is a syntagma that appears from the year 404. Cf. *c. Fel.* 1, 19; *Gn. litt.* 4, 2, 6; *Gn. litt.* 7, 6, 10; *c. Prisc.* 9; *ep. Io. tr.* 4, 1, et al.

destiny of our common home, indeed, humanity's common destiny, along with that of the rest of the biotic community.

4.2.1.2. The Book of Nature.

The encyclical cites Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI as its basis as it points out that: “the world cannot be analyzed by isolating only one of its aspects, since ‘the book of nature is one and indivisible’, and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations, and so forth”.⁵⁷⁹ To speak of the “book of nature” is also to make allusion to Augustine, who points out that God wrote two books so that human beings could have access to Him in both ways: one is the Holy Scripture which is written by real human beings who are divinely inspired, and the other is the Book of Creatures, a book that is not written with ink or on parchment, but written with living beings and with nature, whose beauty should lead man to a tangible encounter with God:

Others, in order to find God, will read a book. Well, as a matter of fact there is a certain great book, the book of created nature. Look carefully at it top and bottom, observe it, read it. God did not make letters of ink for you to recognize Him in; He set before your eyes all these things He has made. Why look for a louder voice? Heaven and earth cry out to you, ‘God made me’...Observe heaven and earth in a religious spirit...⁵⁸⁰

The number eighty-five (85) of the encyclical referred to this same image, and again it made no mention of Augustine: “God has written a precious book, ‘whose letters are the multitude of created things’ present in the universe”.⁵⁸¹ In this case, John Paul II is quoted,⁵⁸² and as we have already mentioned, it would have been helpful to trace the concept back to the Bishop of Hippo. On the other hand, we can perceive in this quotation from John Paul II a clear Augustinian resonance, although the text of the catechesis from which the quotation is taken does not refer to Augustine either. Later in this same paragraph number six (6), still quoting Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, it is pointed out that the cause of the disorder that prevails in the world at the ecological

579 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 6. Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 51: AAS 101 (2009), 687.

580 Augustine, s. 68, 6, trans. Edmund Hill. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991) PLS 2, 505: “Alius, ut inveniatur Deum, librum legit. Est quidam magnus liber ipsa species creaturae: superiorem et inferiorem contuere, attende, lege. Non Deus, unde eum cognosceres, de atramento litteras fecit: ante oculos tuos posuit haec ipsa quae fecit. Quid quaeris maiorem vocem? Clamat ad te caelum et terra: Deus me fecit.”

581 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 85. Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesis* (30 January 2002), 6: *Insegnamenti* 25/1 (2002), 140.

582 Cf. J.A. Orr, “The Philosophical Magisterium of John Paul II Implicit in *Laudato si'*”, in M. Mills – J.A. Orr – H. Schnitker, *Reflections on Pope's Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si'*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 188-199.

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and moral level is because of a certain world view that there are no certain or absolute truths that can guide man's life, and that freedom has no limits:

The social environment has also suffered damage. Both are ultimately due to the same evil: the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless. We have forgotten that "man is not only a freedom which he creates for himself. Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature".⁵⁸³

For his part, Augustine reminds us that human freedom is not truly free if it is not liberated by Christ and his grace, because human being, wounded by original sin, cannot choose what is truly good, since he is blinded by his own selfishness and disordered passions. Human freedom needs to be liberated by the grace of Christ. Man himself is a slave of his own disordered inclinations. Hence Augustine points out that it is grace that gives true freedom to the human will:

If we want to truly defend the will, let us not oppose that which makes it free. He who opposes grace, which gives our will the freedom to turn away from evil and do good, wants his will to remain captive.⁵⁸⁴

Towards the end, the encyclical would return to this idea. We can contemplate God present in the midst of his creation. So, in number two hundred thirty-three (233), it is said that the universe unfolds in God, so there can be a subtle mystery in a leaf, in the dew, in the face of a poor man. In this number, the text of a Sufi author, Ali al-Khawwas, is cited in the footnote, though at the end it is a bit obscure, since it states that: "The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face".⁵⁸⁵ This view could have been deepened and enlightened by a citation from Augustine, who clearly and specifically tells us what message the whole universe conveys to man; and it is no other than the truth that God loves him, and that man himself is called to love God:

583 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 6. These words recall the reflection that Benedict XVI presented in his address to the Deutscher Bundestag, Berlin (22 September 2011): AAS 103 (2011), 664.

584 Augustine, *ep.* 217, 3.8. PL 33, 981: "Si vere volumus defendere liberum arbitrium, non oppugnemus unde fit liberum. Nam qui oppugnat gratiam, qua nostrum ad declinandum a malo et faciendum bonum liberatur arbitrium, ipse arbitrium suum adhuc vult esse captivum."

585 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 233. The spiritual writer Ali al-Khawwas stresses from his own experience the need not to put too much distance between the creatures of the world and the interior experience of God. As he puts it: "Prejudice should not have us criticize those who seek ecstasy in music or poetry. There is a subtle mystery in each of the movements and sounds of this world. The initiate will capture what is being said when the wind blows, the trees sway, water flows, flies buzz, doors creak, birds sing, or in the sound of strings or flutes, the sighs of the sick, the groans of the afflicted..." (Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch [ed.], *Anthologie du soufisme*, Paris 1978, 200).

You have stricken my heart with Your word, and I loved You. And also the heaven, and earth, and all that is therein, behold, on every side they say that I should love You; nor do they cease to speak unto all, so that they are without excuse.⁵⁸⁶

Augustine perceives all creation to have been made for the glory of God and that creation, eloquent in its beauty, invites the human being to praise God and to love him. Creation is a reflection of the beauty of God, and it invites every human person, created in the image and likeness of God, endowed with understanding and freewill, to understand the message of the beauty of the cosmos, and to love freely the Creator of all that exists. In this sense, the Augustinian thought reflects the Pauline insights of cosmology and natural theology presented in the first chapter of the Letter to the Romans:

For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them. Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible attributes of eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse.⁵⁸⁷

4.2.1.3. *Formica Dei*.⁵⁸⁸

If nature is indeed “an open book” which according to Augustine “tells us about the Creator”,⁵⁸⁹ so that according to *Laudato Si'* “there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face,”⁵⁹⁰ then, we must learn how to read it; we must “look carefully at it top and bottom, observe it, read it”,⁵⁹¹ as Augustine exhorts the faithful in one of his sermons.

Augustine himself was a great observer of nature and saw in created realities not only signs of the greatness and beauty of God, but also practical lessons which one can discern and learn in life. In many of his sermons and writings, he uses ordinary figures and images which can easily be seen in the environment and use them to deliver powerful moral, spiritual, or ethical teachings.

586 Augustine, *conf. 10, 8*. Translated by J.G. Pilkington. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 782: “Percussisti cor meum verbo tuo, et amavi te. Sed et caelum et terra et omnia, quae in eis sunt, ecce undique mihi dicunt, ut te amem, nec cessant dicere omnibus, ut sint inexcusabiles.”

587 Rm 1, 19-20.

588 Cf. Augustine, *en. Ps. 66, 3*.

589 Cf. Augustine, *s. 68, 6*.

590 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 233.

591 Augustine, *s. 68, 6*.

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In this part, we will learn from the Bishop of Hippo the art of reading this so-called “book of nature” by presenting specific example on how he himself discover God and His message in created reality. In view of the fact that there are many created things (animals like birds, reptiles, insects, fish, mammals, etc.) that appear in the work of Augustine, for the purpose of this study, we will only stick to one figure—the *formica Dei* or the analogy of the ant of God. We present this figure of the ant, not only to emphasize that for the Bishop of Hippo, even the tiniest and most insignificant creature can be a messenger of God, but more so because in association to it, Augustine made a concrete application of his doctrine of the *mensura, numerus, et pondus*⁵⁹² which would become central in his trinitarian vision of the world.

Augustine invites us to praise God not only for the great and spectacular creatures, but also for the small and humble ones like ants, since in every creature the *ordo* of God’s creation is made manifest:

God arranged all things in *measure* and *number* and *weight* (Wis 11:20). In this way you will perhaps find more genuine satisfaction when you praise God in the *tiny little ant* down on the ground, than when you are crossing a river high up, let us say, on an elephant.⁵⁹³

In various parts of Augustine’s work, the figure of the ant is used to highlight the qualities that Christians and believers should learn from the ants. In this way, Augustine stresses two elements in particular: on the one hand, its constancy and perseverance; and on the other, its hard work during spring and summer. In the same way, a Christian must work spiritually in moments of prosperity to prepare himself to face the trying moments. The first time that Augustine refers to this figure of the ant as an example for the believers is in the year 394, in his work *Contra Adimantum* while commenting on the text of Prov 6, 6.8. The Augustinian interpretation is as follows:

The text referring to the ant was placed so that, as it gathers provisions in the summer, in order to feed itself in the winter, so every Christian gathers in this time of peace, meaning in the summer, the word of God, so that in adversity and tribulations, symbolized by the winter, he may have something to feed his spirit with, since man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.⁵⁹⁴

592 These terms which Augustine adopted from Wisdom 11:20 will be tackled in more details in the subsequent theme on *Mensura, Numerus, et Pondus*.

593 Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 26.

594 Augustine, *c. Adim.* 24. PL 42, 168: “Sed tamen illud de formica ita positum est, ut quemadmodum illa aestate colligit unde in hieme pascatur, sic unusquisque Christianus in rerum tranquillitate, quam significat aestas, colligat verbum Dei, ut in adversitate et tribulationibus, quae hiemis nomine significantur, habeat unde spiritaliter vivat. Non enim in pane solo vivit homo, sed in omni verbo Dei.”

The believer therefore must be like the “holy ant” which accumulates within its nest all that is necessary for life in preparation for the rainy days or winter. During spring and summer time, it collects food so that during autumn and winter it can stay securely inside its nest with provisions in-store. In the same way, according to the thought of Augustine, particularly in *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, the believer, in moments of prosperity, must accumulate spiritual riches, so that when winter comes, that is, when the trials and tribulations of life come, he can draw strength from the inner treasures he has accumulated within. He will not lose the faith he treasures dearly in his heart as he faces moments of difficulties and tribulations. The lesson learned from the analogy of the ant can also be applied to our modern-day consumerist society. Instead of “saving for the future”, Pope Francis notes that the problem of waste is such that “approximately a third of all food produced is discarded.”⁵⁹⁵

Possibly, the first time that Augustine linked the idea of “spiritual preparation” to the figure of an ant is in a sermon delivered in the year 395, when he was still a young priest, delivering a sermon on Psalm 48, and using the example of the ant as a Christian way of preparing for the final judgment. In fact, in the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 48, 1, 12, the imagery of winter is linked to the final judgment, for which the “ant of God” must always be prepared:

Fear not: boys put in a moneybox, and are secure: do you place it in the hand of Christ, and fear? Be prudent and provide for yourself against the future in Heaven. Be therefore prudent, imitate the ant, as says the Scripture: Store in summer, lest you hunger in winter; the winter is the last day, the day of tribulation; the winter is the day of offenses and of bitterness: gather what may be there for you for the future: but if you do not so, you will perish both imprudent and unwise.⁵⁹⁶

Then about eight years later, in his second sermon on Psalm 36 (c. 403), Augustine says:

(...) but it was not one of those wise ants, which in the summer provide themselves with food in the winter. When tranquility reigns, it is then that man must provide himself with the word of God and keep it in the intimacy of his heart. As the ant does, which hides in its hidden lairs the fruits of summer work.⁵⁹⁷

595 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 50.

596 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 48, 1, 12. Translated by J.E. Tweed. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 36, 552: “Noli timere: ponunt pueri in thesaurario, et securi sunt; ponis tu in manu Christi, et times! Esto prudens, et prospice tibi in posterum in coelo. Esto ergo prudens, imitare formicam, sicut dicit Scriptura; reconde aestate, ne esurias in hieme: hiems est dies novissimus, dies tribulationis; hiems est dies scandalorum et amaritudinis: collige quod ibi tibi sit in posterum; si autem non facis, simul imprudens et insipiens peribis.”

597 Ibid. 36, 2, 11. PL 36, 369-70: “...sed ille non erat de sapientibus formicis, quae sibi aestate collegerunt unde hieme vivant. Cum enim res sunt tranquillae, tunc homo sibi colligere debet verbum

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In this same year (c. 403), Augustine referred again to this analogy of the ant to enrich it with a series of communitarian and liturgical values. Thus, the “ant of God” (*formica Dei*) is accumulating provisions within itself, through prayer, the life of piety, constant going to church, listening to sermons, and singing hymns:

See the *ant of God*, he rises day by day, he hastens to the Church of God, he prays, he hears lection, he chants hymn, he digests that which he has heard, with himself he thinks thereon, he stores within grains gathered from the threshing-floor. They that providently hear those very things which even now are being spoken of, do thus, and by all men are seen to go forth to the Church, go back from Church, to hear sermon, to hear lection, to choose a book, open and read it: all these things are seen, when they are done. That ant is treading his path, carrying and storing up in the sight of men seeing him. There comes winter sometime, for to whom comes it not?⁵⁹⁸

This same idea is also developed in other *enarrationes* written about two years earlier than the text we have been commenting on, approximately in the year 405, when this masterpiece on Psalm 41, 16 was preached. In this, a reference is made once again to Prov 6:6.

In Sermon 38 preached five years after (c. 411), Augustine returned to this idea of the ant of God, and invited the faithful to have “the heart of an ant” (*cor formicae*), in the sense that one must be persevering in good works, be attentive to the Word of God and keep it in one’s heart, so that when tribulation comes, he is not caught off-guard:

Wake up, stay awake, have the heart of an ant. It’s summertime; gather what’s good for you for the winter. Learn, when everything is going well, with what you have to sustain yourself when it is going bad. Everything is going well for you: you are in summer. Do not be sluggish; pick up the seeds of the Lord’s day - God’s words in God’s Church - and keep them in your heart.⁵⁹⁹

Dei, et recondere in intimis cordis sui, quemadmodum formica abscondit in cavernosis penetralibus labores aestatis.”

598 Ibid., 66, 3. PL 36, 805: “Vide formicam Dei: surgit quotidie, currit ad ecclesiam Dei, orat, audit lectionem, hymnum cantat, ruminat quod audivit, apud se cogitat, recondit intus grana collecta de area. Haec ipsa quae modo dicuntur qui prudenter audiunt, hoc agunt, et ab omnibus videntur procedere ad ecclesiam, redire de ecclesia, audire sermonem, audire lectionem, invenire librum, aperire et legere: omnia ista videntur, cum fiunt. Formica illa est conterens iter, portans et recondens in conspectu cernentium. Venit hiems aliquando; cui enim non venit?”

599 Augustine, s. 38, 4. 6. PL 38, 238: “Expergiscere, evigila, habeto cor formicae. Aestatis tempus est, collige quod tibi ad hyemem prosit 10. Quando tibi bene est aestas est. Ergo quando tibi bene est, tunc disce unde sustentaris quando tibi male est. Bene est tibi, aestas est. Noli esse piger, collige grana de arca dominica, verba Dei de Ecclesia Dei, collige et reconde intus in corde.”

Nevertheless, the figure of the ant has also its shadow and dark side. Augustine also uses the image to talk about greed in view of the fact that the ant accumulates its treasures beneath the earth. This is what Augustine points out around the year 400 in *Annotationes in Iob*⁶⁰⁰ and in *De Genesi ad litteram* where he explains the lack of basis in the theory of transmigration of souls, and points out that some people wrongly believe that the soul of the greedy transmigrates and reincarnates in ants:

This one certainly, that similarity of behavior draws them to this; for example misers into ants, the greedy and gasping into hawks, fierce and proud people into lions, those bent on unclean pleasure into pigs and other things like that.⁶⁰¹

The figure of the ant then is used by Augustine both to speak of the believer, who as an “ant of God” must fill his heart with the word of God in times of prosperity so that when difficulty comes, he does not falter; and on the other hand, the character of those who accumulate only for themselves, moved by greed and selfishness. The latter can also be a strong message against the excessive anthropocentrism of modernity that brings havoc to the environment, because according to Pope Francis (citing Benedict XVI) “creation is harmed where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone.”⁶⁰²

4.2.1.4. Creatures speak of the Creator.

The first chapter of *Laudato Si'* focuses on the question “what is happening to the common home”. It was a question that echoes the clamor of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) in its pastoral letter published in 1988 as the country faces an unprecedented ecological devastation.⁶⁰³ The Church of the Philippines already warned that ‘the attack on the natural world which benefits very few Filipinos is rapidly whittling away at the very base of our living world and endangering its fruitfulness for future generations’.⁶⁰⁴ The Pope has amplified this message as he speaks of the terrible consequences of man's abuse of the natural resources, which causes the disappearance and extinction of various species. Pope Francis points out that these extinct species, which future generations will no longer be able to know, will not be able to fulfill their function of being a sign that leads man to remember God:

600 Augustine, *adn. Iob.*, 4.

601 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 7, 10, 15. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 330. PL 34, 361: “Hoc certe, quod morum similitudo ad id trahat, velut avaros in formicas, rapaces in milvos, saevos ac superbos in leones, sectatores immundae voluptatis in sues: et si qua similia.”

602 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 6. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address to the Clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone* (6 August 2008): AAS 100 (2008), 634

603 The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *A Pastoral Letter on Ecology: What is happening to our beautiful land* (Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, 29 January 1988), 1.

604 Ibid.

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Each year sees the disappearance of thousands of plant and animal species which we will never know, which our children will never see, because they have been lost forever. The great majority become extinct for reasons related to human activity. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us. We have no such right.⁶⁰⁵

For Augustine, as it is for Pope Francis, every being in creation and in the universe has a message to convey to human beings, and it is precisely that God exists, that God loves mankind and calls them to salvation in Christ. Whoever opens the ears of his heart and listens to the message of creatures must praise God. In this way Augustine felt that all creatures of heaven and earth in all parts of the universe were repeating this message to him as to almost like deafening him. It is a message so loud and clear that for Augustine, citing St. Paul (in Romans 1:19-20), those who cannot perceive the greatness of God and his love in nature and in all of creation would be without excuse. More so, Augustine feels wounded by the word of God, and this wound of love (*conf.* 5:8) makes him more sensitive to the message of creation:

Not with uncertain, but with assured consciousness do I love You, O Lord. You have stricken my heart with Your word, and I loved You. And also the heaven, and earth, and all that is therein, behold, on every side they say that I should love You; nor do they cease to speak unto all, so that they are without excuse. But more profoundly will You have mercy on whom You will have mercy, and compassion on whom You will have compassion, otherwise do both heaven and earth tell forth Your praises to deaf ears.⁶⁰⁶

Similarly, in rather poetic terms, Pope Francis writes that “the entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.”⁶⁰⁷ Creation is indeed, a tangible expression of the triune God’s outpouring of love. It is even more in the case of humanity. In the last analysis, we owe our existence to the infinite love of the Creator who brought us into being and this “special love of the Creator for each human being,” as John Paul II points out, “confers upon him or her an infinite dignity”.⁶⁰⁸

605 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 33.

606 Augustine, *conf.* 10, 8. Translated by J.G. Pilkington. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 782: “Non dubia, sed certa conscientia, Domine, amo te. Percussisti cor meum verbo tuo, et amavi te. Sed et caelum et terra et omnia, quae in eis sunt, ecce undique mihi dicunt, ut te amem, nec cessant dicere omnibus, ut sint inexcusabiles. Altius autem tu misereberis, cui misertus eris, et misericordiam praestabis, cui misericors fueris; alioquin caelum et terra surdis loquuntur laudes tuas.”

607 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 84

608 *Ibid.*, 65. Cf. Angelus in Osnabrück (Germany) with the disabled, 16 November 1980: Inseg-

Later, the Pope talks about the effects of pollution to the people who live in the big cities without enough or decent housing, and where there is a great visual and noise pollution. In these great cities of the world, no room has been left for wisdom, which is not about accumulating knowledge, but rather an exercise in reflection, silence, and dialogue. As Pope Francis puts it:

True wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue, and generous encounter between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data which eventually leads to overload and confusion, a sort of mental pollution. Real relationships with others, with all the challenges they entail, now tend to be replaced by a type of internet communication which enables us to choose or eliminate relationships at whim, thus giving rise to a new type of contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than with other people and with nature.⁶⁰⁹

For his part, Augustine stresses the same thing. Wisdom is not just an accumulation of data and knowledge, but the ability to dialogue and search for the truth. And in this search for truth within the universe, one can find God. In fact, Augustine distinguishes between science and wisdom (*scientia-sapientia*). The object of science is the temporal and changing world, while the object of wisdom is the knowledge of the eternal and immutable realities which exist in the mind of God. Science uses the investigative method to acquire facts, while wisdom uses intuition to arrive at the truth. Science teaches us the practical ways to use the things of this world, with order and respect, while wisdom shows us the unchanging truths that lead to salvation and bring us to contemplate the mysteries of God.⁶¹⁰ Certainly in the contemporary world where there may be a lot of science and overload of information, but with little wisdom due to lack of space for silence, the Bishop of Hippo could have taught us of the need for an interior ecology that leads to contemplation and the search for truth. Thus, Augustine wisely comments:

Yet action, by which we use temporal things well, differs from contemplation of eternal things; and the latter is reckoned to wisdom, the former to knowledge. For although that which is wisdom can also be called knowledge, as the apostle too speaks, where he says, Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known; when doubtless he meant his words to be understood of the knowledge of the contemplation of God, which will be the highest reward of the saints; yet where he says, For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, certainly he

namenti 3/2 (1980), 1232.

609 Ibid., 47.

610 Cf. R. H. Nash, 'Sabiduría' in *Diccionario de San Agustín*, translated from English by Constantino Ruiz-Garrido (Spain: Monte Carmelo, 2001), pp. 1155-1157.

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distinguishes without doubt these two things...⁶¹¹

Towards the end of the encyclical, the Pope returns to this theme by recalling the sacramental dimension of all creation:

An integral ecology includes taking time to recover a serene harmony with creation, reflecting on our lifestyle and our ideals, and contemplating the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us, whose presence “must not be contrived but found, uncovered”.⁶¹²

4.2.1.5. Creatures glorify God.

The encyclical reminds us that all creatures give glory to God by their very existence and speak to all about the beauty and perfection of their Creator. To support this statement, it cites the Catechism of the Catholic Church. While the citation is already enriching, one could have had recourse to Augustine, since this thought is so often repeated in his work. The whole of creation by its existence gives glory to God and makes of its beauty the silent voice that speaks of God, inviting men to go out of themselves to meet the Creator. Thus, the encyclical says that other living beings have their own value before God and ““by their mere existence they bless him and give him glory”,⁶¹³ and indeed, ‘the Lord rejoices in all his work’ (Ps 104:31)”.⁶¹⁴ Augustine for his part teaches that all creatures in every corner of the world are constantly giving glory to God with their own very existence:

The dumb earth has a voice, it has a face. You listen and see its face, its surface; you see its fecundity, you see its vigor, you see how the seed germinates in it; how many times it makes sprout what was not sown in it. You see this, and in your reflection, you question it, since this inquiry is a questioning. Well, when you have admired, investigated and scrutinized, and have found the immense vigor, great beauty and lofty power, as of itself and by itself it cannot have this virtue, at once it occurs to you that it can be endowed with it only because it has received it from the Creator Himself. And this which you have found in it,

611 Augustine, *trin.* 12, 14, 22. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 1009-10: “Distat tamen ab aeternorum contemplatione actio qua bene utimur temporalibus rebus, et illa sapientiae, haec scientiae deputatur. Quamvis enim et illa quae sapientia est, possit scientia nuncupari, sicut et Apostolus loquitur, ubi dicit: Nunc scio ex parte, tunc autem cognoscam sicut et cognitus sum; quam scientiam profecto contemplationis Dei vult intellegi, quod sanctorum summum erit praemium; tamen ubi dicit: Alii quidem datur per spiritum sermo sapientiae, alii sermo scientiae secundum eundem Spiritum haec utique duo sine dubitatione distinguit...”

612 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 225. Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 71: AAS 105 (2013), 1050.

613 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2416.

614 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 69.

is the very voice of its confession, that you praise the Creator. When you have thought on the universal beauty of this world, does not its very beauty as it were with one voice answer you, I made not myself, God made me?⁶¹⁵

Later, the encyclical speaks of the moderate use of creatures by man to avoid the danger and the accusation of anthropocentrism. To draw a clear line on how the things of creation should be used, reference is made once again to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, with these words:

The Catechism clearly and forcefully criticizes a distorted anthropocentrism: "Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection... Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things".⁶¹⁶

Here the Augustinian distinction between *uti et frui* could have been employed as a very enlightening doctrine that gives an ethical and moral guideline regarding Creation.⁶¹⁷ Inferior things should be used, always in God, and equal or superior things, as human beings or God Himself, should be enjoyed, but only in God. This Augustinian norm is born of the *ordo amoris*, and calls to live in this order, letting the same order govern the relations between man and God, and man and creation:

When, therefore, the creature is either equal to us or inferior, we must use the inferior in order to God, but we must enjoy the equal duly in God. For as you ought to enjoy yourself, not in yourself, but in Him who made you, so also him whom you love as yourself. Let us enjoy, therefore, both ourselves and our brethren in the Lord; and hence let us not dare to yield, and as it were to relax, ourselves to ourselves in the direction downwards.⁶¹⁸

615 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 144, 13. Translated by J.E. Tweed. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888.). PL 36, 1878-79: "Vox quaedam est mutae terrae, species terrae. Attendis et vides eius speciem, vides eius fecunditatem, vides eius vires, quomodo concipiat semen, quomodo plerumque afferat quod non est seminatum: vides, et consideratione tua tamquam interrogas eam; et ipsa inquisitio interrogatio est. Cum autem inquisieris admirans, et perscrutatus fueris, et magnam vim, magnam pulchritudinem, praeclaramque virtutem inveneris, quoniam apud se et a se habere hanc virtutem non posset; continuo tibi venit in mentem, quia non potuit a se esse, nisi ab illo Creatore. Et hoc quod in ea invenisti, vox confessionis ipsius est, ut laudes Creatorem. Nonne considerata universa pulchritudine mundi huius, tamquam una voce tibi species ipsa respondet: Non me ego feci, sed Deus?"

616 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 69. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 339.

617 Cf. Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 1, 4, 4; *doctr. chr.* 1, 33, 37; *trin.* 9, 8, 13. G. Quaranta makes an interesting analysis of the various ethical levels that can be found within *Laudato Si'*: Cf. G. Quaranta, "Con tutte le tue creature. L'etica eco-logica della *Laudato Si'*", in *Studia Patavina* 63 (2016), 617-629.

618 Augustine, *trin.* 9, 8, 13. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 968: "Cum ergo aut par nobis, aut inferior creatura sit, inferiore utendum est ad Deum;

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When speaking of the psalms which are creation's songs of praise to God and by which creation itself praises God, *Laudato Si'* ends up saying that human beings praise God because they exist in Him:

The Psalms frequently exhort us to praise God the Creator, "who spread out the earth on the waters, for his steadfast love endures forever" (Ps 136:6). They also invite other creatures to join us in this praise: "Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created" (Ps 148:3-5). We do not only exist by God's mighty power; we also live with him and beside him. This is why we adore him.⁶¹⁹

Augustine expresses this same idea in an extremely beautiful way, by making us see that it is God who cultivates man like a field, and that it is man who praises God by recognizing that everything comes from Him and that without Him nothing can be done. This is how Augustine expresses it, playing with the meanings that the Latin verb "*colo*" can have (to cultivate, or to give worship or adoration):

For he possesses us, and we possess him. He possesses us to cultivate us (*colat nos*); we possess him to worship him (*colamus illum*). But we worship him as God (*colimus*); he cultivates us (*colit*) as his field. He cultivates us (*colit*) so that we bear fruit; we worship him (*colimus*) so that we bear fruit. Everything is for our benefit; he does not need us. I will give you," he says, "as your inheritance and possession the ends of the earth: see that we are his possession; the Lord," he says, "is the portion of my inheritance and my cup: see that he is our possession. But with a distinction: You are human beings; I, the Lord, your God," says the Lord our God.⁶²⁰

It is true, the encyclical shows that the Creator God is the same as the Redeemer God. The one who created the heavens and the earth, is the one who redeems the creation from sin at the same time. The Pope puts it in these words, quoting the prophet Jeremiah (32:17, 21):

In the Bible, the God who liberates and saves is the same God who created

pari autem fruendum, sed in Deo. Sicut enim te ipso, non in te ipso frui debes, sed in eo qui fecit te; sic etiam illo quem diligis tamquam te ipsum. Et nobis ergo et fratribus in Domino fruamur, et inde nos nec ad nosmetipsos remittere, et quasi relaxare deorsum versus audeamus."

619 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 72.

620 Augustine, *s.* 47, 30. PL 38, 316: "Nam et possidet nos, et possidemus illum. Possidet nos ut colat nos, et possidemus illum ut colamus illum. Sed nos colimus tamquam Deum, ille colit tamquam agrum. Ille nos colit ut fructum feramus, nos cum colimus ut fructum demus. Totum ad nos recurrit, ille nostri non eget. Dabo tibi, inquit, hereditatem tuam et possessionem tuam fines terrae: ecce possessio ipsius sumus. Dominus, inquit, pars hereditatis meae, et calicis mei: ecce possessio nostra est. Sed tamen, quia distinctione: Vos homines estis, ego Dominus Deus vester, dicit Dominus Deus noster."

the universe, and these two divine ways of acting are intimately and inseparably connected: "Ah Lord God! It is you who made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you... You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders" (Jer 32:17, 21). "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless" (Is 40:28b-29).⁶²¹

In a similar way, Augustine also points out this reality. God is good and omnipotent. The Creator is none other than the Triune God, the One Trinity who has made all things:

For Thou created heaven and earth, not out of Yourself, for then they would be equal to Your Only-begotten, and thereby even to You; and in no wise would it be right that anything should be equal to You which was not of You. And anything else except You there was not whence You might create these things, O God, One Trinity, and Trine Unity; and, therefore, out of nothing You created heaven and earth — a great thing and a small, because You are Almighty and Good, to make all things good, even the great heaven and the small earth.⁶²²

Thus, all creatures give glory to God and in their own particular way is a sign which speaks of their Creator. Different biblical books attest to this, and one can appreciate the intimate union between Creation and Redemption, since the Triune God is the Creator, and it is the same Economic Trinity that performs the Redemption in the person of the Son.

4.2.1.6. All Things are Interrelated.

In number eighty-six (86) a fundamental ecological question is tackled, namely the interrelationship of all beings in the universe. Nothing in the universe is isolated, since all creatures, however small and insignificant they may seem to be, are related to other beings, and ultimately all beings of creation form a harmonious and orderly whole, where nothing is superfluous, and nothing is in excess. The Pope ratifies this idea citing the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

621 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 73.

622 Augustine, *conf.* 12, 7. Translated by J.G. Pilkington. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 828-29: "Fecisti enim caelum et terram non de te; nam esset aequale Unigenito tuo ac per hoc et tibi, et nullo modo iustum esset, ut aequale tibi esset, quod de te non esset. Et aliud praeter te non erat, unde faceres ea, Deus, una Trinitas et trina Unitas; et ideo de nihilo fecisti caelum et terram, magnum quiddam et parvum quiddam, quoniam omnipotens et bonus es ad facienda omnia bona, magnum caelum et parvam terram. Tu eras et aliud nihil, unde fecisti caelum et terram, duo quaedam, unum prope te, alterum prope nihil, unum, quo superior tu esses, alterum, quo inferius nihil esset."

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Hence, we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships.⁶²³ We understand better the importance and meaning of each creature if we contemplate it within the entirety of God's plan. As the Catechism teaches: "God wills the interdependence of creatures. The sun and the moon, the cedar and the little flower, the eagle and the sparrow: the spectacle of their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other".⁶²⁴

Augustine, for his part, conceives this idea, on the assumption that there may be creatures that seem to us useless or even harmful. Nevertheless, Augustine emphasizes that everything has been created by God and all creatures are interconnected in the order set by God, who has a plan that surpasses human beings, and that even though man himself cannot know for sure its utility, or its contribution within the order of creation, all beings have a reason to exist, since at the end all are interrelated:

I, however, must confess that I have not the slightest idea why mice and frogs are created, and flies and worms; yet I can still see that they are all beautiful in their own specific kind, although because of our sins many of them seem to be against our interests. There is not a single living creature, after all, in whose body I will not find, when I reflected upon it, that its measures and numbers and order are geared to harmonious unity... If you object to their not being of any use, be thankful they do no harm, because even if they are not needed for our homes, at any rate they contribute to the completion of the universe, which is not only much bigger than our homes, but much better as well; God manages it after all, much better than any of us can manage our homes... In this way you will perhaps find more genuine satisfaction when you praise God in the tiny little ant down on the ground, than when you are crossing a river high up, let us say, on an elephant.⁶²⁵

In the citation above, Augustine explains the metaphysical principle of interconnected of all beings in the order set by God in eternity. There may be creatures whose

623 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 47, art. 2, ad 1; art. 3.

624 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 86. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 340.

625 Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 26. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 55-56. PL 34, 250: "Ego vero fateor me nescire mures et ranas quare creatae sint, aut muscae aut vermiculi: video tamen omnia in suo genere pulchra esse, quamvis propter peccata nostra multa nobis videantur adversa. Non enim animalis alicuius corpus et membra considero, ubi non mensuras et numeros et ordinem inveniam ad unitatem concordiae pertinere... De superfluis vero quid nobis est quaerere? Si tibi displicet quod non prosunt, placeat quod non obsunt; quia etsi domui nostrae non sunt necessaria, eis tamen completur huius universitatis integritas, quae multo maior est quam domus nostra et multo melior. Hanc enim multo melius administrat Deus, quam unusquisque nostrum domum suam... Sic fortasse uberius capies fructum, cum Deum laudas in humilitate formicae, quam cum transis fluvium in alicuius iumentum altitudine."

purpose of existence we may not be able to fully grasp, but then, in view of this holistic plan of the Creator, we need to treat every creature with care and respect because they contribute to the integrity of creation, and more importantly because “all these things are beautiful to their Maker (*omnia pulchra sunt conditori et artifici suo*), who has a use for them all in His management of the whole universe which is under the control of His sovereign law.”⁶²⁶

At the end of the encyclical, it returns to this idea by pointing out that the theological foundation of the interrelatedness of all reality, of all forms of life, and of all social structures, is the very trinitarian communion of the divine persons who are of subsistent relationships, so that all creatures, created after this interdependent relations, tend towards God, and towards each other. So, the encyclical points out:

The divine Persons are subsistent relations, and the world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships. Creatures tend towards God, and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things, so that throughout the universe we can find any number of constant and secretly interwoven relationships.⁶²⁷

Here a reference is made to St. Thomas Aquinas. But a citation could have been made also to Augustine, in pointing out how everything has been made by God, and every creature is restless until it rests in God. The *quies* of all creatures, according to the Augustinian thought, is in God. Only in God, the final goal of all creation, can all creatures find their *quies*. In this way, Augustine indicates that when we reach the goal:

He (God) shall give us (who shall be the seventh day) rest in Himself. But there is not now space to treat of these ages; suffice it to say that the seventh shall be our Sabbath, which shall be brought to a close, not by an evening, but by the Lord's day, as an eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, and prefiguring the eternal repose not only of the spirit, but also of the body. There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?⁶²⁸

626 Ibid., 1, 25. PL 34, 250: “Sed cum ista dicunt, non intellegunt quemadmodum omnia pulchra sunt conditori et artifici suo, qui omnibus utitur ad gubernationem universitatis, cui summa lege dominatur.”

627 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 240. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 11, art. 3; q. 21, art. 1, ad 3; q. 47, art. 3.

628 Augustine, *ciu.* 22, 30, 5. Translated by Marcus Dods. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 41, 804: “Post hanc tamquam in die septimo requiescet Deus, cum eundem diem septimum, quod nos erimus, in se ipso Deo faciet requiescere. De istis porro aetatibus singulis nunc diligenter longum est disputare; haec tamen septima erit sabbatum nostrum, cuius finis non erit vespera, sed dominicus dies velut octavus aeternus, qui Christi resurrectione sacratus est, aeternam non solum spiritus, verum

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In Augustine's theological scheme, just as a physical object's weight draws it to rest in certain spaces, so a spiritual substance's weight (which he identifies in the *Confessions* as love: "My weight is my love")⁶²⁹ also draws it to rest in certain spiritual conditions. Just as oil rests upon water because it is lighter, so the soul's love rests upon that to which it is attracted. The soul, by its will and love, is attracted to and seeks the form of beauty and wisdom and wishes to avoid the folly of tending toward unformed and degenerate desires. The soul's ability to will and love is at once its weight by which it rises and finds rest in God whose infinite love satiates all human desire.

4.2.1.7. The Unity of All Beings.

The Pope subsequently points out that no one should feel alienated or excluded from the union with nature and creation, since among all God's creatures there exists a certain unity and communion. This is how the encyclical comments on the issue:

"For they are yours, O Lord, who love the living" (Wis 11:26). This is the basis of our conviction that, as part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect.⁶³⁰

In the above citation, the Pope teaches that creation, not only reveals and points to our symbolic communion with the Divine, but also in itself a concrete means for communion within the human family and within the larger biotic community. We are in communion along with the rest of God's creatures, bonded together by God's love.

Augustine speaks also of the same concept of this "universal family" united by the bonds of beauty, being, and goodness. All creation has been made by God, and by the fact that it came out of his hands it bears the seal of its Creator, the Triune God. This seal can be seen by the fact that each creature has limits, a figure and is ordered in a certain way. The triad of the text of Wisdom 11, 20, (*mensura, numerus, pondus/ordus*) allows Augustine to speak of the essential link that exists between all beings.⁶³¹ It is not a vaguely pantheistic union, but clearly a trinitarian unity. There is an essential

etiam corporis requiem praefigurans. Ibi vacabimus et videbimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus. Ecce quod erit in fine sine fine. Nam quis alius noster est finis nisi pervenire ad regnum, cuius nullus est finis?"

629 Cf. Augustine, *conf.* 13, 9, 10.

630 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 89.

631 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 26. In later writings, *ordo* becomes interchangeable with *pondus*. Cf. *c. Faust.* 20, 7. In the *De Trinitate*, the triad already appears as a stamp of the Trinity on the creatures. Cf. *trin.* 11, 18. The triad *mensura, numerus, pondus* is related to another triad: *modus, species, ordo: nat. bon.* 3, 3; 8, 8; *lib. arb.* 3, 35; *ciu.* 5, 11; 11, 28; *Gen. litt.* 4, 3, 7.

and substantial difference between God and His creatures, but the Creator's virtual presence is evident in all His creatures through measure (*mensura*), number (*numerus*) and order (*ordo*) or weight (*pondus*). The fact that all beings of creation are creatures and have come forth from the hands of God and at the same time are all oriented and ordered to the same end (their perfection in Christ, in the new world), renders possible a deeper communion among them than the mere ecological communion, which is a vital, spatial, temporal communion, while the communion in Christ goes beyond these limits. This is what Augustine comments in *Gen. adu. Man.*, using a version of the text from Wis 11:20, where the *pondus* is substituted with *ordo*:

When it was dealing with them one by one, you see, it just said, "God saw that it was good"; but when it came to talking about them all, it was not enough to say "good" unless "very" was also added. God's individual works are found by sensible people who consider them to display, each in its own kind, admirable *measures* and *numbers* and *orders* (Wis 11:20); how much more must this be so with *all things together* (Sir 18:1), that is, with the universal self, which is completed by all these individual things being brought together into one whole? Every beauty, after all, that consists of parts is much more admirable in its totality than in any of its parts.⁶³²

Augustine and Pope Francis, share a common vision wherein humanity and the whole of creation have a common destiny, i.e., the final communion with God, the Creator—the *telos* of all creation to be recapitulated in Christ when "God will be all in all." They both perceive the destiny of creation to be bound up with the mystery of Christ, the Word, who was present from the beginning as "all things have been created through Him and for Him" (Co. 1:16). It is important to highlight that in this "vision", it is conceived that the entire physical universe, and not just humanity alone, that is destined to be redeemed and transformed in Christ.

Towards the end, the encyclical goes back to this very argument to point out that in all creation there are vestiges of the Trinity, who has made all things: "For Christians, believing in one God who is trinitarian communion suggests that the Trinity has left its mark on all creation".⁶³³ Then to ratify this idea, St. Bonaventure is quoted: "Saint

632 Augustine, *Gen. adu. Man.* 1, 21, 32. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 60. PL 34, 252: "Cum enim de singulis ageret, dicebat tantum: Vidit Deus quia bonum est: cum autem de omnibus diceretur, parum fuit dicere bona, nisi adderetur et valde. Si enim singula opera Dei cum considerantur a prudentibus, inveniuntur habere laudabiles mensuras et numeros et ordines in suo quaque genere constituta; quanto magis omnia simul, id est ipsa universitas, quae istis singulis in unum collectis impletur? Omnis enim pulchritudo quae partibus constat, multo est laudabilior in toto quam in parte."

633 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 239.

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Bonaventure went so far as to say that human beings, before sin, were able to see how each creature “testifies that God is three”. The reflection of the Trinity was there to be recognized in nature “when that book was open to man and our eyes had not yet become darkened”.⁶³⁴ Augustine made a similar teaching when he asserts that sin not only disrupts the order of the world, so that it tends toward nothingness,⁶³⁵ but also distorts people’s ability to see how the creation exists in the Word. He likens it to a blind person who stands in the sunlight; though surrounded by light, he is at the same time absent from the light because of lack of eyesight.⁶³⁶ So, it is an idea that Saint Bonaventure possibly adopted from Augustine, for whom all beings bear a vestige of their Creator in their threefold structure as they all have *modus/mensura, numerus, pondus*.

4.2.2. On Human Being.

4.2.2.1. The Human Dignity.

In the second part, the encyclical makes it clear that man—referring to the Genesis accounts (Gen 1:26)—was made in the image and likeness of God, an attribute that confers a unique dignity on the human being among all creatures. The Pope writes:

The Bible teaches that every man and woman is created out of love and made in God’s image and likeness. This shows us the immense dignity of each person, “who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons”.⁶³⁷

Moreover, the Pope reminds us that we are not here by chance, that every human being has been willed and love by God:

How wonderful is the certainty that each human life is not adrift in the midst of hopeless chaos, in a world ruled by pure chance or endlessly recurring cycles! The Creator can say to each one of us: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you” (Jer 1:5). We were conceived in the heart of God, and for this reason “each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary”.⁶³⁸

Augustine in his commentaries on Genesis also reflects on this reality inherent in

634 Ibid. Cf. St. Bonaventure, *Quaest. Disp. de Myst. Trinitatis*, 1, 2 concl.

635 Cf. Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 1, 12, 1.

636 Cf. *Ibid.*, 1, 19, 1.

637 *Ibid.*, 65. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 357.

638 *Ibid.* Cf. Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Solemn Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry* (24 April 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 711.

man and emphasizes that man has been created in the image and likeness of God, but more importantly of the Triune God, the Trinity from which also his personal dignity originates:

For God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'; and a little after it is said, 'So God created man in the image of God'. Certainly, in that it is of the plural number, the word 'our' would not be rightly used if man were made in the image of one person, whether of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Spirit; but because he was made in the image of the Trinity, on that account it is said, 'After our image'. But again, lest we should think that three Gods were to be believed in the Trinity, whereas the same Trinity is one God, it is said, 'So God created man in the image of God', instead of saying, 'In His own image'.⁶³⁹

Augustine thinks that because man bears the image of God, the Trinity must somehow find its best resemblance in his very reality.⁶⁴⁰ In man, he finds the best analogies that would help convey the unity of the divine nature and the distinctiveness of the three Persons. Of the many analogies and metaphors that Augustine discovered, five were the most prominent in man, namely: lover, beloved, love itself;⁶⁴¹ being, knowing, willing;⁶⁴² mind, knowledge, love;⁶⁴³ memory, understanding, will;⁶⁴⁴ and our remembering of God, our understanding of God, and our love for God.⁶⁴⁵ In all these analogies, Augustine believes that they throw some light on the unity and mutual relations of the three Persons. Yet Augustine had no illusions about the limitations of these analogies, remote and imperfect as they were.⁶⁴⁶ He pointed out that they were just metaphors and will remain to be so. In reality one does not find within ourselves a single trinity like that of God, but what we would find is a series of them which serves as ladders where we can ascend, and in so doing may approach the Trinity and grow in

639 Augustine, *trin.* 12, 6, 6. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) PL 42, 1001: "Dixit enim Deus: Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram, paulo post autem dictum est: Et fecit Deus hominem ad imaginem Dei. Nostram certe, quia pluralis est numerus, non recte diceretur, si homo ad unius personae imaginem fieret, sive Patris, sive Filii, sive Spiritus Sancti; sed quia fiebat ad imaginem Trinitatis, propterea dictum est, ad imaginem nostram. Rursus autem ne in Trinitate credendos arbitraremur tres deos, cum sit eadem Trinitas unus Deus: Et fecit, inquit, Deus hominem ad imaginem Dei; pro eo ac si diceret: Ad imaginem suam."

640 Cf. Luis F. Ladaria, *The Living and True God; The Mystery of the Trinity*, on the analogy of the human mind (Convivium Press, 2009), p. 292.

641 Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 8, 12.

642 Cf. Augustine, *conf.* 13, 11.

643 Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 9, 2-8.

644 Ibid. 9, 17-19.

645 Ibid. 14, 15-20.

646 Ibid. 10, 19.

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deeper understanding of God.⁶⁴⁷

The true glory of man consists in being the image and likeness of a Triune God, and only He who engraved it on man's heart can take or preserve it, and no one can ignore or deny this reality. From this "divine image" proceeds man's dominion of the created world, as Augustine points out: "What gives him authority? The image of God."⁶⁴⁸ Then he continued what this image of God means: "We have existence in common with stick and stones, life in common with trees, sense in common with beasts, understanding in common with angels."⁶⁴⁹ Human being, while part of creation and shares existence with other creatures, is special and, in a sense, different from the rest because of his rationality and freewill.

The image of God in human being lies in his exercise of reason. And it is the right exercise of reason that gives him authority or dominion over other inferior creatures.⁶⁵⁰ This dominion however must not be identified with the "domination of human reason" over the world that implies the license to exercise arbitrary will without restraint. Human dominion over creatures must reflect or emulate God's dominion whose divine wisdom governs creation with love that "seeks nothing for itself but the joy of the other".⁶⁵¹

On the other hand, in the theological scheme of Augustine, this divine image in man also implies that no one has the right to exploit any person, reducing him to a mere object. The dignity of every human being is inalienable as it is inherent in him and formed part in God's purpose of creating human being.

In the fourth part of the encyclical, the Pope then goes back to this same theme, speaking of human ecology and pointing out the importance of taking care of the dignity of every worker and to avoid their exploitation. In so doing, the Pope presents the doctrinal framework that Augustine shows in his defense of the peasant Faventius⁶⁵². The encyclical notes:

Respect for our dignity as human beings often jars with the chaotic realities

647 Ibid. 15, 43.

648 Augustine, s. 43, 3. (trans. Edmund Hill. Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991). PL 38, 255: "Unde habeat potestatem? Propter imaginem Dei".

649 Ibid. s. 43, 4. PL 38, 255: "Habemus ergo, ut cuncta breviter retexamus, ipsum esse cum lignis et lapidibus, vivere cum arboribus, sentire cum bestiis, intellegere cum angelis".

650 A more comprehensive discussion on man as a special creature being created in the image and likeness of God is tackled by Ma. Carmen Dolby Múgica's book: *El Hombre es Imagen de Dios. Visión Antropológica de San Agustín*, (Eunsa, Pamplona 2002).

651 Ibid., 75.

652 We will present Faventius' case in the next theme "the Cry of the Poor".

that people have to endure in city life. Yet this should not make us overlook the abandonment and neglect also experienced by some rural populations which lack access to essential services and where some workers are reduced to conditions of servitude, without rights or even the hope of a more dignified life.

In this scenario, the Augustinian doctrine and thought would have given the papal statements a different dimension and would have given it a wider context of reading and application.

4.2.2.2. The Cry of the Poor.

One of the important contributions of the encyclical is to integrate the concerns of the planet and of the poor. The ecological imbalance particularly affects the poorest and least favored, and it is necessary to be aware of this, so that an integral ecological system can be established,⁶⁵³ one that respects human being and nature, so that those who have less can lead a dignified life:

Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.⁶⁵⁴

Later in number ninety-three (93), it reverts to this same theme:

Hence every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged. The principle of the subordination of private property to the universal destination of goods, and thus the right of everyone to their use, is a golden rule of social conduct and “the first principle of the whole ethical and social order”.⁶⁵⁵

Augustine was aware of the social problems arising from the lack of justice and exploitation, both of land and of human beings by the rich and powerful. It is well known how Augustine tried to defend the peasant Faventius, who having suffered an injustice from the rich landowner for whom he worked, fled from the farm, and took refuge in the Church of Hippo, asking the bishop to protect him.⁶⁵⁶ In fact, Faventius

653 Cf. P. Figlizzo, “Ripensare l’economia per la cura della casa comune”, in *Studia Patavina* 63 (2016), 589-602; Cf. also S. Morandini, “Ecologia integrale tra Scienze e Teologia: Questioni di metodo in *Laudato Si'*”, in H.M. Yáñez (ed.), *Laudato Si'. Linee di lettura interdisciplinare per la cura della casa comune*, Roma, Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2017, 49-68.

654 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 49. Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), 19: AAS 73 (1981), 626.

655 *Ibid.*, 93.

656 In Augustine's time there was a right for asylum. However, the Emperor Honorius forbade those who owed taxes to take refuge in the sacred asylum (C. Th. 9, 45). Nevertheless, the Council of

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took refuge in a place located at the western end of the Diocese of Hippo. We know that Augustine granted him the right of asylum and sheltered the persecuted peasant. Though we do not know how the story ended, what is known is that the powerful landowner used his influence and power to achieve his malicious end. One night when Faventius had left the bishop's house for dinner, he was apprehended by Florencio, an officer in the service of the governor of the province of Africa, and was taken far from Hippo, where he could not anymore be traced, to punish him for having fled and denounced the landowner. Even though Augustine condemned the abuses committed against the juridical statute and even went as far as to send Florencio himself the text of the law detailing the right of asylum, nothing more could be done. Faventius seemed to have disappeared and nothing more was heard of him again.⁶⁵⁷ As Augustine points out in *ep.* 115:

For although the integrity of that judge is widely famed as incorruptible, Faventius has for his adversary a man of very great wealth. To secure that money may not prevail in that court, I beg your Holiness, my beloved lord and venerable brother, to have the kindness to give the accompanying letter to the honorable magistrate, a man very much beloved by us, and to read this letter also to him; for I have not thought it necessary to write twice the same statement of the case. I trust that he will delay the hearing of the case, because I do not know whether the man is innocent or guilty.⁶⁵⁸

Along with the rights of the poorest and most neglected, in linking ecology with social justice—what has been called eco-justice—the encyclical speaks of food production and the awful reality that nearly a third of food is wasted and thrown away. In this regard, the Pope quotes his own catechesis, pointing out that the food that is thrown away is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor: “Besides, we know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and “whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor”.⁶⁵⁹

Carthage on April 27, 399 decided to ask the emperor to grant the right of asylum in all circumstances. This request was heard by the emperor who granted this right. Cf. S. Lancel, *St. Augustine*, Paris, Fayard, 1999, 377.

657 Cf. Augustine, *ep.* 113-116. Cf. S. Lancel, *Saint Augustin*, Paris, Fayard, 1999, 377.

658 Ibid., 115. Trans. by J.G. Cunningham. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 33, 430. “Habet enim causam cum homine pecuniosissimo, quamvis iudicis integritas fama clarissima praedicetur. Ne quid tamen apud Officium pecunia praevaleat, peto Sanctitatem tuam, domine dilectissime et venerabilis frater, ut honorabili nobisque carissimo Consulari digneris tradere litteras meas, et has ei legere; quia bis eadem causam insinuare necessarium non esse arbitratus sum; et eius causae differat audientiam, quoniam nescio utrum in ea nocens an innocens sit.”

659 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 50. Cf. Catechesis (5 June 2013): *Insegnamenti* 1/1 (2013), 280.

In here it would have been very helpful, in addition to the self-quote, to place the thought of Augustine who considers it a kind of theft to have superfluous goods, especially food which is vital for survival, and hoarding them instead of sharing them to the needy:

Take stock then: not only can you manage on a few things only, but God himself asks very few from you. Ask yourself how much he has given you and then pick out what you need: all the rest of your things lie there as superfluities, but for other people they are necessities. The superfluity of the rich is necessary to the poor. If you hold onto the superfluous items, then, you are keeping what belongs to someone else.⁶⁶⁰

Later in number ninety-five (95), the encyclical returns to this same theme:

That is why the New Zealand bishops asked what the commandment “Thou shall not kill” means when “twenty percent of the world’s population consumes resources at a rate that robs the poor nations and future generations of what they need to survive”.⁶⁶¹

It is therefore necessary not to dissociate the ecological concern from the social issue. An ecological conversion must include a conversion of the heart, in such a way that greed is renounced and that what the earth produces is shared in solidarity with all human beings.

During his time as bishop of Hippo, Augustine tries to move the conscience of the rich to use their wealth to help the poor. He invites the rich to avoid wasting money in payments for circus shows or popular banquets and use the money instead to feed the poor. Thus, he exhorts them not to give donations to the *uenatores* (i.e. to the hunters of wild beasts in the shows), but instead, use the money to help and feed the poor.⁶⁶² Nevertheless, Augustine himself acknowledges that donations to be used for feeding the poor, do not attract donors as much as those of the circus games, which many of the rich were so obsessed with. That is why Augustine speaks of the fact that this charitable use of money does not give the “human glory” that circus games and shows may

660 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 147, 12. Trans. by Maria Boulding, OSB. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 15. Edited by J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000), 454. PL. 36, 1922. “Videte quia non solum pauca sunt quae vobis sufficient; sed nec ipse Deus multa a vobis quaerit. Quaere quantum tibi dederit, et ex eo tollo quod sufficit: caetera quae superflua iacent, aliorum sunt necessaria. Superflua divitum, necessaria sunt pauperum. Res alienae possidentur, cum superflua possidentur.”

661 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 95. Cf. New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, *Statement on Environmental Issues* (1 September 2006).

662 Cf. Augustine, *s.* 21, 10.

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offer (*decus auri*), but its fruit is more lasting, because by helping the poor one gains eternal life.

As Brown and Paul Veyne⁶⁶³ have pointed out, Augustine must have contributed to the change of the practice of “euergetism”⁶⁶⁴ (also called *evergetism*) in which the rich were obliged to show their nobility by sponsoring various works. In the pagan world they had been manifested through donations for the construction of temples and the spectacles of the circus. In the Christian world, this practice of generosity on the part of the rich was manifested in the construction of churches.

4.2.2.3. Man’s Rightful Place.

The encyclical stresses the highest dignity that the human being has above all other creatures, without failing to show the deep respect for other creatures. On the other hand, it also warns of the incoherence that can be observed at present in certain pseudo-ecological movements which have misunderstood ecology, and that seek to place other animal species above human beings. These contemporary theologians who claim to have strong concern for the protection of animals and other living beings, tend to disregard human beings though, and even seek the elimination of those who are not to their liking.

Rowan Williams⁶⁶⁵ speaks of some theologians (the likes of Sallie McFague⁶⁶⁶ and Anne Primavesi⁶⁶⁷) who need to rethink their perspective, since in applying the paradigms of feminism, specifically “patriarchalism”, they have misinterpreted the text of Gen 1:28, which states that man is the image and likeness of God, and that he must govern creation in the name of God. Hence, their accusation of the patristic tradition to have favored “human supremacy” over other living creatures is to some extent baseless. In the encyclical, Pope Francis refers to these moral distortions made by modern pseudo-ecologists:

A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is

663 P. Veyne, *Le pain et le cirque*, Paris, Seuil, 1976, 45-67.

664 This term is derived from the Greek word “εὐεργετέω,” meaning “doing good deeds,” was the ancient practice of high-status and wealthy individuals in society distributing part of their wealth to the community. This was evident in the patron-client relations in ancient Rome. The modern term was coined by French historian André Boulanger and subsequently used in the works of Paul Veyne.

665 Cf. R. Williams, *On Augustine*, London-Oxford-New York, Bloomsbury, 2016. Particularly chapter 4, entitled “Good for Nothing”.

666 Cf. Sallie McFague, *The Body of God. An Ecological Theology*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993; *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming*, Minneapolis, Fortress, 2008.

667 Cf. Anne Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity*, Burns & Oats, 1991.

clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted. This compromises the very meaning of our struggle for the sake of the environment.⁶⁶⁸

For his part, Augustine emphasizes that the dignity of man comes from being made in the image and likeness of the triune God, so he is the only being who has understanding and reason, who is capable of knowing God, who is *summae naturae capax*⁶⁶⁹ and therefore has been placed by God to govern the rest of creation in His name. Thus, the Bishop of Hippo points out in *De Genesi ad litteram*:

Here we must not neglect that other point either, that after saying, *to our image*, he immediately added, *and let him have authority over the fishes of the sea and the flying things of heaven* and of the other animals which lack reason, giving us to understand, evidently, that it was the very factor in which he surpasses non-rational animate beings that man was made to God's image. That, of course, is reason itself, or mind or intelligence or whatever other word it may more suitably be named by.⁶⁷⁰

For this reason, the human being cannot be equated with any other beings in creation. All created beings deserve respect, and it is necessary to take care of creation as the common home. But we should not lose sight of what Pope Francis and Augustine have pointed out; animals or other created beings cannot be placed before the human being, since man is the only created being with understanding and freewill, able to know and love God. By this highest faculty given to him, man, in Augustine's point of view, is not only called to govern creation; he is also called to become the very voice of creation's praise of the Creator. And we praise the Creator when we are able to recognize His very image reflected on the mirror of His creation. Thus, Augustine writes:

How powerful is God, who made the earth! How powerful is God, who filled it with good things, who gave their several lives to all its living creatures, who sowed various seeds in the womb of the earth that it might bear so many different shrubs and such beautiful trees! How powerful is God, and how great! It is your calling, you saint of God, to question, and creation's part to respond to

668 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 91.

669 Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 14, 4, 6.

670 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 3, 20, 30. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 234. PL 34, 292: "Hic etiam illud non est praetereundum, quia cum dixisset, ad imaginem nostram; statim subiunxit, et habeat potestatem piscium maris et volatilium coeli, et caeterorum animalium rationis expertium: ut videlicet intellegamus in eo factum hominem ad imaginem Dei, in quo irrationalibus animantibus antecellit. Id autem est ipsa ratio, vel mens, vel intellegentia, vel si quo alio vocabulo commodius appellatur."

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you. Its response is creation's song of confession, and as you hear it, you bless God and tell of his power.⁶⁷¹

4.2.2.4. Stewards of the Earth.

In point number two (2), the *Laudato Si'* says:

This sister (the earth) now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will.⁶⁷²

The encyclical makes it truly clear that the earth was here before us and has been given to us as a gift. We are not proprietors of the earth but its stewards. This fundamental doctrine counters the charge hurled against the Judeo-Christian tradition on the basis of the Genesis account which grants dominion to man over the earth, accusing Christianity to have encouraged the unbridled exploitation of nature by man, painting him as domineering and destructive by nature.⁶⁷³ Pope Francis explicitly claims that “this is not a correct interpretation of the Bible as understood by the Church” and calls to “forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures”.⁶⁷⁴

Augustine in his writings clarifies the role of human being in the world through the image of an administrator or a steward. The human being is not the owner of anything in this world, but simply an administrator, a *villicus* or *vilicus*,⁶⁷⁵ that God has put in charge of his goods and gifts, both spiritual and material, not to exploit nor neglect them, but to make them bear fruit and bring them to their fullness. Augustine puts it this way:

671 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 144, 14. Trans. by Maria Boulding, OSB. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 20. Edited by B. Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 392. PL 36, 1879: “Quam potens Deus, qui fecit terram! quam potens Deus, qui implevit terram bonis! quam potens Deus, qui dedit vitas suas proprias animalibus! quam potens Deus, qui semina diversa dedit visceribus terrae, ut germinarent tantam varietatem fructicum, tantam speciem arborum! quam potens Deus, quam magnus Deus! Tu interroga, creatura respondet; et de responsione, tamquam confessione creaturae, tu, sancte Dei, benedicis Deum, et potentiam loqueris.”

672 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 2.

673 The encyclical here responds to the renowned article of Lynn White Jr. in 1967 which laid the blame for our environment crisis largely on Christianity.

674 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 67.

675 During Augustine's time, the *villicus* or *vilicus* was the administrator of a ranch or an estate who had the duty of being in-charge of the property but was not the real owner. He had to give an account of his administration to the ultimate owner of the land and shield his master from direct experience of violence and extortion on the land. Cf. Peter Brown, *Through the eye of a Needle* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp 13-14. Also see A. G. Hamman, *La vida cotidiana en Africa del Norte en Tiempos de san Agustín* (Iquitos, OALA, 1989), p. 147.

After all, we are all stewards, and we have to do something with whatever has been entrusted to us in this life, so that we can account for it to the great householder. And from the one to whom more has been entrusted, a stricter account will be required (...) whether they are rich, or kings, or princes, or judges, whether they are bishops, or those in charge of churches.⁶⁷⁶

Augustine views stewardship not as first and foremost to please human beings “in themselves”. In *The City of God* he writes that one of the problems of calling nonhuman creatures displeasing or evil is that men do not consider the creatures as they are in themselves, i.e. according to the purpose of why they were created, but always in relation to their utility. Thus, says Augustine:

If we attentively consider even these faults of earthly things, which are neither voluntary nor penal, they seem to illustrate the excellence of the natures themselves, which are all originated and created by God; for it is that which pleases us in this nature which we are displeased to see removed by the fault — unless even the natures themselves displease men, as often happens when they become hurtful to them, and then men estimate them not by their nature, but by their utility; as in the case of those animals whose swarms scourged the pride of the Egyptians.⁶⁷⁷

In the care of creation, one of the guiding principles according to Augustine is to see to it that creatures are preserved so they continue “to give glory to their maker”. Thus, he goes on to write a few lines later: “Therefore it is not with respect to our convenience or discomfort, but with respect to their own nature, that the creatures are glorifying to their Artificer.”⁶⁷⁸ Augustine affirms that animals have their own intrinsic goodness that can be appreciated by people in relation to God's creative work. Similarly, in *The literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine argues that all creatures that are without free wills are not simple subordinate to those beings with wills without any

676 Augustine, *s.* 359A, 11. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 10. Edited by J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1993), 217. PL 38, 1597: “Omnes enim villici sumus et aliquid nobis in hac vita commissum est agendum unde magno patrifamilias rationem reddamus. Et cui plus commissum est, maior ratio ab illo exigitur. Prima lectio quae recitata est, terruit omnes et maxime eos terruit qui praesunt populis, sive divites sint, sive reges sint, sive principes sint, sive iudices sint, sive episcopi sint, sive praepositi ecclesiarum. Unusquisque de actu suo patri familiae redditurus est rationem.”

677 Augustine, *trin.* 12, 4. Translated by Marcus Dods. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 41, 352: “Quamquam et vitia rerum terrenarum non voluntaria neque poenalia naturas ipsas, quarum nulla omnino est, cuius non sit auctor et conditor Deus, si prudenter attendamus, eadem ratione commendant, quia et in eis hoc nobis per vitium tolli displicet, quod in natura placet; nisi quia hominibus etiam ipsae naturae plerumque displicent, cum eis fiunt noxiae, non eas considerantibus, sed utilitatem suam, sicut illa animalia, quorum abundantia Aegyptiorum superbia vapulavit.”

678 Ibid.

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qualification. Rather, the ranking of creatures is set within limits according to a specific “order established by the justice of the Creator.” The rule of some creature over others is to be guided by the providential government of God, who delights in all the things He had made:

But He (the Creator) did not give all natures freewill, while those He did give it to are the higher, more powerful ones; so the natures which do not have freewill are necessarily subordinate to those which do, and this by the Creator’s design, who never punishes a bad will in such a way as to eliminate the nature’s rank or worth. Since therefore no mere body and no non-rational soul has freewill, these things are subordinate to the natures which are in fact endowed with freewill—not every one of them to all of them, but according to the just distribution of the creator.⁶⁷⁹

Hence for Augustine, the exercise of dominion is not merely to delight in the use that a creature provides for human needs, but that the Creator might be praised in creation. In *Sermon* 68 he makes clear that if one recognizes in forms of life that are not made in God’s image the signs of God’s good plan for creation, then they who are made to God’s image and therefore possesses reason or intelligence should love God because of His good works, Since all forms of life are good and therefore reveal God’s greatness, their use by humanity should lead to humanity’s worship and enjoyment of God. So says Augustine:

In fact, since the creation of the world, the invisible of God can be perceived with the intelligence through the created things; also, his everlasting power and divinity. Why did He manifest it? So that they may be inexcusable. If He manifested himself so that they are of no excuse, why are they guilty? Because, having known God, they did not glorify him as God. What do you say that they did not glorify him as God? Nor did they give him thanks. So, to glorify God is to thank him.⁶⁸⁰

679 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 8, 23, 44. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 370. PL 34, 390: “Sed quia non omnibus naturis dedit voluntatis arbitrium, illae autem quibus dedit, potentiores ac superiores sunt; illae naturae quae non habent voluntatem, subditae sint necesse est illis quae habent, et hoc ordinatione Creatoris, qui nunquam ita punit voluntatem malam, ut naturae perimat dignitatem. Cum igitur omne corpus et omnis anima irrationalis non habeat voluntatis arbitrium, subdita ista sunt eis naturis quae praeditae sunt arbitrio voluntatis; nec omnibus omnia, sed sicut distribuit iustitia Creatoris.”

680 Augustine, *s.* 68, 6. PL 38, 440: “Invisibilia enim eius a constitutione mundi per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspiciuntur, sempiterna quoque virtus eius ac divinitas. Quare manifestavit? Ut sint inexcusabiles. Si manifestavit ut sint inexcusabiles, unde ergo culpabiles? Quia cognoscentes Deum, non sicut Deum glorificaverunt. Quid est quod dicis: “ Non sicut Deum glorificaverunt “? Nec gratias egerunt. Hoc est ergo glorificare Deum, gratias agere Deo.”

Along this doctrinal vein, *Laudato Si'* stresses that man is not a Promethean ruler of nature,⁶⁸¹ but simply an administrator in the name of God. The encyclical denounces the dangers that can proceed from “Prometheanism” in which one perceives the Earth as a resource whose utility is determined primarily by human needs and interests and whose environmental problems can be overcome through human innovation.

Often, what was handed on was a Promethean vision of mastery over the world, which gave the impression that the protection of nature was something that only the faint-hearted cared about. Instead, our “dominion” over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship.⁶⁸²

The encyclical goes further as to link ecology with anthropology.⁶⁸³ Man cannot take care of the “common house” if he does not recognize his fellow human being as created by the triune God and has no respect for the dignity and rights of every human person. The Pope stresses this view as he writes: “There can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself. There can be no ecology without an adequate anthropology”.⁶⁸⁴ When this humble awareness of being sheer administrators is lost, one can fall into practical relativism, where the person lives a self-centered way of life and concerned only of his self-vested interests, and becomes indifferent to what is happening around him. As the encyclical rightly points out:⁶⁸⁵

The culture of relativism is the same disorder which drives one person to take advantage of another, to treat others as mere objects, imposing forced labor on them or enslaving them to pay their debts.⁶⁸⁶

This would be, from Augustine's perspective, the attitude of the rich man in the parable of the Rich Fool who was too locked up in his own comfortable world and personal interests that he did not care about others (Lk 16:19-31):

If the rich man had had compassion on the poor man who lay at his door and had wanted to be merciful by making use of the riches, he too would have come

681 S. Powell, “Laudato Si” and Nature”, in M. Mills – J.A. Orr – H. Schnitker, *Reflections on Pope's Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si'*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 18-29.

682 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 116. Cf. *Love for Creation. An Asian Response to the Ecological Crisis*, Declaration of the Colloquium sponsored by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (Tagaytay, 31 January-5 February 1993), 3.3.2.

683 Cf. G. Marengo, “The Anthropological Questions and the Care of our Common Home”, in M. Mills – J.A. Orr – H. Schnitker, *Reflections on Pope's Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si'*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 42-50.

684 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 118.

685 Cf. P. Sequeri, *Custode non tirano. Per un nuovo rapporto fra persona e creato*, Bologna, EMI, 2014.

686 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 123.

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to the place where the poor man came. Indeed, it was not poverty that brought Lazarus to the place of rest, but humility; nor was it riches that kept the rich man from such great rest, but pride and unbelief.⁶⁸⁷

Moreover, the theme on *uillicus or vilicus*, or steward, appears again in number one hundred fifty-nine (159) of the encyclical, when it talks of every human being as a passive recipient of the planet from God who freely gives it as a gift, and therefore every human person must administer and take care of the earth in order to be able to share and bequeath it in the best conditions to future generations that will come after them. To be able to do this, it is necessary to have the sense of simply being administrators and not owners and lords:

We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. Since the world has been given to us, we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.⁶⁸⁸

4.2.2.5. The Care of the Earth.

In number sixty-seven (67) of *Laudato Si'*, there is an interesting exegesis of the text of Genesis 2, 15, commenting that God put man in paradise to cultivate it and to take care of it. The Pope focuses on the words “to till and keep”:

The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). “Tilling” refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while “keeping” means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving.⁶⁸⁹

Augustine’s remark on the care of the earth is encouraging. He teaches that man should cultivate paradise with pleasure and at the same time protect it from everything that could harm it, in such a way that he does not deserve to be expelled from it. Today, the environmental pollution and the abuse of natural resources have distorted this

687 Augustine, *s.* 113A, 3. PL 38, 649: “Ille ergo dives, si compateretur pauperi ante ianuam suam iacenti, et vellet esse de divitiis illis misericors, illuc veniret et ipse, quo venit et ille pauper. Non enim illum Lazarum paupertas duxit ad requiem, et non humilitas; aut vero illum divitem ab illa tanta requie divitiae retraxerunt, et non superbia et infidelitas.”

688 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 159.

689 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 67.

care, making man worthy of being expelled from paradise, from the realm of God's creation. This is what Augustine says:

The man of course was put in Paradise to work this same paradise, as we argued above, by cultivating it in a way that was not painfully laborious but simply delightful, furnishing the sensible and observant mind with the most important reminders and useful advice, while he was to guard and keep this same paradise for himself, and not allow anything there which would earn him expulsion from it. Finally, he also received a command, in order for there to be something by which he might guard Paradise for himself, that is, by observing which he might avoid being thrown out of it.⁶⁹⁰

In here, Augustine explains that the stewardship of creation is the first and primary task entrusted to Adam, the first human being. Man's first vocation was to be co-caretaker of creation along with God. God is already caring for His creation "much better than any *paterfamilias* could have had done in his own household."⁶⁹¹ Humans need only to assist Him, to partake of God's ultimate stewardship of the world. And this Augustinian thought seems to have been reflected in the words of the ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew I:

God has not allowed humanity to be a mere spectator or an irresponsible consumer of the world and all that is in the world. Indeed, humanity has been called to assume the task of being primarily a partaker and a sharer in the responsibility for everything in the created world.⁶⁹²

Shortly afterwards, the *Laudato Si'* returns to this theme to speak of the work needed in the care of creation as part of an ecological spirituality and it affirms:

Underlying every form of work is a concept of the relationship which we can and must have with what is other than ourselves. Together with the awe-filled contemplation of creation which we find in Saint Francis of Assisi, the Christian spiritual tradition has also developed a rich and balanced understanding of the meaning of work, as, for example, in the life of Blessed Charles de Foucauld and his followers.⁶⁹³

690 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 8, 10, 22. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 361. PL 34, 381: "Positus est quippe homo in paradiso, ut operaretur eundem paradysum, sicut supra disputatum est, per agriculturam non laboriosam, sed deliciosam, et mentem prudentis magna atque utilia commonentem: custodiret autem eundem paradysum ipsi sibi, ne aliquid admitteret, quare inde mereretur expelli. Denique accepit et praeceptum, ut sit per quod sibi custodiat paradysum, id est, quo conservato non inde proiciatur."

691 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 16, 26.

692 Bartholomew I, "Message for September 1, 1992," in *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer*, ed. Chryssavgis, 39.

693 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 125.

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For Augustine work is also important, not only as a manifestation of poverty and collaboration with God, but also as a symbol of the work that God does in the heart of man himself. Just as Adam cared for and guarded the garden of Eden, in the thought of Augustine, the human being is guarded and cultivated by God himself.

On the other hand, the encyclical refers to the model of St. Benedict, *ora et labora*, as a “revolutionary” idea, forgetting that both elements belong to a monastic tradition which existed prior to St. Benedict, and of which he himself had just inherited. It is enough to see what Augustine says in *De opere monachorum* about the importance of work in the monasteries—one of the central arguments of the book—and how he would prefer to do in certain times the manual works that were assigned to him before having to exercise as a judge in the *Audientia Episcopalis* and having to endure the diverse cases that had to be solved and settled with a decision:

Yet I call our Lord Jesus, in Whose name I fearlessly say these things, for a witness upon my soul, that so far as it concerns my own convenience, I would much rather every day at certain hours, as much as is appointed by rule in well-governed monasteries, do some work with my hands, and have the remaining hours free for reading and praying, or some work pertaining to Divine Letters, than have to hear these most annoying perplexities of other men’s causes about secular matters, which we must either by adjudication bring to an end, or by intervention cut short.⁶⁹⁴

4.2.2.6. The Original Sin and Intrinsic Disorder.

An important contribution of *Laudato Si’* consists in having demonstrated the significant link between human sin and the precarious state of the physical world. Right at the beginning of the encyclical the Pope points out that “the violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of the sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life.”⁶⁹⁵ In number sixty-six (66), he traces the ultimate root of the problem to original sin and man’s desire to be like God due to pride, provoking the rupture between man, his neighbor and the earth, the Pope

694 Augustine, *op. mon.* 37. Translated by H. Browne. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.). PL 40, 576: “Tamen Dominum Iesum, in cuius nomine securus haec dico, testem invoco super animam meam, quoniam quantum attinet ad meum commodum, multo malle per singulos dies certis horis, quantum in bene moderatis monasteriis constitutum est, aliquid manibus operari, et caeteras horas habere ad legendum et orandum, aut aliquid de divinis Litteris agendum liberas, quam tumultuosissimas perplexitates causarum alienarum pati de negotiis saecularibus vel iudicando dirimendis, vel interveniendo praecidendis: quibus nos molestiis idem affixit apostolus, non utique suo, sed eius qui per eum loquebatur arbitrio, quas tamen ipsum perpressum fuisse non legimus.”

695 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 2.

points out:

The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain, in their own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality. They suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin. The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations.⁶⁹⁶

To these words of the Pope, it would have been more compelling and edifying if the Augustinian reflection on the original sin were added. On this theme, Augustine stresses that the first sin of man had caused disruption to the order of the world and the harmony of creation was broken: “Understand that God made all things, and arranged them in their orders. Why, then, do we suffer many evils from a creature that God made? Because we have offended God?”⁶⁹⁷

Moreover, for Augustine, sin not only disrupts the order of the world, so that it tends toward nothingness,⁶⁹⁸ but also distorts people's ability to see how the creation exists in the Word. He likens it to a blind person who stands in the sunlight; though surrounded by light, he is at the same time absent from the light because of lack of eyesight. Thus, explaining John 1:15, where the darkness is described as not comprehending the light that has come into the world, Augustine says:

Accordingly, brethren, as in the case of a blind man placed in the sun, the sun is present to him, but he is absent from the sun. So, every foolish man, every unjust man, every irreligious man, is blind in heart. Wisdom is present; but it is present to a blind man and is absent from his eyes; not because it is absent from him, but because he is absent from it.⁶⁹⁹

In Augustine's theological scheme, the whole creation has an eschatological orientation which means that all creatures are heading toward God so that after their

696 Ibid., 66.

697 Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 1, 15, 1. Translated by John Gibb. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 7*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 35, 1386: “intellegite quia Deus fecit omnia, et in suis gradibus collocavit. Quare autem patimur multa mala a creatura quam fecit Deus? Quia offendimus Deum?”

698 Cf. Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 1, 12, 1.

699 Ibid., 1, 19, 1. PL 35, 1389: “Ergo, fratres, quomodo homo positus in sole caecus, praesens est illi sol, sed ipse soli absens est; sic omnis stultus, omnis iniquus, omnis impius, caecus est corde. Praesens est sapientia, sed cum caeco praesens est, oculis eius absens est: non quia ipsa illi absens est, sed quia ipse ab illa absens est.”

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temporal purpose is served and done, they all can rest and be fulfilled in God. Because of sin however, man breaks this order as he seeks rest in himself⁷⁰⁰ and becomes the center and goal of his own search. By the fundamental principle of interrelatedness, all beings according to the divine design are mutually interconnected, in such a way that an action of one affects the others in the spectrum and vice versa. This principle is also called in science as the “butterfly effect” where no action is independent or isolated. According to this principle, every action within the order of creation—and in the language of ecology, within ecosystems and communities of living beings—has an impact that will reverberate across the entire creation. Thus, every single sin, no matter how small and private has an impact to the precarious state of the planet.

On the other hand, it is necessary to consider that this disorder can have terrible consequences. Yet despite it, Augustine remains optimistic being aware that ultimately God will take advantage of the disorder caused by man, and will rebuild the order from the disorder, thus showing His infinite wisdom and power, for He can draw good even from the evil which men have done, whereas man in his foolishness makes use of the good things for evil ends:

We should therefore meditate on this important and necessary subject, how God uses well the evil works of men, as they on the other hand use ill the good works of God.⁷⁰¹

Augustine highlights that the disorder in the world can ultimately be restored by Christ who can reconstruct the world and direct it back to its stability in God. How does the Word, incarnate in Jesus Christ, do this? Augustine develops a picture of the Word’s redemptive work by first drawing attention to the basic fact that “that which was made, in him is life” (John 1:4). This is explained using the image of a carpenter. The product made by a carpenter is the outcome of the design that is created in the carpenter’s mind. The design exists invisibly, while the product exists visibly. Likewise, the corporal world exists as a result of the Word being the creative knowledge that is called the wisdom of God.⁷⁰² This is how Augustine beautifully puts it:

700 Cf. Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 1, 15.

701 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 104, 12. Translated by J.E. Tweed. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 8. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 36, 1396-97: “Intuenda est ergo res magna et pernecessaria, quomodo Deus bene utatur malis operibus hominum, sicut illi contra male utuntur bonis operibus Dei.”

702 The relationship between the Incarnation and God’s revelation to human beings who can no longer see or hear the divine revelation in its eternal, invisible nature, as Augustine describes it in the *Tractates*, is discussed in Richard P. Hardly, “The Incarnation and Revelation in Augustine’s *Tractatus in Iohannis Evangelium*,” *Église et Théologie* 3 (1972): 193-220.

So, dearly beloved brethren, because the Wisdom of God, by which all things have been made, contains everything according to design before it is made, therefore those things which are made through this design itself are not immediately life, but whatever has been made is life in Him. You see the earth, there is an earth in design; you see the sky, there is a sky in design; you see the sun and the moon, these also exist in design: but externally they are bodies, in design they are life. Understand, if in any way you are able, for a great matter has been spoken.⁷⁰³

As long as creatures participate in the divine, creative knowledge of the Word (through weight, number, and measure) they exist. The Mediator, in the redemptive work, draws the creation back to its right order by calling it to return to the Word. In this sense the Incarnation represent a revelation of God's invisible Word that was spoken at the creation. Augustine ultimately blamed the origin of sin from human pride and the only way that man can be saved is through a mediator whose humility can undo all damages caused by pride:

For you he (Christ) lay in the manger, without speaking, your creator; without calling by name even his mother. You, neglecting your obedience, got lost in a vast garden of fruit trees; He, out of obedience, came in mortal condition to a very narrow stable to seek, by means of death, the one who was dead. You, being a man, wished to be God for your perdition; He, being God, wished to be man to find what was lost. You were so oppressed by human pride that only divine humility could lift you up.⁷⁰⁴

4.2.2.7. Patriarch Bartholomew and Augustine.

The encyclical, consistent to its integral and open approach to ecology, incorporated a dialogue with Patriarch Bartholomew who views the excessive use of the natural resources as a form of sin because “each human act that contributes to the destruction

703 Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 1, 17. Translated by John Gibb. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 7. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 35, 1387: “Sic ergo, fratres carissimi, quia Sapientia Dei, per quam facta sunt omnia, secundum artem continet omnia, antequam fabricet omnia; hinc quae fiunt per ipsam artem, non continuo vita sunt, sed quidquid factum est, vita in illo est. Terram vides; est in arte terra: coelum vides; est in arte coelum: solem et lunam vides; sunt et ista in arte: sed foris corpora sunt, in arte vita sunt. Videte, si quo modo potestis; magna enim res dicta est: et si non a me magno, aut non per me magnum, tamen a magno.”

704 Augustine, *s.* 188, 3. PL 38, 1004: “Vide, o homo, quid pro te factus est Deus: doctrinam tantae humilitatis agnosce, etiam in nondum loquente doctore. Tu quondam in paradiso tam facundus fuisti, ut omni animae vivae nomina imponeres: propter te autem Creator tuus infans iacebat, et nomine suo nec matrem vocabat. Tu in latissimo fructuosorum nemorum praedio te perdidisti, obedientiam negligendo: ille obediens in angustissimum diversorium mortalis venit, ut mortuum quaereret moriendo. Tu cum esses homo, Deus esse voluisti, ut perires; ille cum esset Deus, homo esse voluit, ut quod perierat inveniret. Tantum te pressit humana superbia, ut te non posset nisi humilitas sublevare divina.”

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of the natural environment must be regarded as a very serious sin.”⁷⁰⁵ It is only in the context of a world view where everything is interrelated and interdependent that the concept of “ecological sin” makes sense. Nothing in the created world is autonomous, nothing exists in absolute isolation. There exists a physical and spiritual connectedness between all creatures. Sin is precisely the straining of this inherent and all-embracing relational integrity of creation. The devastation of the planet is sin which ruptures the bonds of divine, human, and cosmic fellowship.

The concept of sin being the primordial cause of the disorder in the universe also traces its root to Augustine. First, Augustine believes that the *ordo amoris* (the order of love) has been established by God from the dawn of creation. It is the fundamental principle that must govern all forms of relationship: divine, human, and cosmic. According to this rule of love, it is necessary, first and foremost, to love the Creator because He is the supreme Good, and not to love the good in creatures independently of their Creator, as Augustine explains in the eighth book of *De Trinitate*, after pointing out the supreme equality of persons in the Holy Trinity:

But whereas other things are not loved, except because they are good, be ashamed, in cleaving to them, not to love the Good itself whence they are good. That also, which is a mind, only because it is a mind, while it is not yet also good by the turning itself to the unchangeable Good, but, as I said, is only a mind; whenever it so pleases us, as that we prefer it even, if we understand aright, to all corporeal light, does not please us in itself, but in that skill by which it was made.⁷⁰⁶

Yet this *ordo amoris* has been disrupted by man’s sin. Pride causes man to withdraw into himself and to turn his back on God, and on his fellow human beings who are equal to him, and on those beings, which are inferior to him. Sin, pride, and selfishness would be for Augustine the causes of the crisis of the order of creation, of the rupture of the harmony that should reign within the common house that is the universe. Therefore, when creation is abused and the human being no longer acts as its administrator (*villicum or vilicum*), but as its owner and exploits it to the point of death, the *ordo amoris* has been altered and that man has brought disorder in the environment. In

705 Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, “Greeting during the Symposium at the Holy Trinity Monastery, Halki, June 1, 1992,” in *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer*, ed. John Chryssavgis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 84.

706 Ibid., 8, 3, 5. PL 42, 950: “Pudeat autem cum alia non amentur nisi quia bona sunt, eis inhaerendo non amare Bonum ipsum unde bona sunt. Illud etiam, quod animus, tantum quia est animus, etiam nondum eo modo bonus quo se convertit ad incommutabile Bonum; sed, ut dixi, tantum animus, cum ita nobis placet ut eum omni etiam luci corporeae cum bene intellegimus, praeferamus, non in se ipso nobis placet sed in illa arte qua factus est.”

the language of Pope Francis, it is excessive anthropocentrism when human being declares independence from God and other realities and behaves with absolute dominion. *Laudato Si'* sees this reality as one of the deepest roots of the modern-day ecological crisis.

Moreover, in number nine (9) of the encyclical, some proposals of Patriarch Bartholomew⁷⁰⁷ on how to live conversion and ecological commitment, specifically with the pedagogy of sharing, and of putting a stop to greed and selfishness, have been presented:

(Patriarch Bartholomew) asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which “entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God's world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed and compulsion.”⁷⁰⁸

For his part, Augustine also points to greed and the unrestrained desire for wealth as one of the evils affecting humanity, and which have led to an imbalance, both from an ecological and a moral and social point of view. In this way, Augustine takes as his point of departure the parable of the rich man and the poor man named Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31). Thus, he points out that the greatest evil in the heart of the foolish rich man was greed, the unbridled desire for riches, which led him to forget the poor man because of his desire to hoard goods. Augustine observes that the same thing happens with those who out of greed wish to accumulate the goods of the earth, and forget the less privileged and the needy:

Only the greed of the rich is insatiable. He is always hoarding and never gets satisfied; neither fears God nor pays human respect; neither forgives the father nor recognizes the mother; neither obeys the brother nor keeps fidelity to the friend; oppresses the widow and takes possession of the goods of the orphan; calls again the free to his service and proffers false testimony. He assaults the goods of the deceased, as if those who do it were not going to die. What is this madness of the souls: to lose life and to wish death, to acquire gold and to lose heaven? Since none thinks of God, judgment is reserved to death.⁷⁰⁹

707 Cf. S. Morandini, *Un amore più grande del cosmo. Laudato Si' per un anno di misericordia*, Cittadella, Assisi, 2016

708 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 9.

709 Augustine, s. 367, l. PL 38, 1651: “Inexplebilis est sola avaritia divitum. Semper rapit, et numquam satiatur: nec Deum timet, nec hominem reveretur: nec patri parcit, nec matrem agnoscit: nec fratri obtemperat, nec amico fidem servat: viduam opprimit, pupilli rem invadit: liberos in servitium revocat, testamentum falsum profert. Res mortui occupantur; quasi non et ipsi qui hoc faciunt moriantur. Quae est ergo ista animarum insania, amittere vitam, appetere mortem? acquirere aurum, et perdere caelum? Sed quia nemo cogitat Deum, ideo manet in morte iudicium.”

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Augustine advises to observe moderation, that is, not to let oneself be carried away by prosperity in order not to weaken the will. In a consumerist, hedonist and selfish culture like ours,⁷¹⁰ this advice of Augustine has much to say to raise ecological awareness, and to understand that it is necessary to use with moderation the goods of the earth, and not to use them up until they are depleted, driven by the sheer desire to hoard possessions. Hence, Augustine comments:

He admonishes, moreover, by such an example, that no one ought to lift himself up in prosperous circumstances. For many fear adverse circumstances, fear not prosperous circumstances. Prosperity is more perilous to soul than adversity to body. First, prosperity does corrupt, in order that adversity may find something to break. My brethren, stricter watch must be kept against felicity.⁷¹¹

Therefore, in the face of the selfish greed that leads to the exploitation of natural resources until they are exhausted, Augustine recommends prudence and moderation, bearing in mind the social destiny of the goods of the earth and the role of the human being as administrator of the earth.

4.2.2.8. Ecological Conversion.

In number five (5) of *Laudato Si'*, the words of John Paul II are quoted, and his call for a “global ecological conversion” is recalled: “Subsequently he (John Paul II)⁷¹² would call for a global ecological conversion”.⁷¹³ According to the old Christian tradition the only valid response to sin is deep repentance or *metanoia* which will culminate in the radical conversion of the heart to God. In the theological nuance of *Laudato Si'*, ecological conversion is understood as a sort of radical change of heart and mind or

710 Being an eco-feminist theologian, it seems that S. McFague, is biased in her approach to the thought of Augustine and maintains a negative reading of his work. Nevertheless, it is interesting to reflect on the need for a culture of austerity in the contemporary world, against the unrestrained consumerism that damages the planet and is causing climate change. Cf. S. Mcfague, *Blessed are the Consumers. Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2013. (particularly chapter 4: “The Practice of Saints 1: Voluntary Poverty in Order to Pay Attention to the Material Needs of Others”: 81-110).

711 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 50, 4. Translated by J.E. Tweed. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888.). PL 36, 587: “Admonet etiam tali exemplo, non se quemquam debere extollere in prosperis rebus. Multi enim res adversas timent, res prosperas non timent. Periculosior est res prospera animo, quam adversa corpori. Prius corrumpit prospera, ut inveniatur quod frangat adversa. Fratres mei, adversus felicitatem acrius vigilandum est.”

712 Cf. J.A. Orr, “The Philosophical Magisterium of John Paul II Implicit in *Laudato si'*”, in M. Mills – J.A. Orr – H. Schnitker, *Reflections on Pope's Francis' Encyclical Laudato Si'*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 188-199.

713 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 5. Cf. Catechesis (17 January 2001), 4: Insegnamenti 41/1 (2001), 179.

metanoia (the Greek word *meta-nous*, *nous* also refers to the mind) after a sincere repentance for sins committed against creation, leading to a universal reconciliation with God, fellow human, and the created world. Pope Francis cites Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in the need for repentance.⁷¹⁴

In his writings, Augustine does not cease to call for conversion, for a “return to the heart”⁷¹⁵ and to God. However, the return to God is not possible without an ‘ecological conversion’ from the Augustinian perspective, that is, learning to use (and not to abuse) things and enjoy their goodness in God.⁷¹⁶ For Augustine, conversion is not only an interior and purely spiritual or Neoplatonic process.⁷¹⁷

Conversion for Augustine has practical implications as it impacts the life of every human being, in his relationship with creatures and with himself. In this way, the “ecological conversion” which John Paul II has advocated, and of which Pope Francis echoes in the encyclical, is in a sense an Augustinian call made in the 4th century. For Augustine, genuine conversion to God starts with something as practical as to use rightly the creatures to satisfy one's needs, and never to forget one's status of being a steward of created things, and that he is called to enjoy their use only in God who is the ultimate Lord of all things. The Augustinian teaching of *uti y frui* (use and fruition) is one of the essential principles or keys for a true ecological conversion,⁷¹⁸ since it is not adulterated with veiled pantheism, or subtle panentheism,⁷¹⁹ nor does it create an ambiguous counter-cultural movement. It is about converting the heart, for without inner conversion of the heart there can be no genuine and lasting ecological conversion:

714 Cf. Bartholomew I, *Message for the Day of Prayer for the Protection of Creation* (1 September 2012).

715 Cf. Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 18, 10.

716 Cf. Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 1, 4, 4. *doctr. chr.* 1, 33, 37.

717 Cf. G. Madec, “Conversio”, in *AL*, 1, Basel, Schwabe, 1986-1994, cols. 1282-1294; Cf. T. Van Bavel, “De la raison a la foi. La conversión d’Augustin”, in *Augustiniana* 36 (1986), 5-27; Cf. V. Capánaga, “San Agustín en nuestro tiempo. Problemas sobre la conversión”, in *AVGVSTINVS* 1 (1956), 33-48; Cf. N. Cipriani, “La conversión de san Agustín y sus primeros diálogos”, in D. Canet (ed.), *1650 Aniversario de su nacimiento*, Madrid, 2004, 123-140; M. G. Mara, “La ‘conversione’ le ‘conversioni’? l’invio alla conversione nel VIII libro delle Confessioni”, in *Le Confessioni di Agostino. Libri VI-IX*, Palermo, 1985, 71-87.

718 It has already been pointed out in a pioneering article by Andrew McGowan in 2010 (“To use and enjoy. Augustine and ecology”, in *St. Mark's Review*, 212 [2010], 89-99), where the key point is laid to understand ecology from the Augustinian perspective from the distinction of *uti* and *frui*. Certainly, the article makes hasty generalizations and incorrect interpretations, particularly regarding the *frui* of human beings, forgetting the Augustinian doctrine and reducing everything to a conflict between the *ordo amoris* and the *libido dominandi*. However, he has brilliant ideas in pointing out, as Augustine did, that the ecological imbalance is a product, among other things, of the dominant *libido* (p. 95). Cf. A. McGowan, “To use and to Enjoy. Augustine and Ecology”, in *St. Mark's Review* 212 (2010), 89-99.

719 Cf. R. Battocchio, “Il Dio della *Laudato Si'*”, in *Studia Patavina* 63 (2016), 603-616.

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For to enjoy a thing is to rest with satisfaction in it for its own sake. To use, on the other hand, is to employ whatever means are at one's disposal to obtain what one desires, if it is a proper object of desire; for an unlawful use ought rather to be called an abuse.⁷²⁰

Hence, in accordance with the Augustinian vision, the very first ecology that needs to be set right is the ecology of the heart; only after then that one, guided by prudence and moderation, can be truly concerned with external ecology, i.e. the ecology of the planet. In fact, in his ingenious use of metaphors, Augustine presents himself as an interior gardener, who takes care and cultivates the interior garden of the heart by cleansing it of the weeds of selfishness and indifference, so that a true conversion to God, in God, and through God, can happen among the brothers and sisters in the common environment he shares with them, and with all living beings:

Truly, O Lord, I labor therein, and labor in myself. I have become a troublesome soil that requires overmuch labor. For we are not now searching out the tracts of heaven, or measuring the distances of the stars, or inquiring about the weight of the earth.⁷²¹

Along this view, Pope Francis also insists that ecological conversion starts with the individual in the personal level. In fact, a conversion of one person can make a decisive difference. The Pope refers to the biblical account of the story of Noah in the Old Testament whose personal righteousness saved not only himself and his family from the destruction of the flood, but also the rest of the biotic community. The theme of “ecological conversion” will be mentioned once again at the end of the encyclical (nos. 226-221), as part of the proposal for an ecological spirituality (no. 202), as we have seen in the Chapter III of this work on *Laudato Si'*.

4.2.2.9. Francis of Assisi and Augustine.

The encyclical then refers to the saint of Assisi,⁷²² to emphasize the great values and qualities that make Francis of Assisi the Patron Saint of ecology and of those who have committed themselves to this path.

720 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 1, 4, 4. Trans. by James Shaw. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 34, 20: “Frui est enim amore inhaerere alicui rei propter seipsam. Uti autem, quod in usum venerit ad id quod amas obtinendum referre, si tamen amandum est. Nam usus illicitus abusus potius vel abusus nominandus est.”

721 Augustine, *conf.* 10, 25. Translated by J.G. Pilkington. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 789: “Ego certe, Domine, laboro hic et laboro in me ipso: factus sum mihi terra difficultatis et sudoris nimii. Neque enim nunc scrutamur plagas caeli aut siderum intervalla dimetimur vel terrae libramenta quaerimus.”

722 Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 10-12.

It is true that such great figure like Saint Francis has made its way into history, and in this section we do not intend to make a comparison between the two saints, as it seems to be the case in the frescoes of the Church of St. Augustine in Gubbio (Italy).⁷²³ In these depictions painted by Ottaviano Nelli between 1410 and 1420, there is one that catches attention and is particularly interesting; Augustine is portrayed to have been contemplating the Trinity and at the same time, the holy Bishop of Hippo opens the left side of his habit to show a wound. Some observers have interpreted it as a sort of “fusing” together the mystical experiences of the two saints: Augustine who was ecstatic before the great mystery of the triune God, and Francis of Assisi, who received a series of stigmata on Mount Alvernia as a gift from God in 1224. In fact, the fresco by Ottaviano Nelli indirectly alludes to these stigmata of St. Francis. However, if we observe more closely the depiction of Nelli, one might realize that what seemed to be a “wound” which Augustine is showing before the Trinitarian God, is not really a wound, but a simple “mystical mark” of the same Triune God who resides in the heart of Augustine.

Thus, putting aside the apologetic value that the portrayal of Augustine by Ottaviano Nelli may represent, it must be said that the encyclical points out that Francis could see the beauty of God imbedded in creation, to such a degree that he calls all creatures “brothers or sisters”.⁷²⁴ From this special gift to perceive beauty in creatures, proceeds respect and love for creation. As the encyclical stresses, when the relationship with creation is not based on this premise, creation simply becomes a means of satisfying man's needs, and a heap of resources to be exploited. Thus, the encyclical affirms:

If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously.⁷²⁵

For his part, Augustine has this same attitude of respect and wonder before the beauty of creation, inviting us to contemplate its beauty, and to reach out to the Creator through the beauty manifested in the whole universe, and to praise God for all that He has created:

Observe the beauty of the world and praise the plan of the creator. Observe what He made, love the One who made it. But remember mainly this: love the

723 Cf. Mauricio Saavedra y Enrique Eguiarte, *San Agustín y la encíclica 'Laudato Si'*, 201.

724 Ibid., 11.

725 Ibid.

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One who did it; because He also made you, His lover, in His own image.⁷²⁶

The encyclical warns us again in number one hundred fifteen (115) of the danger of modern anthropocentrism⁷²⁷ that has disenchanting nature,⁷²⁸ and has blurred the vision of the contemporary man and makes him shortsighted, incapable of marveling and contemplating the beauty of God reflected in nature. Creation becomes for him a mere commodity:

Modern anthropocentrism has paradoxically ended up prizing technical thought over reality, since “the technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere ‘given’, as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape; it views the cosmos similarly as a mere ‘space’ into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference”.⁷²⁹

Along this thought, Augustine has spoken of the “eyes of the heart” becoming blind, so that man is unable to contemplate the beauty of the universe, where in such beauty, he could have catch a glimpse of God’s presence. In the contemporary world, *Laudato Si’* ascribes the cause of such “blindness” to modern technology which occasions the mechanistic vision of the natural world that looks down on the physical reality as nothing more than a gigantic reservoir of objects or raw materials destined for human consumption. This deprives us of what we could call “the reason of the heart” (echoing Blaise Pascal)⁷³⁰ which perceives nature as an expression of God’s beauty. For this reason, Augustine affirms that an enormous misfortune is looming over those who are blind in their hearts:

For who can know the misfortune of the man who is blind in the heart? If he lacks the eyes of the body, everyone regards him as unhappy. But suppose he lacks eyes of the soul and is surrounded by abundant earthly goods: they call him happy, but they are those who are also blind in their soul.⁷³¹

726 Augustine, s. 68, 5. Trans. Edmund Hill. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1991). PLS 2, 504: “Tu autem non valde cures, si gyros siderum et caelestium terrenorumve corporum ignores: vide pulchritudinem mundi, et lauda consilium Creatoris: vide quod fecit, ama qui fecit. Tene hoc maxime, ama qui fecit; quia et te ipsum amatorem suum ad imaginem suam fecit.”

727 Cf. G. Marengo, “The Anthropological Questions and the Care of our Common Home”, in M. Mills – J.A. Orr – H. Schnitker, *Reflections on Pope’s Francis’ Encyclical Laudato Si’*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 42-50. Also cf. S. C. van den Heuvel, “The Theocentric Perspective of *Laudato Si’*”, in *Philosophia Reformata* 83 (2018), 51-67.

728 S. Powell, “Laudato si” and Nature”, in M. Mills – J.A. Orr – H. Schnitker, *Reflections on Pope’s Francis’ Encyclical Laudato Si’*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, 18-29.

729 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 115. Cf. Romano Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit*, 63 (*The End of the Modern World*, 55).

730 Cf. B. Pascal, *Pensées*, Paris, Flammarion, 2015.

731 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 68, 2, 10. PL 36, 860: “Nam quotusquisque est, qui intellegat infelicitatem hominis cuius cor iam caecum est? Tollantur illi oculi corporis; omnes homines miserum dicunt: perdat

4.2.3. On God the Creator.

4.2.3.1. The Sacred Scriptures: Font of Wisdom.

Laudato Si' acknowledges the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes and made as its resolve to be open to all sources of knowledge so that “no branch of the sciences and no form of wisdom can be left out, and that includes religion and the language particular to it.”⁷³² It then turns to the Sacred Scripture as the indispensable source of wisdom in order to “ask what the great biblical narratives say about the relationship of human beings with the world.”⁷³³ The whole of Chapter Two is then dedicated to the exploration of the biblical richness in relation to ecology.

Augustine for his part has made the Sacred Scripture an essential reference to his discourse and the indispensable source of his thought. The reading that Augustine makes of the word of God however is not arbitrary and autonomous, but it is always in accordance with the *regula fidei* and the tradition of the Catholic Church. Augustine is aware of the value that the word of God has and the respect that is necessary. Despite his confessed love for wisdom and philosophy, Augustine declares loyalty to the Word of God. In the *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, he indicates his firm belief on the authority of the Sacred Scriptures over “false Philosophy” and the “superstition of false religion”:

But when they (philosophers) produce from any of their books a theory contrary to our Scripture, and therefore contrary to the Catholic faith, either we shall have some ability to demonstrate that it is absolutely false, or at least we ourselves will hold it so without any shadow of a doubt. And we will so cling to our Mediator...that we will not be led astray by the glib talk of false philosophy or frightened by the superstition of false religion.⁷³⁴

For this reason, it is safe to say that the Augustinian work is just an explanation, an exposition, or an elaboration of what the Bible is saying. When speaking of ecology, we cannot but see in the Augustinian doctrine an explanation of what the Bible itself proposes, specifically in this case, the first chapters of the book of Genesis where the

oculos mentis, sed tamen circumfluat omni abundantia rerum; felicem appellant, sed qui similiter mentis oculos perdiderunt.”

732 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 63.

733 Ibid., 65.

734 Augustine, *Gen. litt. inp.* 1, 21, 41, trans. J. H. Taylor, S.J., (Newman Press, New York, 1982). PL 34, 262: “Quidquid autem de quibuslibet suis voluminibus his nostris Litteris, id est catholicae fidei contrarium protulerint, aut aliqua etiam facultate ostendamus, aut nulla dubitatione credamus esse falsissimum: atque ita teneamus Mediatorem nostrum, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae atque scientiae absconditi (Col. 2,3), ut neque falsae philosophiae loquacitate seducamur, neque falsae religionis superstitione terreamur”.

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accounts of creation are presented. In them Augustine sees an abundance of ideas and material for reflection.⁷³⁵

For Augustine—as he declares in the second book of the *De Trinitate*—there are two paths, not opposed but complementary, to arrive at the knowledge of the triune God: contemplation on creation, and the meditative and prayerful study of Sacred Scripture. For this reason, the Bishop of Hippo asks God to free him from two nefarious evils in the search for God, such as presumption, and the obstinate defense of what is false. He, for his part, commits himself to investigate (*ad inquirendam*), and to seek God through a double path, that of the contemplation of nature and the study of the Bible. Thus, Augustine says:

But there are two things most hard to bear with, in the case of those who are in error: hasty assumption before the truth is made plain; and, when it has been made plain, defense of the falsehood thus hastily assumed. From which two faults, inimical as they are to the finding out of the truth, and to the handling of the divine and sacred books, should God, as I pray and hope, defend and protect me with the shield of His good will, and with the grace of His mercy, I will not be slow to search out the substance of God, whether through His Scripture or through the creature.⁷³⁶

During the time of Augustine, he uses this doctrine to combat the heresy of the Manicheans who believe that the body and the physical world comes from the domain of evil, from the material world of darkness.

Very much like the ecological vision of Augustine, *Laudato Si'* also develops its ecology on the basis that creation is “good news” on account of two fundamental truths of faith: first, is based on the account of the book of Genesis which affirms the basic goodness of creation, and secondly, the physical world has been brought into existence as an act of love on the part of the triune God.

735 Cf. Enrique Eguiarte, *San Agustín y la ecología: elementos esenciales de la ecología según San Agustín*, in *AVGVSTINVS* (Madrid) vol. 63 (1990), 5.

736 Augustine, *trin.* 2, preface. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 845: “Sed duo sunt quae in errore hominum difficillime tolerantur: Praesumptio priusquam veritas pateat, et cum iam patuerit praesumptae defensio falsitatis. A quibus duobus vitiis nimis inimicis inventioni veritatis et tractationi divinorum sanctorumque Librorum si me, ut precor et spero, Deus defenderit atque muniverit scuto bonae voluntatis suae et gratia misericordiae suae, non ero segnus ad inquirendam substantiam Dei sive per Scripturam eius sive per creaturam.” See also Augustine’s earlier work, written before *De Trinitate*, the *Doctrina Christiana* 1, 37, 41 in which he warns against the error in the interpretation of the Scriptures.

4.2.3.2. *Creatio ex Nihilo*.

Laudato Si' revives into the picture the fundamental truth of the Judeo-Christian faith that the natural world is above all God's creation and as such, is in itself "good news". It founded its theology of the natural world on the biblical doctrine of creation. The world was brought into being by God *ex nihilo*—not from any pre-existent or primordial matter but from complete void. This fundamental dogma of faith which has a long historical significance confronts the modern problem of the existence of the material world. In the wake of modern scientific revolution, a secular trend has emerged that tends to look at the material world as given, uncreated, and reduce it into a mere inert matter—the Cartesian *res extensa*, or merely as a storehouse of resources as in the case of the neo-liberal economy.

This secular trend has contributed a lot to the emergence of modern anthropocentrism which perceives the physical world as completely at man's disposal, passive and helpless before man's quest for control and mastery. It usurps the primacy of God the Creator and ruthlessly pillaging the rest of creation. This attitude leads to man's voracious and exploitative attitude towards nature as it reduces the physical reality as nothing more than a gigantic reservoir of objects or raw materials destined for human consumption. Modern anthropocentrism and the mechanistic vision of the natural world are two worldviews which are dialectically linked, and they are the underlying roots of the modern-day depreciation and abuse of the common planetary home.

This problematic worldview however, though seemingly 'new', is not really new at all. Augustine had to confront Manicheanism in the 4th century which advocated this type of worldview. For the Manicheans, matter was neither made by God nor engendered by Him, but the world is coeternal and consubstantial with God, as Felix⁷³⁷ stated in his debate with Augustine:

AUGUSTINE: Pay attention now, so that you begin to know the error of that writing. If what God begot is not co-eternal to Him, it is better that land, not begotten by God, where all things begotten by Him dwell. According to you, that land was not begotten by Him.

FELIX: All things are equal to one another (*coaequantur sibi omnia*), both those that He begot, and those that He did not beget, that is, the land in which He dwelt.

737 Felix, as Augustine himself affirms (*retr.* 2, 8), was an "anointed" Manichee—with a high rank of a "master" (or doctor)—and later arrived at Hippo at the end of the year 404 AD, in order to defend his Manichean faith. He had little formation in "liberal arts", but in debates he proved to be an adversary more capable than Fortunato who came twelve years before him.

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AUGUSTINE: What? Is He who has begotten equal or greater than the things begotten?

FELIX: They are also equal (*omnia aequalia sunt*) the one who engendered, the realities engendered and the place in which they are found.

AUGUSTINE: Are they, then, of one substance? (*Unius ergo substantiae sunt?*)

FELIX: Yes.⁷³⁸

Against such an understanding of the Manichaeans, Augustine had to argue that the world had been made by God. The existence of God the Creator has been the basis for faith and Christian confession since the time of the early church,⁷³⁹ in as much as the world does not subsist by itself. However, God does not create the world from his own substance, for if he did, the world would be divine, but God created the cosmos from nothing (*ea fecit de nihilo*):

It's like all the things God made being *very good* (Gn. 1:31); but they are not good in the same way as God is good, because he is the one who made, while they were what was made. Nor did he beget them from himself, to be what he is himself, but he made them out of nothing, so that they would not be equal either to him by whom they were made, or to his Son through whom they were made; and that is as it should be.⁷⁴⁰

Augustine affirms that from formless matter God has taken all things in their determined forms, while formless matter as such has been taken totally from nothing:

And that is why we are dead right in believing that God made all things from nothing, because even though everything that has form was made from this material, this material itself all the same was made from absolutely nothing.

738 Augustine, *c. Fel.* 1, 18. CSEL 25, 2, 822-823: "AUGUSTINUS dixit: Attende ergo iam, ut incipias cognoscere errorem scripturae huius. Si quae genuit Deus, coaeterna non sunt illi, melior est terra illa quam non generavit Deus, ubi habitant omnia quae generavit Deus, quam terram dicis ab eo non generatam. FELIX dixit: Coaequantur sibi omnia, et quae generavit, et quae non generavit, id est, terra illa ubi commorabatur. AUGUSTINUS dixit: Quid, ipse qui generavit, aequalis est illis omnibus, aut maior est illis? FELIX dixit: Et qui generavit, et quos generavit, et ubi positi sunt, omnia aequalia sunt. AUGUSTINUS dixit: Unius ergo substantiae sunt? FELIX dixit: Unius."

739 Cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, London 1972; R.P.C. Hanson, *Dogma and Formula in the Fathers*, in *Studia Patristica* 13 (1975), 169-184; M.C. Zaffi, *Formulazioni di fede della chiesa antica: un contributo allo studio delle radici e teologia della «confessione» cristiana*, Roma 1989.

740 Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 2, 4. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 41. PL 34, 180: "Sicut omnia quae fecit Deus bona sunt valde, sed non sic bona sunt, quomodo bonus est Deus, quia ille fecit, haec autem facta sunt: nec ea genuit de seipso, ut hoc essent quod ipse est; sed ea fecit de nihilo, ut non essent aequalia, nec ei a quo facta sunt; nec Filio eius per quem facta sunt; iustum est enim."

We should not, you see, be like these people who do not believe that Almighty God could have made everything from nothing, when they observe that carpenters and craftsmen of any kind cannot make anything unless they have something to make it from, and that the carpenter is assisted by a supply of wooden planks and the silversmith by a supply of silver and the goldsmith by a supply of gold and the potter by a supply of clay, so that each can carry out his work.⁷⁴¹

The doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, fundamental for the Christian faith but unthinkable for the ancient philosophical tradition, was the central axis and the key concept that allowed Augustine to overcome the Manichean worldview⁷⁴² and to embrace, with cautiousness and reservations, the spiritualism of the Platonists, since *creatio ex nihilo* clearly traces the difference between the transcendence and immutability of the Creator and the contingent and temporal character of the creature.⁷⁴³ While formless matter, taken from nothing, has no form or present existence, the power of God is more clearly shown through it, because from formless matter, which is ontologically deficient, God has created not only lower bodies, but also higher and more perfect bodies, since the power of God is infinite:

After all, if we say that the beauty of the sky itself was made from nothing or from unformed material, because we believe its Craftsman to be all-powerful,

741 Ibid. 1, 6, 10. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 45. PL 34: "Et ideo Deus rectissime creditur omnia de nihilo fecisse, quia etiamsi omnia formata de ista materia facta sunt, haec ipsa materia tamen de omnino nihilo facta est. Non enim debemus esse similes istis qui omnipotentem Deum non credunt aliquid de nihilo facere potuisse, cum considerant fabros et quoslibet opifices non posse aliquid fabricare, nisi habuerint unde fabricent. Et ligna enim adiuvant fabrum, et argentum adiuvat argentarium, et aurum aurificem, et terra figulum adiuvat ut possit perficere opera sua. Si enim non adiuventur ea materia unde aliquid faciunt, nihil possunt facere, cum materiam ipsam ipsi non faciant."

742 C. Harrison, *Rethinking Augustine's Early Theology*, p. 49: "The fundamental difference between Augustine and the Platonists on this subject is his conviction that the soul, along with the body, was created by God from nothing. We will see how far-reaching the repercussions of this belief were to be in the next chapter, but here we might observe the clear anti-Manichaeic foundation for such an assertion, in order to counter their teaching that the soul was part of the divine substance, and also its congruity with traditional Christian teaching".

743 Ibid., 114: "He was convinced of this [everything is of grace] from the moment of his conversion. It derived from his own experience and was confirmed by the Christian doctrine of creation from nothing, which he adopted as the central and determining feature of his earliest theological reflection. It is present, as we have seen, as the inspiration for the opening prayer of one of his first works, the *Soliloquia*, where it leads Augustine to praise the Creator and to abjectly confess his complete and absolute dependence upon him for any good action. It was central to his theological refutation of the Manichees, in an extended series of works, which punctuate his early years with almost annual regularity, and was thereby confirmed as the central axis of his increasingly systematic theology. This systematic theology of God, the Trinity, of creation, humankind, sin, incarnation, grace, and redemption is already in place at a surprisingly early date."

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what's so odd about the possibility of the body, which was made from any sort of mud you like, being made by the all-powerful Craftsman of such a kind that before the man's sin it would never cause him any trouble or excruciating pain or pester him with its defects, and would never be injured or go into a decline and fade away?⁷⁴⁴

The worldview that God is the creator of everything that exists and that the entire natural world is God's creation, has a deep Judeo-Christian tradition which until today can be a strong central axis to combat modern anthropocentrism by holding on to the truth that it is God who is the ultimate source and center of the universe and not man. When man takes God out of the picture and places himself at the center of the universe, chaos and disorder become imminent both to humanity and the rest of creation.

4.2.3.3. God is the Ultimate Owner.

Laudato Si' observes that "modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism".⁷⁴⁵ In the pope's view, the man-made ecological disaster has something to do with modern man's tendency to make himself the absolute center of all things. The abuse of creation begins when man thinks that he can do everything in nature for his own personal benefit. Pope Benedict XVI already warned that creation is harmed "where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves".⁷⁴⁶ The ecological crisis is seen as a sort of rebellion from the part of nature to humanity's lordship over it. Citing Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis writes:

Once the human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble, for "instead of carrying out his role as a cooperator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature".⁷⁴⁷

744 Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 2, 7, 8. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 77. PL 34: "Si enim speciem coeli ipsius de nihilo, vel de informi materia dicimus factam, quia omnipotentem artificem credimus; quid mirum si corpus, quod de limo qualicumque factum est, potuit ab omnipotenti artifice tale fieri, ut nulla molestia, nulla indigentia cruciaret hominem ante peccatum, et nulla corruptione tabesceret?"

745 Ibid., 116.

746 Benedict XVI, *Address to the Clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone* (6 August 2008): AAS 100 (2008), 634.

747 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 117. Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (1 May 1991), 37: AAS 83 (1991), 840.

Augustine constantly insists in his writings that everything belongs to God. He is the owner of everything that exists, because it was He who made everything from nothing. Nevertheless, God has placed all things in the hands of men so that they may administer them, govern them in his name and direct everything toward its fulfillment in God:

Mine are those which you possess not, Mine are these which you possess. For if you are My servant, the whole of your property is Mine. For it cannot be, that is the property of the master which the servant has gotten to himself, and yet that not be the property of the Master which the Master Himself has created for the servant. Therefore Mine are the beasts of the wood which you have not taken; Mine are also the cattle on the mountains which are yours, and the oxen which are at your stall: all are My own, for I have created them.⁷⁴⁸

On the theme on how to use creation which God gives us as a gift, Augustine offers an incredibly beautiful guidelines through his doctrine of *uti et frui*. He had expressed it in the *De doctrina christiana*, where it became the essential Augustinian ethical doctrine, in such a way that earthly things are to be used to satisfy man's needs but must only be enjoyed in God:

For to enjoy a thing is to rest with satisfaction in it for its own sake. To use, on the other hand, is to employ whatever means are at one's disposal to obtain what one desires, if it is a proper object of desire; for an unlawful use ought rather to be called an abuse.⁷⁴⁹

When this order is altered, and one enjoys the creatures and forgets God, the human being is unable to achieve happiness, which is in God, as Augustine himself recognizes in the well-known phrase that serves as a gateway to his writing of the *Confessions*: "You made us Lord for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you."⁷⁵⁰ From an ecological perspective, when a certain natural resource is abused, the order of cre-

748 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 49, 17. Trans. by J.E. Tweed. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 36, 579: "Mea sunt illa quae non possides, mea sunt ista quae possides. Si enim servus meus es tu, totum peculium tuum meum est. Neque enim est peculium Domini quod sibi servus comparavit, et non erit peculium Domini quod ipse Dominus servo creavit. Ergo meae sunt bestiae silvae quas tu non cepisti; mea sunt et pecora in montibus quae sunt tua, et boves qui sunt ad praesepe tuum: omnia mea sunt, quia ego creavi ea."

749 Augustine, *doctr. chr.* 1, 4, 4. Translated by James Shaw. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 34, 20: "Frui est enim amore inhaerere alicui rei propter seipsam. Uti autem, quod in usum venerit ad id quod amas obtinendum referre, si tamen amandum est. Nam usus illicitus abusus potius vel abusio nominandus est."

750 Augustine, *conf.* 1, 1.

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ation is broken, and the human being falls into an imbalance proper to one who allows himself to be dragged along by some disordered *appetitus* that leads him to abuse the creatures of this world, which, as *Laudato Si'* points out, must be at the service of all men, to be used with respect, so that nature itself remains a *sacramentum* of God.

It is a doctrine that Augustine returns to many years later in *De Trinitate*, when he explains the *similitudiness* of the outer man, and in this concrete case, the famous *similitudo* of *mens, notitia, amor*.⁷⁵¹ When explaining love, Augustine makes a rich statement where he explains how the superior creature can use the inferior one, and must enjoy the one that is equal to him and of which he is superior. Concretely, Augustine refers to the fact that the human being can use all the non-rational creatures of creation, must enjoy the other human beings, but in God, and must only find his full joy in God, because if the order is reversed, the human being can become a slave of the temporal things and no longer be its *uillicum* (or *vilicum*) or administrator, but its slave:

When, therefore, the creature is either equal to us or inferior, we must use the inferior in order to God, but we must enjoy the equal duly in God. For as you ought to enjoy yourself, not in yourself, but in Him who made you, so also him whom you love as yourself. Let us enjoy, therefore, both ourselves and our brethren in the Lord; and hence let us not dare to yield, and as it were to relax, ourselves to ourselves in the direction downwards.⁷⁵²

4.2.3.4. The Bounty of Love.

The encyclical then points out that God is the creator of everything and that in the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is a much greater reality to say “creation” than just “nature” because God’s plan of love and salvation is at work in creation.⁷⁵³ Thus, God does not create out of necessity, but out of the bounty of his love. To speak of the work of creation is to point out that God worked out of love, and in this way, creation becomes another sign of his infinite mercy:⁷⁵⁴

751 Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 9, 2, 2 ff.

752 Augustine, *trin.* 9, 8, 13. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 968: “Cum ergo aut par nobis, aut inferior creatura sit, inferiore utendum est ad Deum; pari autem fruendum, sed in Deo. Sicut enim te ipso, non in te ipso frui debes, sed in eo qui fecit te; sic etiam illo quem diligis tamquam te ipsum. Et nobis ergo et fratribus in Domino fruamur, et inde nos nec ad nosmetipsos remittere, et quasi relaxare deorsum versus audeamus.”

753 Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 76.

754 On the subject of mercy, S. Morandini’s reflection on the encyclical *Laudato Si'* is interesting in that it points out that ecological concern for the planet, for the common home, is an occasion to manifest and make known, through one’s actions and with the same care for creation, the loving mercy of God in a secular age. Concern for ecology is thus a “language” for speaking about God’s mercy in an

The universe did not emerge as the result of arbitrary omnipotence, a show of force or a desire for self-assertion. Creation is of the order of love. God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things: "For you love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made; for you would not have made anything if you had hated it" (Wis 11:24).⁷⁵⁵

In this same section (no. 77), St. Basil and Dante Alighieri are quoted at the end. The Augustinian mindset is also remarkably close to the thoughts expressed by the encyclical, since the Bishop of Hippo also points out that God does not create all things out of necessity; God creates because He wills to, out of pure love,⁷⁵⁶ and that this love is shown from the beginning of the account of creation. On the other hand, as C. Mayer has pointed out,⁷⁵⁷ Augustine teaches that God creates because He is good and because creation itself is good. In this way, Augustine conveys the reason of goodness in creatures and the reason of God's will in creation. The will (*quia uoluit*) reveals the transcendence of the Creator, while the goodness (*quia bonus*) highlights the ontological goodness of all creation:

Now what the Son speaks the Father speaks, because when the Father speaks, a Word is uttered which is the Son, with God uttering in an eternal manner, if "manner" it can be called, a co-eternal Word. For in God there is a supreme and holy and just courtesy and a kind of love in his activity which comes not from any need on his part but from generosity. That is why, before scripture came to text, *God said, Let light be made* (Gn 1:3), it preceded it by saying, *And the Spirit of God was being borne over the water* (Gn 1:2).⁷⁵⁸

Later, Augustine specifies that the Spirit hovered over the waters to indicate that God created out of love and not with a poor or needy love, in an expression in which

unbelieving age. Cf. S. Morandini, "Interpretare Laudato Si'. Il movimento d'una enciclica", in *Studia Patavina* 63 (2016), pp. 563-578.

755 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 77.

756 This is the answer which Augustine gives to the Manichaeans to the question of the reason for creation. God creates because He wants to: "*Quare fecit Deis caelum et terram? quia uoluit. uoluntas enim dei causa est caeli et terrae*", Cf. *Gen. adu. Man.* 1, 2, 4. Cf. R. Arteaga, *La creación en los comentarios de san Agustín al Génesis*, Zaragoza, Mayéutica, 1994, 46.

757 For his part, C. Mayer, points out that the reason for creation is not only the *quia uoluit*, of the *Gen. adu. Man.*, but it is also the *quia bonus*, of *De ciuitate Dei* (11, 21). In this last text, Augustine himself points out, on the one hand, the biblical aspect, where we are told that everything is good, and on the other hand, the voluntary part of God.

758 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 5, 11. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 172. PL 34, 220: "Quod autem Filius loquitur. Pater loquitur, quia Patre loquente dicitur Verbum, quod Filius est, aeterno more, si more dicendum est, loquente Deo Verbum coaeternum. Inest enim Deo benignitas summa, et sancta et iusta; et quidem non ex indigentia, sed ex beneficentia ueniens amor in opera sua. Propterea priusquam scriberetur: Dixit Deus: Fiat lux; praecessit Scriptura dicens: Et Spiritus Dei superferebatur super aquam."

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we can hear faraway platonic echoes.⁷⁵⁹ Creation is made with superabundant love and generosity, the love of God in person that hovered over the waters:

Was it because a love that is needy and in want loves in such a way that it is subjected to the things it loves: and so for that reason, when the Spirit of God was to be mentioned, in which his holy benevolence and love is understood, it is said to be *borne over* what he loves, in case it should be thought that it was out of the compulsion of his needs that God loved the things which were to be made, rather than out of the abundance of his generosity? With this very thing in mind, the apostle is going to say about charity that he will point out *an overwhelming way* (1 Cor 12:31), and in another place he says, *the charity of Christ that overwhelms knowledge* (Eph 3:19).⁷⁶⁰

In here, Augustine describes the Holy Spirit as goodness and love “stirring above the water” (Gn 1:2) in the light of the divine unconditional and self-sufficient love that is poured out or given “out of the largeness of God’s bounty” (*abundantiam beneficentiae*). In contrast to creaturely love, which is subordinated to the object of its love, God’s love is not needy, not subordinated to anything else, but overflows freely from its inner bounty.

This same Spirit, not only hovered over the waters, but more so, as Augustine points out following a Syrian Christian author of his time, the Spirit *fouebat*, that is to say, protected, gave warmth, embraced all creatures, and with this Augustine wants to reiterate the idea of creation made by love and not by necessity:

For what is said here in the Greek and Latin versions about the Spirit of God, that *it was being borne over the water*, according to the Syriac which is a language closely related to Hebrew (this is how a learned Christian Syrian⁷⁶¹ is said to have explained the word) is reported to mean not *was being borne over*

759 Plato in his dialogue called “the Symposium” (Banquet), puts on the lips of Diotyma a beautiful myth about the birth of “love”, which is the son of Poros (the wit) and Penia (the need), because when you love someone you have ingenuity and creativity to manifest that love and on the other hand you feel a need for the love of the person you love. Cf. Plato, Symposium, 203 bc.

760 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 7, 13. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 173. PL 34, 231: “An quoniam egenus atque indigus amor ita diligit, ut rebus quas diligit, subiciatur; propterea cum commemoraretur Spiritus Dei, in quo sancta eius benevolentia dilectioque intellegitur, superferri dictus est, ne facienda opera sua per indigentiae necessitatem potius quam per abundantiam beneficentiae Deus amare putaretur? Cuius rei memor Apostolus dicturus de caritate, super eminentem viam demonstraturum se ait: et in alio loco: Super eminentem, inquit, scientiae caritatem Christi. Cum ergo sic oporteret insinuari Spiritum Dei, ut superferri diceretur, commodius factum est ut prius insinuaretur aliquid inchoatum, cui superferri diceretur; non enim loco, sed omnia superante ac praecellente potentia.”

761 This was probably St. Ephrem, a deacon of the Church of Edessa, who founded a school of theology there, and died in 373.

but *was brooding over the water* in the way birds brood over their eggs, where that warmth of the mother's body in some way also supports the forming of the chicks through a kind of influence of her own kind of love.⁷⁶²

4.2.3.5. The 'Ordo' in Creation.

Number eighty (80) of the *Laudato Si'* speaks of the order of nature and cites St. Thomas Aquinas, who made allusion to an image which is that of a creator who could have given things movement, in such a way that they would coalesce to form a certain reality, since everything is oriented towards a specific end. In St. Thomas' example, things arranged by a master builder of ships, would have the possibility of forming a ship:

The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore, from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge: "Nature is nothing other than a certain kind of art, namely God's art, impressed upon things, whereby those things are moved to a determinate end. It is as if a shipbuilder were able to give timbers the wherewithal to move themselves to take the form of a ship".⁷⁶³

In dealing with this theme, Augustine uses an image that has become a classic, and that would have been very well suited here. It is the image of a mosaic. In the Augustinian metaphor, the dynamism is not found in the object, but in the one who perceives it. In fact, God's plan has always existed, and his ordaining of the universe is not something casual or arbitrary, as the encyclical also points out. Nevertheless, the movement in creatures is placed in the historical perspective, or rather, in the progression of history. Whoever has come too close to a mosaic can only perceive a portion of the piece and may even see its lack of symmetry for he perceives only a small part of the whole. But when one gets away at a proper distance, the harmony begins to manifest, and he can perceive the order and beauty which previously appeared to be just disproportionate or not very concordant. This is how Augustine puts it.⁷⁶⁴

But even this poses more problems, since the members of an insect are carved with such admirable order and distinction, while human life is versatile and

762 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 18, 36. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 185. PL 34, 260: "Nam et illud quod per graecam et latinam linguam dictum est de Spiritu Dei, quod superferebatur super aquas, secundum syrae linguae intellectum, quae vicina est hebraeae, (nam hoc a quodam docto christiano syro fertur expositum) non superferebatur, sed fovebat potius intellegi perhibetur. Nec sicut foveantur tumores aut vulnera in corpore aquis vel frigidis vel calore congruo temperatis; sed sicut ova foveantur ab alitibus, ubi calor ille materni corporis etiam formandis pullis quodammodo adminiculatur, per quemdam in suo genere dilectionis affectum."

763 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 80. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis expositio*, Lib. II, lectio 14.

764 Cf. V. Pacioni, *L'unità teorética del De Ordine di S. Agostino*, Roma, 1996.

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adapts to innumerable disturbances and vicissitudes. But this way of looking at things is similar to that of a man who, by restricting the visual field and seeing with his eyes only the unit of a tile in a mosaic, reproaches the craftsman as ignorant of the order and composition of such works; he would believe that there is no order in the combination of tiles, because he does not consider or examine the entirety of all ornaments that contribute to the formation of a beautiful figure. The same occurs to poorly educated men who, unable to grasp and consider with their narrow minds the arrangement and harmony of the universe, when they come across something that displeases them, later think that it is an inherent disorder or deformity of things.⁷⁶⁵

Hence, for Augustine, creation is like a work of art by an Artist who creates his masterpiece with generous love. And yet, unlike human artist who leaves his piece of art on its own after the completion of his work, the divine Artist remains with his creation through his providential governance, continually caring and ordering his creation, in such a way that not even the “evil intention” of a “fallen will” can derail his good plan. Thus, Augustine writes:

And so by his (God’s) hidden power he sets the whole of his creation in motion, and while it is whirled around with that movement, while angels carry out his orders, while the constellations circle round their courses, while the winds change, while the abyss of waters is stirred by tides and agitated by cyclones and waterspouts even through the air...while the wicked are permitted to vex the just, he unwinds the ages which he had as it were folded into the universe when it was first set up. These, however, would not go on being unwound along their tracks, if the one who set them going stopped moving them on by his provident regulations.⁷⁶⁶

The *ordo* in the universe is a sign that the divine governance never ceases to oper-

765 Augustine, *ord.* 1, 1, 2. PL 32, 979: “At enim hoc ipsum est plenius quaestionum, quod membra pulicis disposita mire atque distincta sunt, cum interea humana vita innumerabilium perturbatorum inconstantia versetur et fluctuet. Sed hoc pacto si quis tam minutum cerneret, ut in vermiculato pavimento nihil ultra unius tessellae modulum acies eius valeret ambire, vituperaret artificem velut ordinationis et compositionis ignarum; eo quod varietatem lapillorum perturbatam putaret, a quo illa emblemata in unius pulchritudinis faciem congruentia simul cerni collustrarique non possent. Nihil enim aliud minus eruditus hominibus accidit, qui universam rerum coaptationem atque concentum imbecilla mente complecti et considerare non valentes, si quid eos offenderit, quia suae cogitationi magnum est, magnam putant rebus inhaerere foeditatem.”

766 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 5, 20, 41. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 297. PL 34, 336: “Movet itaque occulta potentia universam creaturam suam, eoque motu illa versata, dum Angeli iussa perficiunt, dum circumeunt sidera, dum alternant venti, dum abyssus aquarum lapsibus et diversis etiam per aerem conglobationibus agitur, dum vireta pullulant, suaque semina evolvunt, dum animalia gignuntur, varioque appetitu proprias vitas agunt, dum iniqui iustos exercere permittuntur, explicat saecula, quae illi, cum primum condita est, tamquam plicata indiderat: quae tamen in suos cursus non explicarentur, si ea ille qui condidit, provido motu administrare cessaret.”

ate in creation. Yet, on the part of the beholder, this *ordo* in creation must not remain in the level of sheer admiration of the created beauty. The beauty of the world must lead man to praise its Creator. Whoever contemplates the extraordinary beauty of creation with the eyes of the heart cannot remain silent and needs to translate this admiration into praise of the Creator. For Augustine, the world and the entire creation is a tangible sign of the beauty of God so that when the human heart is open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, it becomes disposed to *confessio laudis*, leading him to recognize and praise the greatness of God the creator, as well as the perfection and goodness of all that He has created:

How powerful is God, who made the earth! How powerful is God, who filled it with good things, who gave their several lives to all its living creatures, who sowed various seeds in the womb of the earth that it might bear so many different shrubs and such beautiful trees! How powerful is God, and how great! It is your calling, you saint of God, to question, and creation's part to respond to you. Its response is creation's song of confession, and as you hear it, you bless God and tell of his power.⁷⁶⁷

4.2.3.6. The Sabbath.

In the *City of God*, Augustine teaches that the order of creation will reach its fullness in eschatology. The six days of creation are followed by the moment of God's eternal Sabbath, where the human being himself will become the seventh day, because he will reach his rest in God. All creation from its origin is directed, according to the Augustinian thought, toward that eternal Sabbath of God:

There shall be accomplished the words of the psalm, "*Be still, and know that I am God*". There shall be the great Sabbath which has no evening, which God celebrated among His first works, as it is written, And God rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made. *And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God began to make* (Genesis 2:2-3). For we shall ourselves be the seventh day, when we shall be filled and replenished with God's blessing and sanctification. There shall we be still, and know that He is God; that He is that which we ourselves aspired to be when we fell away from Him, and listened to the voice of the seducer, *You shall be as gods* (Genesis 3:5), and so abandoned God, who would have made us

767 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 144, 14. Trans. by Maria Boulding, OSB. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III, Vol. 20. Edited by B. Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2004), 392. PL 36, 1879: "Quam potens Deus, qui fecit terram! quam potens Deus, qui implevit terram bonis! quam potens Deus, qui dedit vitas suas proprias animalibus! quam potens Deus, qui semina diversa dedit visceribus terrae, ut germinarent tantam varietatem fructuum, tantam speciem arborum! quam potens Deus, quam magnus Deus! Tu interroga, creatura respondet; et de responsione, tamquam confessione creaturae, tu, sancte Dei, benedicis Deum, et potentiam loqueris."

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as gods, not by deserting Him, but by participating in Him.⁷⁶⁸

Along this doctrinal trend and echoing the insight of Fr. Teilhard de Chardin, Pope Francis writes: “the ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things.”⁷⁶⁹ It is important to note here that it is the whole of creation—not just humanity alone—but man along with the entire physical universe that is destined to be redeemed and transformed in Christ. Then the Pope continues:

The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things. Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator.⁷⁷⁰

It is crucial to mention here that the “seventh day” which Augustine describes as “God’s eternal Sabbath” and that according to God’s eschatological plan, we will be transformed so that “we shall ourselves be the seventh day,” is actually, according *Laudato Si’*, a Person—Jesus Christ, the Risen One, “the measure of the maturity of all things”, “the ultimate destiny of the universe”. When we will be transformed in Christ, we will be—in Augustine’s language— “filled and replenished with God’s blessing and sanctification.”

Christian tradition looks at Jesus Christ as the Alpha and the Omega of all created realities. Creation begins through him, and with him, it moves towards universal communion, and in him, it will find its completion. But also, according to this tradition, Christ is not someone who guides creation from without. He lived within the world.

768 Augustine, *ciu.* 22, 30, 4. Translated by Marcus Dods. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 41, 803: “Ibi perficietur: Vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus; quod erit vere maximum sabbatum non habens vesperam, quod commendavit Dominus in primis operibus mundi, ubi legitur: Et requievit Deus die septimo ab omnibus operibus suis, quae fecit, et benedixit Deus diem septimum et sanctificavit eum, quia in eo requievit ab omnibus operibus suis, quae inchoavit Deus facere. Dies enim septimus etiam nos ipsi erimus, quando eius fuerimus benedictione et sanctificatione pleni atque refecti. Ibi vacantes videbimus quoniam ipse est Deus; quod nobis nos ipsi esse volumus, quando ab illo cecidimus, audientes a seductore: Eritis sicut dii et recedentes a vero Deo, quo faciente dii essemus eius participatione, non desertione.”

769 Ibid., 83. In this horizon we can set the contribution of Fr Teilhard de Chardin; cf. Paul VI, *Address in a Chemical and Pharmaceutical Plant* (24 February 1966): *Insegnamenti* 4 (1966), 992-993; John Paul II, *Letter to the Reverend George Coyne* (1 June 1988): *Insegnamenti* 11/2 (1988), 1715; Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Celebration of Vespers in Aosta* (24 July 2009): *Insegnamenti* 5/2 (2009), 60.

770 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 83.

With Christ, the “Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14), the earth is not anymore home only for humanity and other living creatures; it has also become God's home.

The Incarnate Word lived and walked on earth like any ordinary man would. *Laudato Si'*, in an article which bears the title “the Gaze of Christ” took interest on how the Word-made-flesh had looked at the physical world. Pope Francis writes in the encyclical: “this leads us to direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father, so that “God may be everything to every one”” (1 Cor 15:28). Indeed, the gaze of Jesus has profoundly transformed the whole of creation:

Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence.⁷⁷¹

At the end of the encyclical it reverts to this theme of rest, adding the meaning that Sunday has—as a day that anticipates heavenly peace, where all beings will reach their fullness in Christ on God's eternal Sabbath. Thus, the Pope says: “Sunday is the day of the Resurrection, the “first day” of the new creation, whose first fruits are the Lord's risen humanity, the pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality. It also proclaims “man's eternal rest in God”.⁷⁷²

In this profound insight, one could have made again an allusion to the brilliant Augustinian thought, where the Bishop of Hippo points out that “we shall ourselves be the seventh day, when we shall be filled and replenished with God's blessing and sanctification”.⁷⁷³ And in the *Confessions*, he declares that all human good works come from God's goodness and are part of God's creation so that ultimately they are God's works and will finally find rest also in God:

But the seventh day is without any evening, nor has it any setting, because You have sanctified it to an everlasting continuance that that which Thou did after Your works, which were very good, resting on the seventh day, although in unbroken rest You made them that the voice of Your Book may speak beforehand unto us, that we also after our works (therefore very good, because You have given them unto us) may repose in You also in the Sabbath of eternal life.⁷⁷⁴

771 Ibid., 100.

772 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 237.

773 Augustine, *ciu.* 22, 30, 4.

774 Augustine, *conf.* 13, 36, 51. Translated by J.G. Pilkington. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co.,

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4.2.3.7. The Father, the Ultimate Origin of all Being.

Laudato Si', teaches that God the Father is the Creator, who alone owns the world.⁷⁷⁵ “He is the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self-communicating foundation of all that exists.”⁷⁷⁶

The view of the Father as the *principium* or *principaliter*⁷⁷⁷ (which means “origin”) of all beings but not based on might or hierarchy of powers but of love, traces its root back to Augustine’s teaching on the relationship of the Divine persons within the Trinity. Lewis Ayres refers to this divine love as “reciprocal communion” in allusion to Augustine’s use of the word “cleaving”,⁷⁷⁸ and suggests that the Father’s monarchy is where this communion of love originates.⁷⁷⁹

In his presentation of the Father’s monarchy in *De Trinitate*, Augustine presents the Father as *principium deitatis*, being the source of the Son, but the Son is not a different or lesser substance than the Father. Everything the Father has in himself, the Son also has in himself, because He has the indivisible simplicity of the Father’s substance himself, such that when one speaks of the Son loving the Father, He love with a perfect love from the Father from where the communion of love originates.⁷⁸⁰ In a concise but equally enlightening explanation, in a letter addressed to Maximus concerning the relationship between the Father and the Son, Augustine writes:

All He has and can do He attributes to his Father, not to himself, because He is not of himself but of the Father. For He is equal to the Father and this also He received from the Father, but He did not receive His being equal as if He had previously been unequal and was born equal, but, as He is always born, so He is always equal. Similarly, the Son’s and the Father’s mutual love is equal. The Father receives nothing from the Son that is not already the Father’s. That the Son receives everything He has from the Father is not a sign of his lacking anything in himself. Instead, it is to be understood as the proof of his having

1887). PL 32, 867-68. “Dies autem septimus sine vespera est nec habet occasum, quia sanctificasti eum ad permansionem sempiternam, ut id, quod tu post opera tua bona valde, quamvis ea quietus feceris, requievisti septimo die 321, hoc prae loquatur nobis vox Libri tui, quod et nos post opera nostra ideo bona valde, quia tu nobis ea donasti, sabbato vitae aeternae requiescamus in te.”

775 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 75.

776 Ibid., 238.

777 In the *Trinity* Augustine employs these terms at 4, 29; 5, 14-15; 6, 3; 15, 29; and 15, 47.

778 Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 6, 9.

779 Cf. Lewis Ayres, “Augustine, Christology, and God as Love: An Introduction to the Homilies on 1 John,” in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 88.

780 Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 7, 1-6.

everything in eternal fullness because he has it from the eternal Father.⁷⁸¹

Augustine explains that the love that the Father has for the Son, the Son also has in himself to give back to the Father, because He has it from the Father. The reason why the mutual love between the Father and the Son effectively conveys their complete equality rests not so much on the Father's monarchy but on the mutual love they have for each other.

The Father is also the source of the Holy Spirit since the latter proceeds both from the Father and the Son, though principally from the Father. Augustine teaches that the Father, who is never sent, is the source of the missions of the Son and the Holy spirit, just as He is the sole beginning of them in the Immanent Trinity:

As, therefore, the Father begot, the Son is begotten; so the Father sent, the Son was sent. But in like manner as He who begot and He who was begotten, so both He who sent and He who was sent, are one, since the Father and the Son are one. So also the Holy Spirit is one with them, since these three are one. For as to be born, in respect to the Son, means to be from the Father; so to be sent, in respect to the Son, means to be known to be from the Father. And as to be the gift of God in respect to the Holy Spirit, means to proceed from the Father; so to be sent, is to be known to proceed from the Father. Neither can we say that the Holy Spirit does not also proceed from the Son, for the same Spirit is not without reason said to be the Spirit both of the Father and of the Son.⁷⁸²

Regarding creation, the Father is the *principium sine principio*. Even if the work of creation is common to the Trinity, only the Father among the Persons is referred to as the Origin without origin, the first principle of the existence, subsistence, and unity of creatures. But it is important to stress that in Augustine's perspective, the Father does not create the world by imposing His divine will on 'something' because creation

781 Augustine, *ep.* 170, 8. Trans. W. Parsons, vol. 4, Fathers of the Church 30 (Washington. DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 66. PL 33, 750: "Sed ideo totum quod habet, quod potest, non tribuit sibi, sed Patri, quia non est a seipso, sed a Patre. Aequalis est enim Patri, sed hoc quoque accepit a Patre; nec sic accepit unde esset aequalis, quasi prius fuerit inaequalis; sed natus aequalis, sicut semper natus, ita semper aequalis. Non itaque inaequalem genuit, et aequalitatem iam nato addidit; sed gignendo eam dedit, quia aequalem non impari genuit. Ideo in forma Dei aequalem esse Deo, non ei rapina fuerat, sed natura; quoniam id nascendo sumpsit, non superbiendo praesumpsit."

782 Augustine, *trin.* 4, 29. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 908: "Sicut ergo Pater genuit, Filius genitus est; ita Pater misit, Filius missus est. Sed quemadmodum qui genuit, et qui genitus est, ita et qui misit et qui missus est unum sunt, quia Pater et Filius unum sunt. Ita etiam Spiritus Sanctus unum cum eis est quia haec tria unum sunt. Sicut enim natum esse est Filio a Patre esse, ita mitti est Filio cognosci quod ab illo sit. Et sicut Spiritui Sancto donum Dei esse est a Patre procedere, ita mitti est cognosci quod ab illo procedat. Nec possumus dicere quod Spiritus Sanctus et a Filio non procedat; neque enim frustra idem Spiritus et Patris et Filii Spiritus dicitur."

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is production *ex nihilo*, i.e. from ‘nothing’.⁷⁸³ His creative power does not enact over an inert matter; rather it is, in itself, the ground of all power and all agency within creation.

Let us not heed those who say there is only the Father who has no Son and with who, there is no Holy Spirit; but that the same Father is sometimes called the Son, sometimes called the Holy Spirit. These heretics do not understand the First Principle from whom all things have their existence; or His Image, through whom all things have been made; or His Sanctifier, in whom all things are made subject to order.⁷⁸⁴

Moreover, Augustine stresses the closeness of the Father to creation by pointing out that even after the work of creation, the Father continually wills and sustains its existence, otherwise the creation would simply fall back to non-existence. Thus, by citing the Gospel of John and St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, Augustine writes:

Against them we bring that statement of the Lord’s: *My Father is working until now* (Jn 5:17); and in case anyone should suppose he is working on something alone with himself, and not in this world, *The Father abiding in me*, he says, *performs his works; and as the Father raises the dead and brings them to life, so too the Son brings to life who he will* (Jn 5:21). Furthermore, God does not make only great and important things but also the lowliest things of this earth. For St. Paul says: *Foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be but a mere kernel perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. But it is God who gives it a body as He has willed to do, and to each and every seed He gives an appropriate body*” (1Cor 15, 36-38). Let us, therefore, believe and, if possible, also understand that God is working even now, so that if His action should be withdrawn drawn from His creatures, they would perish.⁷⁸⁵

783 On creation from nothing in Augustine’s thought, confer Tarsicius van Bavel, “The Creator and the Integrity of Creation in the Fathers of the Church, Especially in Saint Augustine”, *Augustinian Studies* 21 (1990), 4-7.

784 Augustine, *agon.*, 14, 16. PL 40, 299: “Nec eos audiamus, qui dicunt Patrem tantummodo esse, nec habere Filium, nec esse cum eo Spiritum sanctum; sed ipsum Patrem aliquando appellari Filium, aliquando Spiritum sanctum. Nesciunt enim Principium ex quo sunt omnia, et Imaginem eius per quam formantur omnia, et sanctitatem eius in qua ordinantur omnia.”

785 Ibid., 5, 20, 40, trans. John Hammond Taylor: Ancient Christian Writers. Kindle Locations 277-281, (Kindle Edition). PL 34, 335: “Contra quos profertur illa sententia Domini: Pater meus usque nunc operator. Et ne quisquam putaret apud se illum aliquid operari, non in hoc mundo: Pater in me manens, inquit, facit opera sua; et sicut Pater suscitavit mortuos et vivificat, sic et Filius quos vult vivificat. Deinde, quia non solum magna atque praecipua, verum etiam ista terrena et extrema ipse operatur, ita dicit Apostolus: Stulte, tu quod seminas non vivificatur, nisi moriatur; et quod seminas, non corpus quod futurum est seminas, sed nudum granum fere tritici, aut alicuius caeterorum; Deus autem dat illi corpus quomodo voluerit, et unicuique seminum proprium corpus (1 Cor. XV 36-38). Sic ergo credamus, vel, si possumus, etiam intellegamus usque nunc operari Deum, ut si conditis ab eo rebus operatio eius subtrahatur, intercendant”.

4.2.3.8. Christ the Word.

The encyclical takes up various texts of the New Testament to speak about ecology, and above all it highlights the example of Christ. It points not only to his deep love for all creatures and creation, but also to his incarnation, which led him to embrace even death on a cross in order to redeem humanity.

The prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18) reveals Christ's creative work as the Divine Word (Logos). But then, unexpectedly, the prologue goes on to say that this same Word "became flesh" (Jn 1:14). One Person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross. From the beginning of the world, but particularly through the incarnation, the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole, without thereby impinging on its autonomy.⁷⁸⁶

Augustine, for his part, uses the imagery of a carpenter or a builder to explain how the humble act of the Word, incarnate in Jesus Christ, can save humanity "because the soul of the artificer, where all these things are before they are brought forth, is living":

As far as I can, I shall explain my meaning to you, beloved. A carpenter makes a box. First, he has the box in design; for if he had it not in design, how could he produce it by workmanship? But the box in theory is not the very box as it appears to the eyes. It exists invisibly in design; it will be visible in the work. Behold, it is made in the work; has it ceased to exist in design? The one is made in the work, and the other remains which exists in design; for that box may rot, and another be fashioned according to that which exists in design. Give heed, then, to the box as it is in design, and the box as it is in fact. The actual box is not life, the box in design is life; because the soul of the artificer, where all these things are before they are brought forth, is living.⁷⁸⁷

In the thought of Augustine, the Incarnation represents a revelation of God's invisible Word that was spoken at creation but became visible and tangible only in time when "the Word became flesh". That creation participates in the "Word-made-flesh" is shown in how the Gospels show Jesus to have control over the forces of nature; nature listens to its Creator Word. This is important to Augustine because the Word is the master builder

786 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 99.

787 Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 1, 17. Translated by John Gibb. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 7*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 35, 1387: "Quomodo possum, dicam Caritati vestrae. Faber facit arcam. Primo in arte habet arcam: si enim in arte arcam non haberet, unde illam fabricando proferret? Sed arca sic est in arte, ut non ipsa arca sit quae videtur oculis. In arte invisibiliter est, in opere visibiliter erit. Ecce facta est in opere; numquid destitit esse in arte? Et illa in opere facta est, et illa manet quae in arte est: nam potest illa arca putrescere, et iterum ex illa quae in arte est, alia fabricari. Attendite ergo arcam in arte, et arcam in opere. Arca in opere non est vita, arca in arte vita est; quia vivit anima artificis, ubi sunt ista omnia antequam proferantur."

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who “constructs while infused in the world”. This is how Augustine puts it:

As the Artificer governing what He had made. For He did not make it as a carpenter makes a chest. The chest which he makes is outside the carpenter, and so it is put in another place, while being made; and although the workman is near, he sits in another place, and is external to that which he fashions. But God, infused into the world, fashions it; being everywhere present He fashions, and withdraws not Himself elsewhere, nor does He, as it were, handle from without, the matter which He fashions. By the presence of His majesty He makes what He makes; His presence governs what He made.⁷⁸⁸

As Jesus, the “Word-made-flesh”, immerses in creation to re-create the world by drawing it out from the state of sinfulness to the divine presence, the created world recognizes and witnesses that He is the eternal Word present among them, intimately united with them in the act of redemption because He made himself part of them as He embraces corporeality. But how does creation acknowledge its creator? Augustine notes those instances where Jesus is described as ruler of nature in the Gospels:

For did not the creature acknowledge its Creator? The heavens gave testimony by a star; (Matthew 2:2) the sea gave testimony, and bore its Lord when He walked upon it; (Matthew 14:26) the winds gave testimony, and were quiet at His bidding; (Matthew 23:27) the earth gave testimony, and trembled when He was crucified. (Matthew 27:51) If all these gave testimony, in what sense did the world not know Him, unless that the world signifies the lovers of the world, those who with their hearts dwell in the world?⁷⁸⁹

In developing this understanding of the incarnate Word, Augustine stresses above all that the Word has always been present in the created world and not a single instance did He ever abandon His creation:

If He came hither, where was He? He was in this world. He was both here and came hither; He was here according to His divinity, and He came hither according to the flesh;... (John 1:5) Behold, both here He is now, and here He was, and

788 Ibid., 2, 10. PL 35, 1393: “Ne putes quia sic erat in mundo, quomodo in mundo est terra, in mundo est coelum, in mundo est sol, luna et stellae, in mundo arbores, pecora, homines. Non sic iste in mundo erat. Sed quomodo erat? Quomodo artifex, regens quod fecit. Non enim sic fecit, quomodo facit faber. Forinsecus est arca quam facit, et illa in alio loco posita est, cum fabricatur; et quamvis iuxta sit, ipse alio loco sedet qui fabricat, et extrinsecus est ad illud quod fabricat: Deus autem mundo infusus fabricat, ubique positus fabricat, et non recedit aliquo, non extrinsecus quasi versat molem quam fabricat. Praesentia maiestatis facit quod facit; praesentia sua gubernat quod fecit. Sic ergo erat in mundo, quomodo per quem mundus factus est.

789 Ibid., 3, 5. PL 35, 1397-98: “Num enim creatura non agnovit Creatorem suum? Testimonium dedit coelum de stella; testimonium dedit mare, portavit ambulans Dominum; testimonium dederunt venti, ad eius iussum quieverunt; testimonium dedit terra, illo crucifixo contremuit: si omnia ista testimonium dederunt, quomodo mundus eum non cognovit, nisi quia mundus dilectores mundi, corde habitantes mundum?”

here He is always; and He never departs, departs no-whither.⁷⁹⁰

This Augustinian doctrine of the divine perpetual concurrence in creation counters the modern *deistic* tendency of viewing God as a creator who after creating, has turned his back on the world and like a human builder, has left his creation to operate on its own. Thus, for a modern deist, man has become the master of the universe and truths can be established by reason alone. For Augustine, God continuously reveals Himself in creation because not only that He ceaselessly sustains it by his divine power (*ad extra*) so that it will not regress to nothingness, but that He sustains it also from within (*ad intra*), because by the act of Incarnation, He directs the entire universe to salvation while remaining really present within it.

Finally, in addressing the theme of the Incarnation in his commentary on the Gospel according to St. John and quoting the well-known phrase "*et Verbum caro factum est*" (Jn 1:14), links the mystery of the Incarnation with the redemptive death of Christ on the cross. Thus, Augustine points out:

They were able to see that which is, but they saw it from afar: they were unwilling to hold the lowliness of Christ, in which ship they might have arrived in safety at that which they were able to see from afar and the cross of Christ appeared vile to them. The sea has to be crossed, and do you despise the wood? Oh, proud wisdom! You laugh to scorn the crucified Christ; it is He whom you see from afar: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God*. But wherefore was He crucified? Because the wood of His humiliation was needful to you. For you had become swollen with pride, and had been cast out far from that fatherland; and by the waves of this world has the way been intercepted, and there is no means of passing to the fatherland unless borne by the wood.⁷⁹¹

Christ incarnate is an example of humility and at the same time the way to reach salvation. The fact that Christ embraced human nature should lead the human being himself to recognize the goodness of creation, as well as of material things, since everything comes from God.

790 Ibid., 2, 8. PL 35, 1392: "Si venit huc, ubi erat? In hoc mundo erat. Et hic erat, et huc venit: hic erat per divinitatem; huc venit per carnem: quia cum hic esset per divinitatem, ab stultis et caecis et iniquis videri non poterat. Ipsi iniqui tenebrae sunt de quibus dictum est: Lux lucet in tenebris, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt. Ecce hic est et modo, et hic erat, et semper hic est; et nunquam recedit, nusquam recedit."

791 Ibid., 2, 4. PL 35, 1390: "Illud potuerunt videre quod est, sed viderunt de longe: noluerunt tenere humilitatem Christi, in qua navi securi pervenirent ad id quod longe videre potuerunt; et sorduit eis crux Christi. Mare transeundum est, et lignum contemnis? O sapientia superba! irrides crucifixum Christum; ipse est quem longe vidisti: In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum. Sed quare crucifixus est? Quia lignum tibi humilitatis eius necessarium erat. Superbia enim tumueras, et longe ab illa patria proiectus eras; et fluctibus huius saeculi interrupta est via, et qua transeatur ad patriam non est, nisi ligno porteris."

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4.2.3.9. The Holy Spirit, the Bond of Love.

In number two hundred thirty-eight (238) of the encyclical, the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity is described as the “infinite bond of love, intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways”.⁷⁹²

The identification of the Holy Spirit with “the bond of love” within the Trinity traces its root in the Augustinian pneumatology. Referring to the Holy Spirit, Augustine writes: “But if any person in the Trinity is also to be specially called the will of God, this name, like love, is better suited to the Holy Spirit; for what else is love, except will?⁷⁹³ Augustine calls the Holy Spirit the common love or charity between the Father and the Son in the Godhead:

Therefore, the Holy Spirit, whatever it is, is something common both to the Father and Son. But that communion itself is consubstantial and co-eternal; and if it may fitly be called friendship, let it be so called; but it is more aptly called charity.⁷⁹⁴

For Augustine, the apparent synonymy of friendship and love indicates that the love between the Father and the Son refers to a mutual turning of one toward the other through the Holy Spirit’s actions, since friendship is not self-centered but other-centered as two persons cleave to each other.⁷⁹⁵ The Holy Spirit brings about the love of the Father and the Son. Through this eternal action of the Holy Spirit the Father and the son cleave to each other in “absolutely inseparable and eternal mutuality”. And His action is efficacious because He himself is of the same loving substance as they are. In here, we can see how Augustine views love not as a passive concept to explain what unites the Father and the Son, as if the two are bound together by a third subject, like two pieces of wood are united by a glue. Such a passive image conveys no sense of the activity of loving that happens between the three divine persons. But instead,

792 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 238.

793 Augustine, *trin.*, 15, 38. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 1087: “Sed voluntas Dei si et proprie dicenda est aliqua in Trinitate persona, magis hoc nomen Spiritui Sancto competit, sicut caritas. Nam quid est aliud caritas, quam voluntas?”

794 Ibid., 6, 7. PL 42, 928: “Spiritus ergo Sanctus commune aliquid est Patris et Filii, quidquid illud est, aut ipsa communio consubstantialis et coaeterna; quae si amicitia convenienter dici potest, dicatur, sed aptius dicitur caritas.”

795 In *Confessions* 4, 7, Augustine’s attributes the definition of true friendship to the work of the Holy Spirit who bonds two persons who cleave to each (citing Romans 5:5). On the connections Augustine made between friendship and love as substance terms in the Godhead, and their unique attribution to the Spirit as derived from his understanding of the divine economy of salvation, see Joseph T. Lienhard, “The Glue Itself is Charity”: Ps. 62:9 in Augustine’s Thought”, in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. E. C. Muller, R.J. Teske, and J. T., Lienhard (New York; Peter Lang, 1993), 375-84.

in Augustine's way of looking at this divine relationship, the Holy Spirit (the subject of the loving) brings about the love of the Father and the Son by uniting them in their substance, because He himself is of the same substance.

This perfect unity of the three persons united by perfect love through the eternal action of the Holy Spirit can be translated in human term as "union", in the sense of a husband and wife who are joined in marriage. That the Son and the Father "cleave" to each other in "absolutely inseparable and eternal mutuality,"⁷⁹⁶ and that they do so in the Holy Spirit who is their common charity,⁷⁹⁷ describes how the three are related in their substance. Each is turned toward the others. For Augustine, this intimate mutuality of the three persons does not only describe their eternal being, but also is a moral example for us to be imitated, since human relationships (as well as human-divine relationship) are to be founded in the unity of love. Thus, Augustine says:

For whether He is the unity of both, or the holiness, or the love, or therefore the unity because the love, and therefore the love because the holiness, it is manifest that He is not one of the two, through whom the two are joined, through whom the Begotten is loved by the Begetter, and loves Him that begot Him, and through whom, not by participation, but by their own essence, neither by the gift of any superior, but by their own, *they are keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*; which we are commanded to imitate by grace, both towards God and towards ourselves. *On which two commandments hang all the law and the prophets*. So those three are God, one, alone, great, wise, holy, blessed.⁷⁹⁸

This thought of Augustine sheds light on what Pope Francis writes in *Laudato Si'* when he points out that "the divine Persons are subsistent relations" and our world is "a web of relationships" precisely because it is "created according to the divine model".⁷⁹⁹ He describes how a trinitarian God is the origin and the sustaining principle of creation, and how each of the three Persons in their relational nature is intimately and uniquely present in the world:

The Father is the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self-communicating foundation of all that exists. The Son, his reflection, through whom all

796 Augustine, *trin.* 6, 6.

797 Ibid., 6, 7.

798 Ibid. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 928: "Sive enim sit unitas amborum, sive sanctitas sive caritas, sive ideo unitas quia caritas et ideo caritas, quia sanctitas, manifestum est quod non aliquis duorum est quo uterque coniungitur, quo genitus a gignente diligatur generatoremque suum diligit, sintque non participatione, sed essentia sua, neque dono superioris alicuius sed suo proprio servantem unitatem spiritus in vinculo pacis. Quod imitari per gratiam, et ad Deum et ad nos ipsos iubemur, in quibus duobus praeceptis tota Lex pendet et Prophetiae. Ita sunt illa Tria Deus unus, solus, magnus, sapiens, sanctus, beatus."

799 Ibid., 240.

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things were created, united himself to this earth when he was formed in the womb of Mary. The Spirit, infinite bond of love, is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways. The world was created by the three Persons acting as a single divine principle, but each one of them performed this common work in accordance with his own personal property. Consequently, “when we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity”.⁸⁰⁰

In relation to creation, Augustine understands the quotation from Genesis “and the Spirit of God was stirring above the water”⁸⁰¹ as referring to the Holy Spirit when he notes that by this phrase “we recognize a complete enumeration of the Trinity”. But when referring to the work of the conversion and in the perfecting of creatures, Augustine goes further by identifying the Holy Spirit with God’s love and “goodness by which God finds pleasure in all the limited perfections of His creatures”. The Holy Spirit works to perfect creaturely love which Augustine describes as “needy and poor”:

Now, love is generally needy and poor, so that its outpouring makes it subordinate to the objects that it loves. Hence, when there is mention of the Spirit of God, whereby the Divine Goodness and Love are to be understood, perhaps He is said to be stirring above creation, so that God may be thought of as loving the work to be produced not out of any need or necessity, but solely out of the largeness of His bounty (*abundantiam beneficentiae*).⁸⁰²

In here, Augustine describes the Holy Spirit as goodness and love “stirring above the water” (Genesis 1:2) in the light of the divine unconditional and self-sufficient love that is poured out or given “out of the largeness of God’s bounty” (*abundantiam beneficentiae*). In contrast to creaturely love, which is subordinated to the object of its love, God’s love is not needy, not subordinated to anything else, but overflows freely from its inner bounty.

Certainly, *Laudato Si*’s portrayal of the Holy Spirit as the “infinite bond of love, intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways” can be enriched by the Augustinian doctrine of the Holy Spirit, viewed as the principle of an absolute, dynamic, unconditional love within the Trinity and this same

800 Ibid., 238. Cf. John Paul II, *Catechesis* (2 August 2000), 4: Insegnamenti 23/2 (2000), 112.

801 Cf. Gn 1:2

802 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 7, 13, trans. John Hammond Taylor: Ancient Christian Writers. Kindle Locations 277-281, (Kindle Edition). PL 34, 251: “An quoniam egenus atque indigus amor ita diligit, ut rebus quas diligit, subiciatur; propterea cum commemoraretur Spiritus Dei, in quo sancta eius benevolentia dilectioque intellegitur, superferri dictus est, ne facienda opera sua per indigentiae necessitatem potius quam per abundantiam beneficentiae Deus amare putaretur”.

unconditional love overflows in abundance as the very same principle intimately present in the world in the person of the same Spirit, actively working in “the conversion and in the perfecting of creatures” as He leads them towards their final destiny in God.

4.2.3.10. *Mensura, Numerus, et Ponderus*.⁸⁰³

In the light of creation as a form of sacrament which reflects God's presence and His works, *Laudato Si'* teaches that the three Persons are also manifested in the created world. Pope Francis argues that for “Christians, believing in one God who is trinitarian communion suggests that the Trinity has left its mark on all creation.”⁸⁰⁴ Following the doctrine of Saint Bonaventure who claimed that man's vision was blurred by sin and hence cannot see clearly the image of the Trinity in creatures, Pope Francis writes:

The reflection of the Trinity was there to be recognized in nature “when that book was open to man and our eyes had not yet become darkened”⁸⁰⁵. The Franciscan saint teaches us that each creature bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure, so real that it could be readily contemplated if only the human gaze were not so partial, dark and fragile. In this way, he points out to us the challenge of trying to read reality in a Trinitarian key.⁸⁰⁶

On the theme which deals with the vestiges of the Trinity, Augustine could have been a rich source of wisdom because he always teaches that every created reality has come from the hands of the Triune God. Nothing produces itself or causes its own existence; nor is there any other creative principle than the only omnipotent and triune God. So, since everything has come out of God's hands, God Himself has left His hallmark or imprint—His signature—in all creatures. It is an idea that already appears in the first writings of Augustine, where the bishop of Hippo affirms a triad of elements that are present in the creatures as ordered and ordering triads that function at the same time as a seal and a reference to the Trinity: of seal, as a manifestation of having been made by the Trinity; of reference, to invite those who contemplate the creature to transcend the material elements and to elevate themselves towards God.

This is an idea that from the point of view of ecology would speak, once again, of transcendence, and come out against the path of pantheism. The environment and ecology must be cared for not only because of the advantages and resources it offers to human life, but more so because all things have been created by the triune God, who has entrusted creation to human beings, so that it can reach its fullness. On the other

803 Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 26.

804 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 239.

805 Cf. Bonaventure, *Quaest. Disp. de Myst. Trinitatis*, 1, 2 concl.

806 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 239.

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hand, it is necessary to preserve and care for the environment, with its ecosystems and communities, so that it may continue to be a symbol of God, so that its sacramental function may remain in force throughout the centuries, and its message may continue to be eloquent for generations to come.

The very first instance in which Augustine develops his concept of the Trinity is found in the early text (letter 11) addressed to his young friend Nebridius. Here Augustine presents his explorative view of the “Trinity” that he will later discard possibly because it was too philosophical in nature and was not literally supported by the word of God. Created things have a being, a form, and remain in that form as long as they are capable of doing so:

There is no nature, Nebridius — and, indeed, there is no substance — which does not contain in itself and exhibit these three things: first, that it is (*ut sit*); next, that it is this or that (*hoc vel illud sit*); and third, that as far as possible it remains as it is (*ut in eo quod est maneat quantum potest*). The first of these three presents the original cause of nature from which all things exist; the second presents the form according to which all things are fashioned and formed in a particular way; the third presents a certain permanence, so to speak, in which all things are.⁸⁰⁷

In this early text which tackles the imprint of the Trinity in creature, there are already traces of what will later be the most repeated triad in the writings of Augustine, that he adopted from the text of Wisdom 11:20: “You have arranged all things in measure and number and weight.”⁸⁰⁸

In this case we can see how the first element “to be” is already marked by a cause of the same essence that makes things exist (*causam ipsam naturae ostentat, ex qua sunt omnia*); where the figure of the Father fits perfectly, who is the cause without a cause, and through whom all things receive their being. Later, when he points out that a second element in all creatures is that they are this or that particular thing, he means to affirm that they are of one species or another, that is, that they have a form or beauty in which they are manufactured or formed (*speciem per quam fabricantur, et quodammodo formantur omnia*). This is an element where the Son and his attributes

807 Augustine, *ep.* 11, 3. Translated by J.G. Cunningham. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 33, 76: “Nulla natura est, Nebridi, et omnino nulla substantia quae non in se habeat haec tria, et prae se gerat: primo ut sit, deinde ut hoc vel illud sit, tertio ut in eo quod est maneat quantum potest. Primum illud causam ipsam naturae ostentat, ex qua sunt omnia; alterum, speciem per quam fabricantur, et quodammodo formantur omnia; tertium, manentiam quamdam, ut ita dicam, in qua sunt omnia.”

808 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 4, 3, 7. PL 34, 299: “Omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere disposuisti”. Can also be found in *ciu.* 5, 1; *ciu.* 11, 31; *ciu.* 12, 19, *et al.*

fit perfectly. Finally, all things tend to remain to be what they are. This permanence in which all things are, could be the Holy Spirit (*manentiam quamdam, ut ita dicam, in qua sunt omnia*). However, Augustine does not explicitly ascribe any attribute to any of the divine persons with these three characteristics.

Some years later, Augustine reiterates this same triad, elaborating on it and in this case making an explicit reference to the Trinity. The triad of philosophical tone presented in *ep.* 11 is deepened to present an explicit trinitarian imprint, and where the three elements are clarified, without yet attributing any of these three elements to the persons of the Trinity. In this way, Augustine says that everything has been created by the Trinity working in unity, and that in creatures we can perceive a triad which resembles the triune Creator:

Knowing this Trinity, as it is possible in the present life, certainly we see that every intellectual creature, animated or bodily, of the same creative Trinity receives the being as it is, and has its form, and is administered with perfect order; but this does not mean that a portion of each creature was made by God, and another by the Son, and another by the Holy Spirit; but the Father made all and every one of the natures together with the Son in the gift of the Holy Spirit. For everything, or substance, or essence, or nature, or let it be called by some other more suitable name, brings together at the same time these three things: that it is something unique, that it differs by its form from others, and that it is within the universal order.⁸⁰⁹

In this second presentation of the triad, the “being” or “to be” continues to present itself, first of all, as that which makes a certain being remain in its own unity (*ut et unum aliquid sit*). Later, it continues to speak of a species, form or beauty that distinguishes it from others (*et specie propria discernatur a ceteris*). But possibly the great novelty is the introduction of the word “*ordo*”, in the third characteristic, which was previously attributed to “remaining to be what is”. Now this permanence is done by means of an order that must not be exceeded or surpassed (*et rerum ordinem non excedat*). This word places us closer to the *Pondus*, which will later correspond to the Holy Spirit, and which will be understood by Augustine, among other things, as “*ordo*”.

Possibly the first time that this triad “*Mensura, Numerus and Pondus*”, appears is

809 Augustine, *uera rel.* 7, 13. PL 34, 128-29: “qua Trinitate quantum in hac vita datum est cognita, omnis intellectualis et animalis et corporalis creatura, ab eadem Trinitate creatrice esse in quantum est, et ordinatissime administrari, sine ulla dubitatione perspicitur; non ut aliam partem totius creaturae fecisse intellegatur Pater, et aliam Filius, et aliam Spiritus Sanctus, sed et simul omnia et unamquamque naturam Patrem fecisse per Filium in dono Spiritus Sancti. Omnis enim res, vel substantia, vel essentia, vel natura, vel si quo alio verbo melius enuntiatur, simul haec tria habet; ut et unum aliquid sit, et specie propria discernatur a ceteris, et rerum ordinem non excedat.”

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in a foundational text of *De Genesi aduersus Manicheos*, where, Augustine sincerely acknowledges that he does not understand why mice, flies and other animals were created. He points out that the reason of their existence must be found only in God, who is the supreme measure, number, and order:

I, however, must confess that I have not the slightest idea why mice and frogs are created, and flies and worms; yet I can still see that they are all beautiful in their own specific kind, although because of our sins many of them seem to be against our interests. There is not a single living creature, after all, in whose body I will not find, when I reflected upon it, that its measures and numbers and order are geared to harmonious unity. Where these should all come from, I cannot conceive, unless it be from the supreme measure and number and order which are identical with the unchanging and eternal sublimity of God himself.⁸¹⁰

After explaining that there are three types of creatures, Augustine declares that all of them have been created by God. Regarding the first type of creatures, those that are beneficial to the human being, Augustine does not hesitate to affirm because it seems obvious and logical to him that they contribute to the order of the universe. As for the second type of creatures, those that are harmful to man, Augustine asserts that they have been placed in the world and in creation for some reason. Among the reasons proposed by Augustine is the possibility that these creatures are created for the purpose of inviting the human being to go beyond this world and to aspire for the future world. It is in this context that Augustine presents the triad. First, by changing “*ordo*” for “*pondus*”, as he had done in the first allusion to the triad in this text, and later, by citing the biblical text from the book of Wisdom. This is a biblical scheme attributed to the Trinity, but again there is no specific attribution of characteristics to the respective persons of the Trinity. Thus, says Augustine:

In all of them, though, when you observe their measures and numbers and order, look for the craftsman; and you won't find any other but the one with home the supreme measure and the supreme number and supreme order is to be found, and that is God, about whom it says what is so absolutely true, that he has *arranged all things in measure and number and weight* (Wis 11:20).⁸¹¹

810 Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 26. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 55-56. PL 34, 250: “Ego vero fateor me nescire mures et ranae quare creatae sint, aut muscae aut vermiculi: video tamen omnia in suo genere pulchra esse, quamvis propter peccata nostra multa nobis videantur aduersa. Non enim animalis alicuius corpus et membra considero, ubi non mensuras et numeros et ordinem inueniam ad unitatem concordiae pertinere. Quae omnia unde veniant non intellego, nisi a summa mensura et numero et ordine, quae in ipsa Dei sublimitate incommutabili atque aeterna consistunt.”

811 Ibid. PL 34, 250: “In omnibus tamen cum mensuras et numeros et ordinem vides, artificem

This text from *De Genesi aduersus Manichaeos* has a particular importance, since, as we pointed out at the beginning, Augustine speaks of creation and of the universe using the image of a home or house (*domus*). Despite the presence of some animals and other realities that apparently have no use for man, the universe as a whole is still a much better place than our own house and more importantly, it is a home governed by God with greater care and attention than any human *paterfamilias* could ever do in his own household.⁸¹² This is a key and brilliant Augustinian thought, since ecology as conceived by *Laudato Si'* starts precisely from this idea, from the world as a house, a “common home”. Hence even the etymology of the very word “ecology” (oikos-logos= the science related to the house, in this case the world, as the Augustinian text itself points out).

We encounter again the triad of Wisdom 11, 20 in Augustine's *Contra Faustum*, when he explains how God the Trinity is the creator of all things, and how all things have been created with these three elements. Clearly, no explicit attribution to the persons of the Trinity exists yet in *Contra Faustum*, but this threefold structure is already presented in relation to the Trinity:

From God all bodies derive their subsistence in extension (*mensura ut subsistant*), their beauty in number (*numerus ut ornentur*), and their order in weight (*pondus ut ordinentur*). This light is one divine being, in an inseparable triune existence; and yet, without supposing the assumption of any bodily form, you assign to separate places parts of the immaterial, spiritual, and unchangeable substance. And instead of three places for the Trinity, you have four.⁸¹³

In the *De Trinitate*, within the section on the resemblance of the exterior man, Augustine tries to relate the triad of Wisdom 11:20 to the similitude of the vision. While applying this model to the triad of Wisdom, Augustine categorically affirms that everything that has been made has this threefold structure:

But because those things which are impressed on the memory singly, can be conceived according to number, measure seems to belong to the memory, but number to the vision... And therefore, I would just notice by way of anticipa-

quaere. Nec alium inuenies, nisi ubi summa mensura, et summus numerus, et summus ordo est, id est Deum, de quo verissime dictum est, quod omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere disposuerit.”

812 Ibid.

813 Augustine, *c. Faust.* 20, 7. Translated by Richard Stothert. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 372-73: “inde etiam omnibus corporibus mensura ut subsistant, numerus ut ornentur, pondus ut ordinentur. Itaque lumen illud Trinitas inseparabilis, unus Deus est, cuius vos nullo corpore adiuncto, per se ipsam incorpoream, spiritalem, incommutabilemque substantiam etiam locis dividitis. Nec saltem Trinitati loca tria datis, sed quatuor.”

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tion these three things, measure, number, weight, which are to be perceived in all other things also.⁸¹⁴

Towards the end of the eleventh book of *De Trinitate*, Augustine reaffirms this thought by pointing out that man has been created in the image of God, so that it is possible to look for the traces of this trinitarian image in the inner man, perhaps more clearly than that which can be found in the exterior. But in the same way, Augustine presents that everything that has been made has this threefold imprint, because it has been made with *mensura*, *numerus* and *pondus*:

Wherefore time admonishes us to seek for this same trinity in the inner man, and to strive to pass inwards from that animal and carnal and (as he is called) outward man, of whom I have so long spoken. And here we hope to be able to find an image of God according to the Trinity, He Himself helping our efforts, who as things themselves show, and as Holy Scripture also witnesses, has regulated all things in measure, and number, and weight.⁸¹⁵

In the fourth book of *De Genesi ad Litteram*, Augustine goes back to this text from Wisdom 11:20, to explain how the text can be applied to the Creator himself, that is, the triune God. And after exposing what the words mean in the worldly context, he proceeds to give its meaning from the theological perspective, and applying the biblical text to the triune God:

God, after all, is neither measure nor number nor weight, nor all of them together...but in so far as measure sets a limit to everything, and number gives everything its specific form, and weight draws everything to rest and stability, He is the original, true and unique measure which defines for all things their bounds, the number which forms all things, the weight which guides all things: so are we to understand that by the words *You have arranged all things in measure and number and weight* nothing else was being said but “You have arranged all things in yourself?”⁸¹⁶

814 Augustine, *trin.* 11, 18. Translated by Arthur West Haddan. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 3. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 42, 998: “Sed quia numerose cogitari possunt quae singillatim sunt impressa memoriae, videtur ad memoriam mensura, ad visionem vero numerus pertinere... Quapropter haec tria: mensuram, numerum, pondus, etiam in ceteris omnibus rebus animadvertenda praelibaverim.”

815 Ibid. PL 42, 998: “Unde tempus admonet, hanc eandem trinitatem in interiore homine requirere, atque ab isto de quo tamdiu locutus sum animalis atque carnalis, qui exterior dicitur, introrsus tendere. Ubi speramus invenire nos posse secundum trinitatem imaginem Dei, conatus nostros illo ipso adiuvante, quem omnia, sicut res ipsae indicant, ita etiam sancta Scriptura in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisse testatur.”

816 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 4, 3, 7. Trans. by Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. 13, ed. J. E. Rotelle, OSA (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), 246. PL 34, 299: Neque enim Deus mensura est, aut numerus, aut pondus, aut ista omnia... secundum id vero quod mensura omni rei modum praefigit, et numerus omni rei speciem praebet, et pondus om-

Later on Augustine makes this triad more explicit in relation to the Creator Trinity, without specifying how each of these characteristics can be applied to each person, but indicating that when it comes to God, these are categories that have no limit. It is particularly interesting that when speaking of the “*pondus*”, i.e. of the weight, it is indicated that its mission is to lead all creatures to the “*quies*”, i.e. to rest, which is pure joy (*quorum quies purum gaudium est*)⁸¹⁷. The whole of creation in Augustine's view is lead precisely by this “*pondus*” to its perfection and rest in God:

But the measure without measure is the standard for what derives from it, while it does not itself derive from anything else; the number without number, by which all things are formed, is not formed itself; the weight without weight to which are drawn, in order to rest there, those whose rest is pure joy is not itself drawn to anything else beyond it.⁸¹⁸

In *De ciuitate Dei* Augustine returns to this idea, pointing out that the triune God is very different from the pagan gods, and that all the elements are found in Him, including the triad of Wisdom 11:20:

(The Trinity) from whom is every mode, every species, every order; from whom are measure, number, weight; from whom is everything which has an existence in nature, of whatever kind it be, and of whatever value; from whom are the seeds of forms and the forms of seeds, and the motion of seeds and of forms; who gave also to flesh its origin, beauty, health, reproductive fecundity, disposition of members, and the salutary concord of its parts.⁸¹⁹

Later in this same text of *De ciuitate Dei*, the passage from Wisdom 11:20 is quoted again, but in this case in relation to the number six, as it explains how this number is the product of the sum of the first three numbers, and therefore a perfect number which hints of the Trinity:

So much I have thought fit to state for the sake of illustrating the perfection of

nem rem ad quietem ac stabilitatem trahit, ille primitus et veraciter et singulariter ista est, qui terminat omnia et format omnia, et ordinat omnia; nihilque aliud dictum intellegitur, quomodo per cor et linguam humanam potuit: Omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere disposuisti, nisi: Omnia in te disposuisti?

817 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 4, 3, 8.

818 Ibid., 4, 4, 8. PL 34, 300: “Mensura autem sine mensura est, cui aequatur quod de illa est, nec aliunde ipsa est: numerus sine numero est, quo formantur omnia, nec formatur ipse: pondus sine pondere est, quo referuntur ut quiescant, quorum quies purum gaudium est, nec illud iam refertur ad aliud.”

819 Augustine, *ciu.* 5, 11. Translated by Marcus Dods. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 41, 153-54: “a quo est omnis modus omnis species omnis ordo; a quo est mensura numerus pondus; a quo est quidquid naturaliter est, cuiuscumque generis est, cuiuslibet aestimationis est; a quo sunt semina formarum formae seminum motus seminum atque formarum; qui dedit et carni originem pulchritudinem valetudinem, propagationis fecunditatem, membrorum dispositionem, salutem concordiae.”

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the number six, which is, as I said, the first which is exactly made up of its own parts added together; and in this number of days God finished His work. And, therefore, we must not despise the science of numbers, which, in many passages of holy Scripture, is found to be of eminent service to the careful interpreter. Neither has it been without reason numbered among God's praises, *You have ordered all things in number, and measure, and weight.*⁸²⁰

However, in the commentary on the Gospel according to St. John, in his exposition of the text of John 1:3, Augustine returns to this notion, to point out that everything created has been made by God according to a measure, number and weight:

For every creature, great and small, was made by Him: by Him were made things above and things beneath; spiritual and corporeal, by Him were they made. For no form, no structure, no agreement of parts, no substance whatever that can have weight, number, measure, exists but by that Word, and by that Creator Word, to whom it is said, *You have ordered all things in measure, and in number, and in weight.*⁸²¹

It should be noted however that Augustine never made an explicit attribution of any of the three characteristics to each of the persons of the Trinity, even though there seems to be a great affinity between the *mensura* and the Father, the *numerus* and the Son, and the *pondus* and the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, the text is used by Augustine to speak of the fact that all creatures bear the imprint of their creator, so that, as St. Paul says, what cannot be seen of God can be perceived through his creatures (Romans 1:20), since all bear the imprint of the Trinity:

In the praise of the Lord our God, whom we worship, it was said in a certain place in Scripture: *You have arranged everything with measure, number and weight. Moreover, the apostolic doctrine teaches us to understand and contemplate the invisibility of God through the things he has done, and to investigate the hidden by using the manifest. For this reason, creation, when questioned in*

820 Ibid., *ciu.* 11, 30. PL 41, 344: "Hoc breviter memorandum putavi ad commemorandam senarii numeri perfectionem, qui primus, ut dixi, partibus suis in summam redactis ipse perficitur; in quo perfecit Deus opera sua. Unde ratio numeri contemnenda non est, quae in multis sanctarum Scripturarum locis quam magni aestimanda sit elucet diligenter intuentibus. Nec frustra in laudibus Dei dictum est: Omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti."

821 Augustine, *Io. eu. tr.* 1, 13. Translated by John Gibb. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 7. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 35, 1386: "Universa enim creatura per ipsum facta est, maior, minor: per ipsum facta sunt supera, infera; spiritualis, corporalis, per ipsum facta sunt. Nulla enim forma, nulla compages, nulla concordia partium, nulla qualiscumque substantia, quae potest habere pondus, numerum, mensuram, nisi per illud Verbum est, et ab illo Verbo creatore, cui dictum est: Omnia in mensura, et numero, et pondere disposuisti."

some way from all sides, responds through its beauty as a voice that it has the Lord God as its maker.⁸²²

Thus, Augustine in his work shows that all creatures bear the mark of its creator, the imprint of the Trinity. That is why it is important to respect every creature no matter how small and seemingly insignificant, because it is part of God's work and it bears in its own ontological constitution a vestige of God. This very rich reflection of Augustine on the vestiges of the Trinity in creation sheds light on our understanding of the teaching of Saint Bonaventure which Pope Francis quotes in *Laudato Si'* which teaches "that each creature bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure, so real that it could be readily contemplated if only the human gaze were not so partial, dark and fragile."

4.2.4. On Ecological Spirituality.

4.2.4.1. Creation Spirituality.

To effect a radical change in our way of caring the environment, Pope Francis proposes, along with ecological education, an authentic creation spirituality. For this reason, he offers suggestions for an ecological spirituality that can motivate and nourish our actions for the safeguarding of our common home. This 'ecological spirituality' is anchored in ecological conversion, an incarnational spirituality, and the sacramental vision of the world.

First, the Pope in the encyclical calls for an ecological conversion in the two-fold sense of recognizing that when ecology is spoken of, it is not a trivial issue, and on the other hand, there is a profound relationship between Christian prayer and ecology.⁸²³ In order to recognize this need for conversion, one must change one's way of thinking, one must recognize one's own mistakes and how at times we have allowed ourselves to be drawn into the world around us. As the encyclical states, citing the words of Benedict XVI,⁸²⁴ if the external deserts increase, this is only a sign that there is a great interior desert, a great emptiness intrinsic to human beings:

822 Augustine, s. 8, 1. PL 38, 67: "Domino Deo nostro, cuius cultores sumus, in laude dictum est quodam Scripturarum loco: Omnia in mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti. Deinde apostolica doctrina edocemur invisibilia Dei per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspicerere, et ea quae latent per manifesta investigare. Unde interrogata quodammodo ubique creatura, Dominum Deum se artificem habere, ipsa speciei suae quadam quasi voce respondet."

823 Cf. P. Sartori, "Educazione e spiritualità. Il Capitolo VI di *Laudato Si'*", en *Studia Patavina* 63 (2016): 631-641

824 Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Solemn Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry* (24 April 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 710.

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The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast”. For this reason, the ecological crisis is also a summon to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment.⁸²⁵

In this section there are many Augustinian ideas that could have been incorporated since the Bishop of Hippo is the “saint of conversion”. He is the one who knew how to continually reform one’s life in order to follow Christ. It is necessary, to return to the heart, to realize the ‘dispersion’ in which we have lived and to notice what happens around us. All this should lead the person to transcend himself and seek the light of the Word to see things in the right perspective and be able to commit one’s self to a concrete ecological action in his own personal life. As Augustine points out:

Let us walk, then, while it is day, that is, we can use reason, so that, by converting to the Lord, we deserve to be illuminated by his Word, which is the true light, and not be caught by darkness.⁸²⁶

However, as the Pope points out, quoting Romano Guardini, a communal conversion is needed, so that there can be joint action:

This task “will make such tremendous demands of man that he could never achieve it by individual initiative or even by the united effort of men bred in an individualistic way. The work of dominating the world calls for a union of skills and a unity of achievement that can only grow from quite a different attitude”.⁸²⁷

In this sense Augustine would point to the interrelatedness that exists among all beings and particularly the interrelatedness of the communion among the members of the same community, which form the body of Christ:

Therefore, if you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to the Apostle who says to the faithful: You are the body of Christ and its members. Therefore, if you are the body of Christ and its members, the mystery that you yourselves are is placed on the table of the Lord: you receive the mystery that you are... Let us not give personal reasons for this; let us listen once more to the Apostle himself who, in regard to this sacrament, says: One bread, being many, we are

825 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 217.

826 Augustine, *uera rel.* 79. PL 34, 157: “Ambulemus ergo dum diem habemus, id est, dum ratione uti possumus, ut ad Deum conversi, Verbo eius, quod verum lumen est illustrari, mereamur, ne nos tenebrae comprehendant.”

827 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 219. Cf. Romano Guardini, *Das Ende der Neuzeit*, 72 (The End of the Modern World, 65-66).

one body. Understand and rejoice: unity, truth, piety, charity. One bread: Who is this one bread? Being many, we are one body.⁸²⁸

Secondly, on the theme which deals with incarnational spirituality, the Pope calls us to imitate Jesus, the incarnate Word, who when He was on earth, contemplated “the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness, He looked at him with love (Mk. 10:21). He was completely present to everyone and to everything, and in this way, He showed us the way to overcome that unhealthy anxiety which makes us superficial, aggressive and compulsive consumers.”⁸²⁹ It is on account of the mystery of the incarnation in God entered and embraced the whole of creation, and sanctified every created reality thereby.

This doctrine of the Pope has echoes of Augustine's doctrine of *deification*.⁸³⁰ Augustine uses the concept of participation. Not only does the human being and the rest of creation necessarily participate in God for their being, but Augustine also speaks of Christ as the divine *particeps*⁸³¹ in creation. Creatures participate in God for their being because without God they would be nothing; and God participates in creation through Christ to enact creaturely redemption. For this reason, God's participation in creation through the incarnation of Christ “perfects us fully” as human persons and on the part of other creatures, they are “perfected in their being”. And through this mystery of the incarnation of Christ, God has been so immersed in creation that prompted Augustine to write that the Word is the master builder who “constructs while infused in the world... He constructs while situated everywhere... He does not direct the structure which He constructs from outside... By His own presence He governs what He has made.”⁸³²

With regard to human beings, Augustine exhorts the faithful to be aware of their identity for by virtue of their baptism, they have become temples of God, and the Lord,

828 Augustine, *s. 272*, 1. PL 38, 1247: “Si ergo vos estis corpus Christi et membra, mysterium vestrum in mensa Dominica positum est: mysterium vestrum accipitis. Ad id quod estis, Amen respondetis, et respondendo subscribitis. Audis enim, Corpus Christi; et respondes, Amen. Esto membrum corporis Christi, ut verum sit Amen. Quare ergo in pane? Nihil hic de nostro afferamus, ipsum Apostolum identidem audiamus, qui cum de isto Sacramento loqueretur, ait: Unus panis, unum corpus multi sumus: intellegite et gaudete; unitas, veritas, pietas, caritas. Unus panis: quis est iste unus panis? Unum corpus multi.”

829 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 226.

830 Cf. G. Bonner, “Augustine's Conception of Deification,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 37 (1986): 369-86.

831 Cf. Meconi, “St. Augustine's Early Theory of Participations,” 85.

832 Augustine, *Io. eu. tr. 2*, 10. PL 35, 1393: “Deus autem mundo infusus fabricat, ubique positus fabricat, et non recedit aliquo, non extrinsecus quasi versat molem quam fabricat. Praesentia maiestatis facit quod facit; praesentia sua gubernat quod fecit. Sic ergo erat in mundo, quomodo per quem mundus factus est.”

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the Incarnate Word, dwells in each of them; and not only in each person respectively, but that God is also present in them as a community, as a collective body of believers:

How many thousands believed, my brethren, when they laid down the price of their possessions at the Apostles' feet! But what says Scripture of them? Surely, they have become a temple of God, not only each respectively a temple of God, but also all a temple of God together. They have therefore become a place for the Lord. And that you may know that one place is made for the Lord in all, Scripture says, *they were of one heart and one soul toward God*.⁸³³

Finally, in the development of ecological spirituality, Pope Francis invites us to embrace a sacramental vision of the natural world. Then he makes references to the Sufi mystic Ali al-Khawwas who sees “a subtle mystery in each of the movements and sounds of this world”;⁸³⁴ Saint Bonaventure who teaches that “contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God’s grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves”;⁸³⁵ and St. John of the Cross who “taught that all the goodness present in the realities and experiences of this world “is present in God eminently and infinitely, or more properly, in each of these sublime realities is God”.⁸³⁶ Then the Pope goes on to clarify that “this is not because the finite things of this world are really divine, but because the mystic experiences the intimate connection between God and all beings, and thus feels that “all things are God”.⁸³⁷

Along this list, Augustine could have been included who also sees the beauty of nature as a reflection of the divine beauty. They are signs and semiotic instruments that invite human being to go beyond, to transcend, and to discover the Creator, but in themselves they are not “gods”. In a manner typical to Augustine, in the *Confessions*, he gives a voice to nature; he talks to them:

I asked the earth; and it answered, I am not He; and whatsoever are therein made the same confession. I asked the sea and the deeps, and the creeping things that lived, and they replied, We are not your God, seek higher than we. I asked the breezy air, and the universal air ...I asked the heavens, the sun,

833 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 131, 5. Translated by J.E. Tweed. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888). PL 36, 1718: “Quam multa millia crediderunt, fratres mei, quando pretia rerum suarum posuerunt ad pedes Apostolorum! Sed quid de illis dicit Scriptura? Certe facti sunt templum Dei; non tantum templum Dei singuli, sed et omnes templum Dei simul. Facti sunt ergo locus Domino. Et ut noveritis quia unus locus factus est Domino in omnibus, Scriptura dicit: Erat illis anima una et cor unum in Deum.”

834 Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 233. Cf. Ali al-Khawwas, Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch [ed.], *Anthologie du soufisme*, Paris 1978, 200.

835 Ibid., Cf. Saint Bonaventure, *In II Sent.*, 23, 2, 3.

836 Ibid., 234. Cf. St. John of the Cross, *Cántico Espiritual*, XIV, 5.

837 Ibid.

moon, and stars: Neither, say they, are we the God whom you seek? And I answered unto all these things which stand about the door of my flesh, You have told me concerning my God, that you are not He; tell me something about Him. And with a loud voice they exclaimed, He made us.⁸³⁸

Augustine also invites us to be grateful, recognizing that everything is a gift that comes from God, and that man by himself has nothing, since he is simply a *mendicus Dei*, a beggar of God. Hence, gratitude becomes the best manifestation of humility:

His mercy is before me. Think of what has been said: He is before me. If you have put something of yours first, and for some expected good you have deserved God's mercy, then it has not gone ahead of you. When will you come to understand that it has gone before you, except when you understand what the Apostle says: *What have you got that you have not received? And if you have received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?* This is what it means: His mercy is before me. Finally, looking at all the goods of any kind that we may have, whether in nature, or in our kind of life, in our behavior, in faith, hope, charity, good conduct, or justice, in the fear of God, are not all of them but a gift from him, thus he concludes: *My God, my mercy.*⁸³⁹

4.2.4.2. *Humilitas, humilitas, humilitas*⁸⁴⁰

Another key to ecological conversion is humility. Every form of conversion, if it must be authentic, should come from the heart, and for this reason, according to Augustine, humility is necessary. But humility for Augustine is nothing more than holding on to the fundamental and essential truth. That is why when an intelligent young student named Dioscorus, moved by pride and the desire for self-honor, insistently pestered Augustine with "useless" and "troublesome" questions. Augustine replied:

838 Augustine, *conf. 10, 9*. Trans. by J.G. Pilkington. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 783: "Interrogavi terram, et dixit: "Non sum"; et quaecumque in eadem sunt, idem confessa sunt. Interrogavi mare et abyssos et reptilia animarum vivarum, et responderunt: "Non sumus Deus tuus; quare super nos". Interrogavi auras flabiles, et inquit universus aer cum incolis suis: "Fallitur Anaximenes; non sum Deus". Interrogavi caelum, solem, lunam, stellas: "Neque nos sumus Deus, quem quaeris", inquit. Et dixi omnibus his, quae circumstant fores carnis meae: "Dicite mihi de Deo meo, quod vos non estis, dicite mihi de illo aliquid". Et exclamaverunt voce magna: Ipse fecit nos."

839 Augustine, *en. Ps. 58, 2, 11*. PL 36, 712: "Misericordia eius praeveniet me. Cogitate quod dictum est, praeveniet me. Si aliquid tuum primum attulisti, et ex tuo aliquo bono primo Dei misericordiam meruisti, non te praevenit. Quando autem vel intellegis quia praeventus es, nisi intellegas quod ait Apostolus: Quid enim habes, quod non accepisti? Si autem accepisti, quid gloriaris quasi non acceperis? Hoc est, Misericordia eius praeveniet me. Denique attendens omnia bona quaecumque habere possumus, sive in natura, sive in instituto, sive in ipsa conversatione, in fide, in spe, in caritate, in bonis moribus, in iustitia, in timore Dei, totum non esse nisi ex illius donis, ita conclusit: Deus meus misericordia mea."

840 This threefold repeated word of 'humility' was Augustine's response to an intelligent young student named Dioscorus who, motivated by pride and fame, pestered Augustine with "useless" and "troublesome" questions regarding the Dialogues of Cicero.

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To Him, my Dioscorus, I desire you to submit yourself with unreserved piety, and I wish you to prepare for yourself no other way of seizing and holding the truth than that which has been prepared by Him who, as God, saw the weakness of our goings. In that way the *first part is humility; the second, humility; the third, humility*: and this I would continue to repeat as often as you might ask direction, not that there are no other instructions which may be given, but because, unless humility precede, accompany, and follow every good action which we perform...pride wrests wholly from our hand any good work on which we are congratulating ourselves.⁸⁴¹

With regard to knowing the fundamental truth of one's self, humility implies the acknowledgement of the objective truth, without belittling or underestimating the self and without exaggerations that distort the truth. Thus, writes Augustine:

But you are not told, "*Be something less than you are*", but "*Know who you are*". Acknowledge that you are weak, that you are a man, that you are a sinner, that it is He who makes righteous, that you are unclean. If your confession includes the stain of your heart, you will belong to the flock of Christ.⁸⁴²

The crisis of our common home is deeply rooted in our denial of our creaturely identity as *imago mundi*—created like every other creature from the dust of the earth, from *humus*, the etymological root of the term humility. Our creaturely identity and our intimate fellowship and consequent interdependence with the rest of creation is evident in the book of Genesis, especially in the older Yahwist narrative of creation. An awareness of this earthly origin should enable us to regain an authentic sense of humility before the creator and the rest of the created world. Significantly, *humilitas*, the Latin word for humility, literally means to be "grounded". Such creaturely humility will indeed be a sure antidote for the *hubris* of modern anthropocentrism in which lie some of the main roots of the crisis of our common home.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis acknowledges that humility is the mother of all eco-

841 Augustine, *ep.* 118, 3, 22. Translated by J.G. Cunningham. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 33, 442: "Huic te, mi Dioscore, ut tota pietate subdas velim, nec aliam tibi ad capessendam et obtinendam veritatem viam munias, quam quae munita est ab illo qui gressuum nostrorum tamquam Deus vidit infirmitatem. Ea est autem prima, humilitas; secunda, humilitas; tertia, humilitas: et quoties interrogares hoc dicerem; non quo alia non sint praecepta, quae dicantur, sed nisi humilitas omnia quaecumque bene facimus et praecesserit et comitetur et consecuta fuerit, et proposita quam intueamur, et apposita cui adhaereamus, et imposita qua reprimamur, iam nobis de aliquo bono facto gaudentibus totum extorquet de manu superbia."

842 Augustine, *s.* 137, 4. PL 38, 756: "Tibi autem non dicitur: Esto aliquid minus quam es; sed: Cognosce quod es. Cognosce te infirmum, cognosce te hominem, cognosce te peccatorem; cognosce quia ille iustificat, cognosce quia maculosus es."

logical virtues. He notes that “sobriety and humility were not favorably regarded in the last century. And yet, when there is a general breakdown in the exercise of a certain virtue in personal and social life, it ends up causing a number of imbalances, including environmental ones.”⁸⁴³ According to the Pope, lack of humility leads to mindless domination over the planet:

Once we lose our humility and become enthralled with the possibility of limitless mastery over everything, we inevitably end up harming society and the environment. It is not easy to promote this kind of healthy humility or happy sobriety when we consider ourselves autonomous, when we exclude God from our lives or replace him with our own ego, and think that our subjective feelings can define what is right and what is wrong.⁸⁴⁴

Pope Francis indicates that the contemporary ecological crisis stems ultimately from our refusal to recognize our humble self-identity as creatures. It is the sin of human *hubris* which lies, in fact, at the root of our irresponsible stewardship of God's creation and of our common household. Augustine's teaching reminds us that only humility leads us to recognize that on the road to ecological conversion, the help of God's grace is necessary in order to fulfill what God wants at a given moment in history, especially today, in the face of such a pressing issue as the man-made ecological devastation.

4.2.4.3. *Caritas*.

Augustine would add that not only is humility the key to Christian life, as *imitatio Christi*, but also that humility has charity as its teacher (*magistram humilitatis*):

Is the one who, by himself, inflates and does not build if not accompanied by charity? Certainly, you do not recommend this one, but the one that has charity as a companion, which is a teacher of humility.⁸⁴⁵

In Augustine's trinitarian perspective, charity is associated with the activity of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation in the same manner as “gift”, because the Holy Spirit unites the believer to God by the gift of love.⁸⁴⁶ Charity, in the Augustinian theological scheme, is not a passive concept, but instead uses love in its active sense

843 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 224

844 Ibid.

845 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 142, 5. PL 36, 1848: “Numquid illam quae cum sola fuerit inflat; quae nisi comitata fuerit caritate, non aedificat? Non utique ipsam; sed illam scientiam comitem caritatis, magistram humilitatis.”

846 Augustine, *trin.* 6, 7. Also see Augustine, *trin.* 13, 14, where Augustine cites a favorite verse: Romans 5:5, “The Charity of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us,”

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because it tends to reach out to the other. In *Trinity* 6, 7, Augustine identifies charity with “friendship” because it indicates a mutual turning of one toward the other since friendship is not self-centered but “other-centered” as the Father and the Son cleave each other through the Holy Spirit’s actions.⁸⁴⁷ In relation to creation, the Holy Spirit is associated with “Goodness and love” stirring above the creation, so as to indicate that God’s love is poured out, or given “out of the largeness of his bounty”.⁸⁴⁸ God’s love however “is not needy”, but overflows from the divine being by which God finds pleasure in all the limited perfections of His creatures”. The Holy Spirit works to perfect creaturely love which Augustine describes as “needy and poor”:

Now, love is generally needy and poor, so that its outpouring makes it subordinate to the objects that it loves. Hence, when there is mention of the Spirit of God, whereby the Divine Goodness and Love are to be understood, perhaps He is said to be stirring above creation, so that God may be thought of as loving the work to be produced not out of any need or necessity, but solely out of the largeness of His bounty (*abundantiam beneficentiae*).⁸⁴⁹

Augustine links charity to his trinitarian concept of “weight” which “draws each thing to a state of repose and stability”, so that they would rest in the place for which they were created.⁸⁵⁰ Like measure and number, Augustine points out that creaturely weight is “drawn by the Weight without weight”.⁸⁵¹ The concept of weight in creatures allows Augustine to make some powerful connection with the use of the metaphor of weight in the *Confessions* where he famously writes, “My weight is my love. Wherever I am carried, my love is carrying me. By your gift we are set on fire and carried upwards; we grow red hot and ascend”.⁸⁵² In this quotation, Augustine associate ‘weight’ with ‘love’ which carries him upward because his heart has been set on fire by God’s gift.

In *Laudato Si’*, charity is also perceived in its ‘active sense’ which is translated into “care”. Care is another important ecological virtue which proceeds from charity so that the subtitle “care for our common home” calls for generous action in the spirit of charity. In the pastoral language of the encyclical, stewardship is characterized by

847 Cf. Augustine, *conf.* 4,4,7.

848 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 7, 13.

849 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 7, 13, trans. John Hammond Taylor: Ancient Christian Writers. Kindle Locations 277-281, (Kindle Edition). PL 34, 251: “An quoniam egenus atque indigus amor ita diligit, ut rebus quas diligit, subiciatur; propterea cum commemoraretur Spiritus Dei, in quo sancta eius benevolentia dilectioque intellegitur, superferri dictus est, ne facienda opera sua per indigentiae necessitatem potius quam per abundantiam beneficentiae Deus amare putaretur”.

850 Augustine, *Ibid.*, 4, 3, 7.

851 Augustine, *Ibid.*, 4, 4, 8.

852 Augustine, *conf.* 13, 10.

the care of the environment. The Pope states that the “ecological conversion” needed in the face of the crisis of our common home “calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness.”⁸⁵³ In caring for our common home and for the weaker members of our common household, we are imitating God's *caritas* and tender care towards all creatures. As Pope Francis writes “every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world.”⁸⁵⁴

Reflecting God's *caritas* which Augustine describes as being “poured out of the largeness of His bounty”, is fundamental to what humans are. It is here that humans reveal their specific identify of being “*imago Dei*”, created in the image of God. Fashioned in the image and likeness of God, the human being is expected to tend creation with the same love and compassion of God. As the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowen Williams writes:

Genesis tells us that when we are called to relationship with our creator, we are in the same moment summoned to responsibility for the non-human world. That is how we express our relationship with the creator, our reality as made in God's image.⁸⁵⁵

4.2.4.4. Charity Conquers All.⁸⁵⁶

In the fourth part of the encyclical, where Pope Francis makes a review and description of the various ecologies that should exist, he points out the ecology of daily life. He comments that in many present cities the conditions are not given so that people can live a worthy life. But in spite of this, when strong and meaningful human relationships exist, and love is present, a true community can be created where a good environment is built, in spite of the diverse limitations that can surround such a human group. The Pope articulates it this way:

In the unstable neighborhoods of mega-cities, the daily experience of overcrowding and social anonymity can create a sense of uprootedness which spawns antisocial behavior and violence. Nonetheless, I wish to insist that *love always proves more powerful*. Many people in these conditions are able to weave bonds of belonging and togetherness which convert overcrowding into an experience of community in which the walls of the ego are torn down and the barriers of selfishness overcome. This experience of a communitarian salvation often generates creative ideas for the improvement of a building or a neighborhood.⁸⁵⁷

853 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 220.

854 Ibid., 77.

855 Rowan Williams, “The Ark and the Covenant,” *The Tablet* (24 October 2009), 10.

856 Augustine, s. 145, 4: “*Omnia uincit caritas*”

857 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 149. Some authors have emphasized the values frequently found, for example, in the *villas*, *chabolos* or *favelas* of Latin America: cf. Juan Carlos Scannone, S.J., “*La*

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Pope Francis' beautiful phrase "love proves more powerful" could have merited a brilliant Augustinian quotation. Augustine had read it in his favorite poet, Virgil,⁸⁵⁸ and simply translated it into Christian language by substituting the worldly word 'love' (*amor*) to 'charity' (*caritas*) which bears a heavily inspired Christian nuance. Thus, Augustine points out that nothing is impossible when the invincible force of love (*quae superat omnia*) is present. Here is the simple and profound Augustinian phrase:

The charity, which you have given to yourself, conquers all. But no; if you have it, you have not given it to yourself. Indeed, what have you got that you have not received? Who has given it to me, who has given it to you? God. Recognize that it is He who gives it so as not to experience his condemnation. If we give faith to the Scriptures, it is God who has given you charity, the great good; the charity that overcomes all others.⁸⁵⁹

In this way, even though places may be "unfriendly", "antisocial" or "violent", as Pope Francis points out, if the power of charity is present, this can be a balm for building true human and meaningful relationships that help the person overcome the limitations of an unfavorable environment. But once again, on this beautiful reality of love or "charity", the Augustinian quotation could have enriched the reflection of *Laudato Si'*.

4.2.4.5. *Pax*.

Finally, Augustine believes that the necessary upshot or fruit of humility and charity is peace. Where there is humility and love, there is peace. That is why, Augustine talks of the circle of virtues formed by charity, peace and humility: "The end result will be that we all find joy in the one charity. But where charity is, there is peace, and where humility is, there is charity" (*Ubi autem caritas, ibi pax; et ubi humilitas, ibi caritas*).⁸⁶⁰ Augustine seems to have understood peace as the result of the harmony generated by humility and love.

In *Laudato Si'*, the Pope makes a similar "circle of virtues" which is necessary if the care of the environment must be carried out. In number ninety-two (92) of the

irrupción del pobre y la lógica de la gratuidad", in Juan Carlos Scannone and Marcelo Perine (eds.), *Irrupción del pobre y quehacer filosófico. Hacia una nueva racionalidad*, Buenos Aires, 1993, 225-230. 858 Virgilio, *Bucólicas* X, 69.

859 Augustine, *s.* 145, 4. PL 38, 793: "Si caritatem, quae superat omnia, tu tibi dedisti, vilem tibi Deum fecisti. Quid tibi plus potest dare Deus? Quidquid dederit, minus est. Omnia caritas vincit, quam tu tibi dedisti. Sed si habes, non tibi dedisti. Quid enim habes, quod non accepisti? 8 Quis mihi, quis tibi dedit? Deus. Agnosce datorem, ne sentias damnatorem. Credendo de Scripturis Deus tibi dedit caritatem, magnum bonum, caritatem omnia superantem."

860 Augustine, *ep. Io. tr.* prol. PL 35, 1977: "In quibusdam enim nutritur quod est, in quibusdam accenditur si deest; ut omnes in una caritate gaudeamus. Ubi autem caritas, ibi pax; et ubi humilitas, ibi caritas."

encyclical, Pope Francis talks of the inseparability of love, justice, and peace in the preservation of creation:

We can hardly consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any aspect of reality: "Peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism"⁸⁶¹.

In his exhortation of the believers to be "consonant with their faith and not to contradict it by their actions," the Pope encourages them to be "ever open to God's grace and to draw constantly from their deepest convictions about love, justice and peace."⁸⁶²

Pope Francis, however, perceives peace to be more than just the sheer "absence of war." For him, peace starts in the interior of every person. He writes:

On the other hand, no one can cultivate a sober and satisfying life without being at peace with him or herself. An adequate understanding of spirituality consists in filling out what we mean by peace, which is much more than the absence of war. Inner peace is closely related to care for ecology and for the common good because, lived out authentically, it is reflected in a balanced lifestyle together with a capacity for wonder which takes us to a deeper understanding of life.⁸⁶³

In the *City of God*, Augustine links peace with order; where there is perfect order, there is perfect peace. In all levels—be it in the body, in both irrational and rational soul, in human relationship, and in the society as a whole—where order is present, there is peace. And the most perfect order is in the Heavenly City where perfect peace can also be found. Thus, Augustine writes:

The peace of the body then consists in the duly proportioned arrangement of its parts. The peace of the irrational soul is the harmonious repose of the appetites, and that of the rational soul the harmony of knowledge and action. The peace of body and soul is the well-ordered and harmonious life and health of the living creature. Peace between man and God is the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law. Peace between man and man is well-ordered concord. Domestic peace is the well-ordered concord between those of the family who rule and those who obey. Civil peace is a similar concord among the citizens. The peace of the Celestial City is the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God, and of one another in God.⁸⁶⁴

861 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 92.

862 Ibid., 200.

863 Ibid., 225.

864 Augustine, *ciu.* 19, 13, 1. Translated by Marcus Dods. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 41, 640: "Pax itaque corporis est ordinata temperatura partium, pax animae irrationalis ordinata

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In Augustine's view, God created humanity to have its end in the enjoyment of God, where people can also enjoy each other in God according to God's conferral of peace upon its citizens. However, Augustine does not limit his conception of harmony to the enjoyment of other human beings in God. He continues: "The peace of all things is the tranquility of order" (*tranquillitas ordinis*). Just as when the principle of *uti et frui* is rightly exercised toward other humans in God, produces harmony, so the right order of creatures within the creation produces peace for the whole creation. This requires that creation be cared for and used rightly. When human dominion over creatures reflects God's rule of goodness and love so that human being exercises properly his being the image of God, he contributes to the peace of all things as he "allots things equal and unequal, each to its own place."⁸⁶⁵ In the contemporary language, this can be translated to justice which is to give each one his due.

Similarly, in *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis, with respect to human society, also understands peace as the fruit of a stable and secure order which ensues when there is right justice which promotes the common good. He writes in the encyclical:

The common good calls for social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice; whenever this is violated, violence always ensues.⁸⁶⁶

In the current ecological crisis, man's failure to rightly exercise the *uti et frui* (in Augustine's language) and thus falls short in living up to his dignity as the image of God, is made manifest when according to Pope Francis:

This vision of "might is right" has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all. Completely at odds with this model are the ideals of harmony, justice, fraternity and peace as proposed by Jesus.⁸⁶⁷

Unfortunately, according to the Pope, those most affected by the profound situation of injustice created by the affluent minority, are the poor and more vulnerable

requies appetitionum, pax animae rationalis ordinata cognitionis actionisque consensio, pax corporis et animae ordinata vita et salus animantis, pax hominis mortalis et Dei ordinata in fide sub aeterna lege oboedientia, pax hominum ordinata concordia, pax domus ordinata imperandi atque oboediendi concordia cohabitantium, pax civitatis ordinata imperandi atque oboediendi concordia civium, pax caelestis civitatis ordinatissima et concordissima societas fruendi Deo et invicem in Deo, pax omnium rerum tranquillitas ordinis."

865 Ibid.

866 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 157.

867 Ibid., 82.

populations of our common household. Where there is injustice, there is always disorder, and where there is disorder, there is no peace. But the Pope remains optimistic that justice, love and peace can still be achieved for “the God who created the universe out of nothing can also intervene in this world and overcome every form of evil. Injustice is not invincible.”⁸⁶⁸

4.2.4.6. Sing and Walk.

Augustine's dynamic vision of the universe conveys creation to be in a constant motion or movement toward the completion of its perfection according to God's will—that is, having its potentials fulfilled through ontological participation in God's fullness. The creature's lack of resting is a sign that they can only find rest outside of themselves, rather than “in themselves.” Their final rest can only be in God, who is their true end—the source of their goodness and happiness.

This creaturely dynamism is even clearer in human beings who are created in the image and likeness of God. That one would want to find rest within oneself rather than in God is part of humanity's sinfulness, expressed in human nature as pride.⁸⁶⁹ Human pride leads to the idea that happiness may be found outside of God and in one's ability to do good and delight in that good apart from God. However, for Augustine, the only true rest that can satisfy man is the rest in the “unchangeable Good, who made us for Himself.”⁸⁷⁰ And it is of this vision of the perfect rest in God, that the famous and beautiful words of Augustine in the *Confessions* flow:

Great are You, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Your power, and of Your wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Your creation, desires to praise You — man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that You resist the proud, — yet man, this part of Your creation, desires to praise You. You move us to delight in praising You; for You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You (*et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te*).⁸⁷¹

The very title of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* — “Praise be to you, my Lord” — which Pope Francis quotes from the *Canticle of Creatures* composed by St. Francis of Assisi

868 Ibid. 74.

869 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. litt.*, 4, 17, 29.

870 Ibid.

871 Augustine, *conf.* 1, 1. Translated by J.G. Pilkington. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 660-61: “Magnus es, Domine, et laudabilis valde: magna virtus tua et sapientiae tuae non est numerus. Et laudare te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae, et homo circumferens mortalitatem suam, circumferens testimonium peccati sui et testimonium, quia superbis resistis; et tamen laudare te vult homo, aliqua portio creaturae tuae. Tu excitas, ut laudare te delectet, quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.”

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in the year 1225, in fact have echoes of the first line of Augustine's *Confessions* (written between the years 397 and 400), as it exhorts praise to the Creator: "Great are You, O Lord, and greatly to be praised (*laudabilis valde*)."⁸⁷²

For Augustine, as for *Laudato Si*'s theological vision, the very existence of creation, and of each and every creature, is to render glory and praise to God. Creation itself becomes an animate temple where the praise of God resounds, as Augustine orates: "Also the heaven, and earth, and all that is therein, behold, on every side they say that I should love You!"⁸⁷³ The scriptures of various religious traditions, and the biblical tradition in particular, abound in references to the unceasing hymn of praise of created realities for the Creator.

In this cosmic liturgy of praise however, human beings have a special role. They are called not only to pray and sing along with all creation in the cosmic liturgy but also to become the very voice of creation's praise of the Creator. It is the unique vocation of human beings to become the voice of the entire creation's unspoken worship of God; as Augustine notes: "The dumb earth has a voice, it has a face."⁸⁷⁴ It is through human being, who possesses reason and freewill that "the heavens declare the glory of God, the moon worships God, the waters and showers of rain, the dew and all creation, venerate God and give glory to God."⁸⁷⁵ And referring to St. Francis of Assisi, the Pope writes: "whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures in his praise."⁸⁷⁶

Finally, in the third to last number of *Laudato Si*', an Augustinian phrase is mentioned, but again, it is not attributed to the Bishop of Hippo, possibly due to chance or haste, or for any other reason. However, the resonance of the words on this point are clearly Augustinian. The Pope says:

In the meantime, we come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us, knowing that all the good which exists here will be taken up into the heavenly feast. In union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God, for "if the world has a beginning and if it has been created, we must enquire who gave it this beginning, and who was its Creator". Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.⁸⁷⁷

872 Augustine, *conf.* 10, 8.

873 Ibid.

874 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 144, 13.

875 Cf. Leontius of Byzantium, *Apologetic Sermon II on the Holy Icons*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857-1928), 93: 1604.

876 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*', 11.

877 Ibid., 244.

St. Basil has been literally quoted,⁸⁷⁸ and later it says: “let us sing as we go”, a clear allusion to Augustine and his famous “*canta et ambula*” as he invites the pilgrims of the City of God to walk their way not with the sadness of sin and despair, but with the joy of love and faith:

So now, my dear brothers and sisters, let us sing, not to delight our leisure, but to ease our toil. In the way travelers are in the habit of singing; sing but keep on walking. Ease your toil by singing, do not fall in love with laziness. Sing, and keep on walking. What's “keep on walking”? Make some progress, make progress in goodness. There are some people, you see, according to the apostle, who progress from bad to worse. You, if you are making progress, are walking; but make progress in goodness, progress in the right faith, progress in good habits and behavior. Sing and keep on walking. Do not stray off the road, don't go back, don't stay where you are.⁸⁷⁹

4.3. Conclusion.

As can be seen in the presentation of the nexus between Augustine's doctrine of creation and the *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis, the Augustinian thought fits quite well within the doctrinal corpus of the Pope. The encyclical presents us with phrases and thoughts remarkably similar, including at times, almost literally identical to those of the Bishop of Hippo, as we have seen on many occasions. From the title up to its concluding prayer, the encyclical seems to have echoed the Augustinian thoughts and doctrines so that we can now affirmed confidently with the Augustinian Recollect Patrologist who observed that in *Laudato Si'*, the Augustinian thought is “so present despite its absence.”⁸⁸⁰ However, possibly because of the conviction that the topic of ecology and the environment was not an urgent issue or a matter of concern during the time of Augustine, he was not referred to in the encyclical. Despite this, as we have pointed out, the Augustinian thought on creation is extremely rich so that it helps us to discover different essential elements that can guide our present-day ecological reflection in the light of the ecological concerns of *Laudato Si'*.

878 Cf. Basil the Great, *Hom. in Hexaemeron*, I, 2, 6: PG 29, 8.

879 Augustine, *s.* 256, 3. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. III, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2007). PL 38, 1193: “*Modo ergo, fratres mei, cantemus, non ad delectationem quietis, sed ad solacium laboris. Quomodo solent cantare viatores; canta, sed ambula; laborem consolare cantando, pigritiam noli amare; canta et ambula. Quid est “ambula”? Profice, in bono profice. Sunt enim, secundum Apostolum, quidam proficientes in peius. Tu Si proficis, ambulas, sed in bono profice, in recta fide profice, in bonis moribus profice: canta et ambula. Noli errare, noli redire, noli remanere. Conversi ad Dominum.*”

880 Mauricio Saavedra y Enrique Eguiarte, *San Agustín y la encíclica ‘Laudato Si’, Una presencia en la ausencia*, in *AVGVSTINVS* (Madrid), vol. 63 (2018), p. 193-194.

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An essential factor to consider is that the Augustinian thinking always starts from the Sacred Scripture. Augustine's reflection on creation and the environment is marked by its constant adherence to the Word of God. He draws the essential ideas which guide the relationship that man must have with nature particularly from the creation stories, keeping in mind that the Creator of all is the triune God, and that creation has a soteriological dimension, continually moving towards that fullness and perfection in eternity. *Laudato Si'* develops along this vein when, by basing its reflection also on the Sacred Scripture, teaches that the entire creation is in *statu viae* moving towards universal communion and has as its ultimate destiny the final communion with the Creator.

On the other hand, creation for Augustine is like a book that speaks of God's beauty and greatness. It is a book that is not written with ink and parchment, but with living beings, which do not stop proclaiming the greatness of their maker. Therefore, the conservation and care of nature has a meaning not only in a practical and secular sense; that is, to take care of nature so that it can continue to be a source of satisfaction for the aesthetic needs of human beings. Moreover, the entire world is also a *sacramentum*, it is a sign that speaks of God and that it invites human beings to raise their eyes and hearts towards transcendent realities. In a surprisingly identical imagery, Pope Francis teaches also that God has written a precious book, "whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe". Then quoting the Canadian bishops, he added "that no creature is excluded from this manifestation of God: 'From panoramic vistas to the tiniest living form, nature is a constant source of wonder and awe. It is also a continuing revelation of the divine'"⁸⁸¹.

Moreover, all creation, in Augustine's worldview, does not only speak of God through its beauty, but also every being is a living testimony of God because it bears the mark and signature of its maker. All beings have been made endowed with measure, form, and weight, in accordance with the text of Wisdom 11:20, and this will be of great importance for Augustine in the various moments of his own theological transformation. In this way, this text from the book of Wisdom will offer Augustine a biblical framework for his own reflection on creation and on the meaning of creation, since every being, regardless of its utility or its size, has been created by God and bears in its being the mark of its creator. This teaching is also at the heart of *Laudato Si'* as it teaches that creation is a form of sacrament which reflects God's presence and His

⁸⁸¹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'* 85. Cf. Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Social Affairs Commission, Pastoral Letter *You Love All that Exists... All Things are Yours, God, Lover of Life* (4 October 2003), 1.

works. Pope Francis points out that “Christians, believing in one God who is trinitarian communion suggests that the Trinity has left its mark on all creation.”⁸⁸²

Human beings, in their relationship with creation, cannot lose sight of their role as stewards and custodians of creation, since God has placed all things at their service, so that he can make them grow and lead them back to God. In relation to the world, man is simply an administrator and not the owner of everything that exists in creation. The Augustinian doctrine of creation rejects the irrational exploitation of natural resources, as well as, on the part of man, the feeling of domination and absolute possession of the things of the earth. For the Bishop of Hippo, the human being is simply a custodian who must take care of creation so that it continues to be bountiful and can satisfy the needs of the present and future generations, and so that the world can continue to be a living sign that speaks to all human beings of the goodness and greatness of God. The Bishop of Hippo is very aware of the social dimension of creation and the goods of nature and is forthright in condemning the abusive, exclusive, and discriminating possession of these natural goods. Everything must be at the service of all men, and creation is made so plentiful so that no human being lacks what is essential for this earthly life. *Laudato Si'*, on the other hand, talks of “ecological sin” which is man’s rupturing of the bonds of union with his Creator, with his fellow human beings, and with the rest of creation. It calls to “acknowledge sins against creation” and make a deep and personal repentance which may lead to the so-called “ecological conversion”. Only from an authentic ecological conversion, that is to say, a conversion which begins in the human heart, that one is able to perceive the sacramental, social, and theological dimension of the world and nature; and only when one has the right perspective that he can begin to build a true ecology. Ecologies which are built on “crypto-pantheistic” ideologies or ecologies which hide other self-vested interests cannot be part of the solution. It is important to build a true Christian ecology, where the human being is recognized as an integral part of creation, yet at the same time, play an important role as its custodian; the one who leads creation toward its perfection and completion in God.

Finally, while *Laudato Si'* concludes its prayerful reflection—characterized as both “joyful and troubling”—by offering two prayers, the first to be shared with believers of other religions and the second among Christians, Augustine can only sing praise to God along with the whole of creation which sings and proclaims the beauty, goodness, and greatness of God:

You have stricken my heart with Your word, and I loved You. And also the heaven, and earth, and all that is therein, behold, on every side they say that I

882 Ibid., 239.

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should love You; nor do they cease to speak unto all, so that they are without excuse.⁸⁸³

883 Augustine, *conf.* 10, 8. Translated by J.G. Pilkington. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1*. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 782: “Percussisti cor meum verbo tuo, et amavi te. Sed et caelum et terra et omnia, quae in eis sunt, ecce undique mihi dicunt, ut te amem, nec cessant dicere omnibus, ut sint inexcusabiles.”

Chapter 5

General Conclusion

The Gospel of John narrates a rare scenario when Jesus Christ became extremely angry and subsequently, turned out to be literally violent: “He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money-changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen, and spilled the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, ‘Take these out of here, and stop making my Father’s house a marketplace’” (John 2: 14-16). Then the disciples recalled the verse from the Psalm (69:9) which they ascribed to Jesus: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

Among the people surrounding Jesus, there were different levels of interpretation regarding the “house” of which Jesus was “afire with zeal”. The Jews understood it as the physical temple, the “*Beit HaMikdash* (Hebrew: *בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ*, meaning, “The Holy House”)⁸⁸⁴ which was the center of the Jewish worship. The disciples, after Christ’s resurrection, had understood this “house” as His own body which was crucified, died, and was buried, but resurrected on the third day. Today, as we face an unprecedented ecological crisis, we could probably, or rather, we should understand this “house” as our common planetary home. It is this common home which is being despoiled, desecrated, and turned into a “marketplace” today, when we persistently inflict harm to our own home and “this sister-earth now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her”⁸⁸⁵.

The “angry reaction” of Jesus Christ in the face of the desecration of the temple was somehow captured and reflected in the general sentiment of the Pastoral Letter published in 1988 by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) as it raised the alarm that “all the living systems on land and in the seas around us are being ruthlessly exploited...” and “the attack on the natural world which benefits very few Filipinos is rapidly whittling away at the very base of our living world and endan-

884 “The Jewish Temple (Beit HaMikdash)”. www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org. Retrieved 2018-01-23.

885 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 1.

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gering its fruitfulness for future generations”.⁸⁸⁶ If there are places on earth where the impact of climate change is strongly felt, the Philippines must be one of them.

The Philippines is an archipelago of about seven thousand six hundred islands and is situated in one of the most vulnerable areas of the earth in terms of natural disasters: an average of twenty tropical storms hit the country every year and records show that in recent years those storms had increasingly devastating effects. Four of the country’s ten most catastrophic storms have occurred in the past decade. Earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are not uncommon due to the country’s geographic location as it is well within the scope of the Pacific Ring of Fire, but recently their occurrence have become more frequent. The sea levels around the archipelago are expected to rise, submerging small Islands at a rate three times greater than the world average in coming decades due to global warming. The threat brought about by environmental devastation is something that cannot anymore be denied especially if one lives in one of the most eco-vulnerable places on earth like the Philippines and the urgency to do something to stop it or at least to contribute in any way possible to slow it down has been felt much stronger these days not only by the Catholic Bishops of the Philippines but also by every Filipino who has the firsthand experience of the precarious state of the land. In a situation of planetary emergency like the collapse of our planetary abode, every inhabitant on earth needs to be aflame once again with “the zeal for our common home!”

The publication of the encyclical *Laudato Si’* on the 24th of May 2015 was precisely intended by Pope Francis to aflame this “zeal” in every man and woman of goodwill living on earth. It was a welcome contribution of the Church to humanity but especially to many Filipinos in a critical area of real human concern. It is a document which many Filipinos, especially those who are engaged in environmental advocacy, had been anticipating for nearly a quarter of a century, and they celebrate both its arrival and its content. To this day, the encyclical remains a subject of discussion especially in many Catholic universities in the country. This does not mean however that the initiatives of the previous Popes and other Church leaders to awaken consciences on matters related to environmental awareness made no impact at all. Indeed, the call of Pope Paul VI to stop the ‘ill-considered exploitation of nature’ so that humanity ‘runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of its degradation’⁸⁸⁷; John Paul II’s warning of the problem of consumerism and man’s failure ‘to look at natural environ-

886 The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, A Pastoral Letter on Ecology: “What is happening to our beautiful land” (Manila: Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, 29 January 1988), 1.

887 Pope Paul VI, Apostolic letter *Octogesimus Adveniens*, (14 May 1971), 21: AAS63 (1971), 416-417.

ment far more than what serves for immediate use and consumption⁸⁸⁸ and his urgent call for ‘ecological conversion’⁸⁸⁹; the counsel of Benedict XVI of the evil of relativism and abuse of freedom so that that creation is harmed ‘where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we used it for ourselves alone’⁸⁹⁰; all these papal messages made a resounding impact both within and outside of the Catholic Church. But for a social issue to gain prominence within the Church and without, it requires a document of the standing of an encyclical. Being regarded as an instrument of the ordinary Magisterium containing the authoritative teaching of the Vicar of Christ, the encyclical bears special integrity and efficacy. In terms of authority in matters of faith and morals, an encyclical is the second most important papal documents (next only to an Apostolic Constitution), exhorting the faithful on a doctrinal issue.

Developed around the concept of integral ecology, *Laudato Si’* squares up to the current problem of consumerism and irresponsible development, laments environmental degradation and global warming. At the heart of this encyclical is the call of Christ “to stop making my Father’s house a marketplace.” Pope Francis invites all people of the world to take “swift and unified global action”.⁸⁹¹ He hinted that the issue on ecological crisis must take into consideration deeper and transcendental questions like “what is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us?” And “unless we struggle with these deeper issues our concern for ecology will not produce significant results”⁸⁹². And based on the conviction that “change is impossible without motivation and a process of education”, he invites everyone to contribute in the so-called ‘ecological education’ that may lead to the so-called ‘ecological conversion’⁸⁹³.

This research work is precisely the fruit of the desire to respond to this specific

888 John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979), 287.

889 Cf. John Paul II, Catechesis (17 January 2011), 4: *Insegnamenti* 41/1 (2011), 179. Prof. Jaime Tatay of Comillas Pontifical University noted that even if this phrase ‘ecological conversion’ is generally ascribed to Pope John Paul II who effectively deepened its meaning in the ecological context, the expression has already been used by the bishops of Lombardy (1988), Balearic Islands (1990), United States (1991), Brazil (1992), Germany (1997), and Czech Republic (2000). Cf. Jaime Tatay Nieto, SJ, *De la «cuestión social» a la «cuestión socio-ambiental» en Cuidar de la Tierra, cuidar de los pobres, Laudato si’ desde la teología y con la ciencia*, ed. por Enrique Sanz Giménez-Rico, 2ª Edición (España: Sal Terrae, 2019), 182.

890 Benedict XVI, address to the clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone (6 August 2008): AAS 100 (2018), 634.

891 Jim Yardley and Laurie Goodstein, “Pope Francis, in Sweeping Encyclical, Calls for Swift Action on Climate Change”, *The New York Times* (18 June 2015), A6.

892 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 11.

893 *Ibid.*, § 15, 213, 216-221.

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call of *Laudato Si'* to promote ecological sensitivity especially among educators in the ambit of philosophy and theology. It is built on the hypothesis that along with the existential and social questions put forward by Pope Francis in the encyclical, there are much deeper metaphysical and even theological roots of the ecological crisis of our time. To achieve this goal, this study has employed an undoubtedly important figure in the doctrinal development of the Church and Western theology—Augustine of Hippo. Hence, the impetus for this study is connected to three factors: the first-hand experience of the devastating effects of climate change, the publication of *Laudato Si'*, and the desire to make a nexus of Augustine's doctrine on creation and *Laudato Si'*.

The question that lingered however, at the very onset of the study was: “does classical Christian theology have good news to contribute to the current ecological issue?” In the face of the question raised by the historian Lynn White Jr. who blamed Christianity “for the devastation of nature in which the West has been engaged for centuries” and the doubt of some contemporary Catholic theologians with strong ecological concerns—the likes of Colin Gunton who proposes that the only way to make a relevant theology of creation is “to overcome the influence of Augustine”; Sallie McFague who perceives as problematic the traditional doctrine of creation ‘*ex nihilo*’; and Anne Primavesi who criticizes the fundamental idea that the universe is a hierarchy—can we still benefit from a theology which is deeply rooted in the doctrine of Judeo-Christian tradition and the Patristics, especially Augustine, and act in it within an ecological framework? After going through an in-depth investigation on the subject matter, we now make a positive affirmation. Augustine's doctrine on creation and the Judeo-Christian tradition of our faith can contribute positively to ecological and ethical concern today.

One of the preliminary questions faced by this study was how to put a ‘logical bridge’ between Augustine's doctrine of creation written in the 4th and 5th centuries and the contemporary ecological issues in the 21st century highlighted in *Laudato Si'*. It seemed anachronistic indeed to apply the practical criteria of current ecology to the thought of Augustine, or to pretend to find in the writings of the Bishop of Hippo reflections on environmental pollution, global warming, or the extinction of species. Obviously, Augustine did not think in contemporary ecological categories when he wrote his reflections on creation the way Pope Francis does when he employs the Church's moral and theological doctrines to current ecological problems that must be faced today; nor could we easily say that the people of today think in same theological and philosophical categories the way thinkers and theologians of the fourth or the fifth century did. Although initially the dilemma seemed to be insurmountable, we have brought to light however, the possibility

to address this question through Augustine's critics themselves. If some modern critics of Augustine had, at least implicitly, blamed his doctrine for the undesirable effects it produced to the subsequent negative worldviews which according to them bear negative impact on political, moral, technological, and scientific developments, then the contrary could also be of equal possibility; that is to say, that some positive influence or lessons can also be learned as well from the Augustinian thoughts.

Indeed, we have shown in this study that, contrary to Gunton's claim, an impartial and unbiased reading of the writings of Augustine could lead one to discover a rich source of essential and indisputable doctrines that should guide the praxis of a true Christian ecology. Moreover, the encyclical *Laudato Si'* itself—despite not having any reference to Augustine—had paved the way for Augustine's relevance in the modern ecological issues. When Pope Francis hinted that the issue on ecological crisis “cannot be approached piecemeal” and that “there is a need to take into consideration deeper and transcendental questions,”⁸⁹⁴ so that the question of ecology is not only a matter of external and environmental issues, but also must involve deeper issues like the meaning of creation, the role of man in the universe, the ecology of the human soul, and above all the triune God as the ultimate source of all created realities, Augustine's rich doctrine in these areas of concern had come into view as an appropriate reference for the current ecological discussions. For Augustine, creation, its care and its purpose, are not disassociated from the triune God, nor from the plans of God and the final destiny of the whole universe, as well as from the social function of the goods of creation. In the thoughts of the Bishop of Hippo, all these concepts are interconnected and inter-related. Therefore, regardless of the interpretations that can be made of the thought of Augustine, his works are full of suggestions and basic principles that must not be disregarded, if ecology must be situated within the correct Christian parameters, and to avoid all forms of ‘perverted ecology’ tainted with concealed pantheism or panentheism—a counter-cultural activism or simply a passing fashion.

Our investigation of *Laudato Si'* and Augustine's doctrine of creation, and the nexus we made of these two worldviews centuries apart, have generated a rich and unique synthesis of insights which combined both the classical and the contemporary reflections on creation and ecology, that can surely contribute to becoming aflame with “the zeal to care for our common home” at the present time.

On the theme of creation, Augustine and Pope Francis have shared a common worldview of the world as a “common home”; that more than just the mere “envi-

894 Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 160.

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ronment” which surrounds us, the earth is above all a home where Life, human life, civilization, religion, philosophy, art, music, literature, science and technology, and a thousand other artifacts of human culture exist and develop. An essential factor to consider is that both Augustine and Pope Francis started their reflection on the natural world from the Word of God. Augustine’s reflection on creation and the environment is marked by its constant adherence to the Sacred Scriptures. He draws the essential ideas which guide the relationship that man must have with nature particularly from the creation stories. In writing the encyclical, Pope Francis also adopted the same approach. By making the book of Genesis as point of departure, the Pope perceived creation as good news, first because it has a basic goodness in it as God Himself sees his creation to be good and the entire creation to be “very good”; and secondly, because the physical world has been brought into existence as an act of love on the part of the triune God. Significantly, we have seen in the interpretation of Genesis by Pope Francis and Augustine that our common home is also God’s own “house”, permeated by the Spirit of God who hovered on the earth from the dawn of creation, where the Son of God pitched His tent in the supreme event of the Incarnation.

Contrary to the accusation against Christianity by the epoch-making Lynn White Thesis, the correct interpretation of the fundamental truth held by the Judeo-Christian faith leads us to perceive the physical world as common home where God co-dwells with humanity, walks on the land, sees, and contemplates the beauty of creation in the person of Christ. *Laudato Si’* stresses that the contemporary ecological crisis, in fact, lays bare precisely man’s incapacity to perceive the physical world as impregnated with divine presence. It points out that the real root of ecological problem is that modernity has been marked by an “excessive anthropocentrism” in which human beings place themselves at the center of the universe, usurping the primacy of the Creator and ruthlessly pillaging the rest of creation. Humanity has swapped the lofty vision of the physical world as God’s own abode, sanctified by the incarnation of the Son of God, with cold, dull, one-dimensional mechanistic outlook of modernity. Accordingly, the physical world gets reduced to a mere storehouse of resources for human consumption, just real estate for market speculation. It is such a reductive perception of the physical world which has enabled both materialistic and neoliberal economic systems, aided by modern technology, to ravage our home planet. Through pollution of the planet’s land, air, and waters, we have degraded our common home which is also God’s own home. Indeed, with our failure to see God’s presence in creation; with our abuse of nature and negligence to care for the earth, we have turned this sacred abode into a “marketplace”! Now the encyclical virtually echoes the cry of Jesus in the temple area: “stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!”

On the other hand, creation for Augustine becomes a great book that speaks of God's beauty and greatness. It is a book that is not written with ink and parchment, but with living beings, which do not stop proclaiming the greatness of their maker, so that man, by making an *exercitatio animi* can seek and find Him in the environment. For Augustine, the conservation and care of nature has a meaning not only in a practical and secular sense so that it can continue to be a source of satisfaction for the needs of human beings, but above all because the entire creation is itself beautiful so that it continually fascinates humanity in all time and ages. It is also a *sacramentum*, a sign that speaks of God; every creature regardless of its utility and size bears in its reality measure, form, and weight in accordance with Wisdom 11:20, thus reflecting the triune nature of its Creator. It invites human beings to raise their eyes and hearts towards transcendent realities, and not to remain tangled and locked up in their quest for material goods of this earth. In a surprisingly identical imagery, Pope Francis teaches also that God has written a precious book, "whose letters are the multitude of created things present in the universe". Like the Augustinian viewpoint, there is a strong aesthetic as well as sacramental element running through the encyclical. Its concern to conserve the earth and all the species on it, is not simply a matter of use as an instrument; it is also a matter of appreciation and the recovery of the sense of sacredness in every created reality. Creatures have value in themselves not only because they are useful to human but also because they have inherent beauty "which we will never know, which our children will never see because they have been lost forever."⁸⁹⁵ In themselves, they also have sacramental value which man defiles when he destroys nature because creatures, when they become extinct "will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, nor convey their message to us."⁸⁹⁶

In relation to man, we also found a stunning affinity of perspective between Augustine and Pope Francis. The encyclical stresses the highest dignity that the human being has above all other creatures, without failing to show the deep respect for other creatures. On the other hand, it also warns of the incoherence that can be observed at present in certain pseudo-ecological movements which have misunderstood ecology, and that seek to place other animal species above human beings. For his part, Augustine emphasizes that the dignity of man comes from being made in the image and likeness of the triune God, so he is the only being who has understanding and reason, capable of knowing God, the *summae naturae capax*⁸⁹⁷ and therefore has been placed by God to govern the rest of creation in His name. But man is simply an administrator,

895 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 33.

896 Ibid.

897 Cf. Augustine, *trin.* 14, 4, 6.

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a guardian, and not the owner of all that exist. He must use creatures in moderation and in a rational way (*uti*), and that only in God can they be enjoyed and utilized fully (*frui*). On the other hand, *Laudato Si'* also points out that man's superiority, having been gifted with reason and freewill, does not empower him to seek "personal glory or irresponsible dominion", but rather a "different capacity"⁸⁹⁸ which entails serious responsibility to care for each other and the rest of creation. Both Pope Francis and Augustine have taught that while all created beings deserve respect, animals or other created beings cannot be placed before the human being, since man is the only created being with understanding and freewill, able to know and love God. By this highest faculty given to him, man is not only called to govern creation; he is also called to become the very voice of creation's praise of the Creator.

Moreover, the encyclical seeks to integrate the concerns of the planet and of the poor. The ecological imbalance particularly affects the poorest and least favored, and it is necessary to establish an integral ecology which respects human being and nature, so that those who have less can lead a dignified life. Augustine for his part taught that the goods of creation and the environment have been created for all men, and not just for an exclusive few. The Bishop of Hippo is very aware of the social dimension of creation and the goods of nature and is forthright in condemning the abusive, exclusive, and discriminating possession of these natural goods by the rich and powerful against the weak and the poor. Everything must be at the service of all men, and creation is made so plentiful so that no human being in every place and epoch lacks what is essential for this earthly life. In conformity with this worldview, *Laudato Si'* points out that the care of creation is something we owe especially to the more vulnerable members of our common household, who are the early and disproportionate victims of the degradation of our common home. We owe it also to the future generations. One of the most powerful questions raised by Pope Francis in the encyclical and which resounds loudly in our ears, even after we have laid down the text, is: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?"⁸⁹⁹ Then the Pope goes on to warn us: "Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn."⁹⁰⁰

The destruction of the environment begins with man destroying his own self. Disorder and imbalance may ensue in all human community when, according to August-

898 Ibid., 220

899 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 160.

900 Ibid.

tine, the *ordo* in the human heart is altered. When man breaks the *ordo amoris* by forgetting God and places himself at the foreground, disorder is triggered. In the language of *Laudato Si'*, it employed the word “modern anthropocentrism”, referring to modern man’s tendency to make himself the absolute center of all things. Therefore, for Augustine as well as for Pope Francis, the ecological problem is not only an external and environmental issue, but above all it is an internal matter that traces its root to the more fundamental problem of the “ecology of the soul”. Hence, in concordance with the Augustinian ecological thoughts, one of the fundamental steps to be taken if ecological problem were to be addressed, is for man to make a proper disposition of his interior self by moderating and setting right his desires according to the *ordo amoris*, because only in this way can he direct his actions as the true custodian of creation, and not as its exploiter or owner. *Laudato Si'*, on the other hand, talks of “ecological sin” which is man’s rupturing of the bonds of union with his own self, with his Creator, with his fellow human beings, and with the rest of creation. It calls to “acknowledge sins against creation” and make a deep and personal repentance which may lead to the so-called “ecological conversion”. The silver lining in the clouds, however, is that “human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start.”⁹⁰¹ Hence, all is not yet lost! Men and women are still capable of intervening positively to rectify the mistake. “Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home.”⁹⁰² It is important to build a true Christian ecology, where the human being is recognized as an integral part of creation, yet at the same time, play an important role as its custodian; the one who leads creation toward its perfection and completion in God.

On the theme of God as the creator, both Augustine and Pope Francis have emphasized the “*creatio ex nihilo*” of all things and the trinitarian dimension of creation. The world was brought into being by God *ex nihilo*, i.e., not from any pre-existent matter, nor from the uncreated substance of God, but from complete void. And this creator-God is the Trinity. Contrary to the view of some modern critics of Augustine who—in their attempt to eradicate the “problematic dualism” or the “unbridgeable gap” between God and the world in traditional theology—would like to see God being ‘embodied’ in creation or better still, a God who ‘gives birth’ to creation,⁹⁰³ Augustine and Pope Francis teach that creation does not emanate from the substance of God nor was created from any pre-existing matter, but from complete “nothing”. The issue of

901 Ibid., 205.

902 Ibid., 13.

903 Cf. Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age* (London: SCM, 1987), 109 and Anne Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity* (London: Burns & Oates, 1991), 203.

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dualism and hierarchy highlighted by Augustine's critics, becomes problematic only within a system where relations of distinct realities ought to be unified and interdependent. But in Augustine's scheme of things, God is not within the same frame of reference with creation. While creation needs God's providence for its existence and sustenance, God in His fullness does not need creation at all.⁹⁰⁴ Augustine stresses that creation is purely the result of God's inherent goodness, "for He found His works pleasing, in keeping with the benevolence by which He was pleased to create them".⁹⁰⁵ For Augustine, creation tells us most about God when it is most clearly different from Him; it speaks of God's perfection by being imperfect, it shows God's immutability by being changeable. And the more creation shares in the sort of life that God has, the more it steers us back inevitably to their fundamental difference.⁹⁰⁶

On the other hand, in the face of the present-day secular trend which perceives the physical world as given, uncreated, thus reducing it into a mere inert matter, passive and helpless before man's quest for control and mastery, the doctrine of "*creatio ex nihilo*" stresses the immutability of the Creator and the contingent and temporal character of creation. Since existence is not ontologically bound to its essence, the entire creation has 'ontological dependence' for its continuous existence on the Creator whose existence is necessary and eternal. If the trinitarian God does not positively desire and sustain creation with His creative and providential power, it would simply regress to non-existence. Only the all-powerful God can preserve it from total annihilation! This worldview of creation based on "*creatio ex nihilo*" would lead us to value every creature with reference to the Creator. Every being exists because God desires it, God wills and sustains it!

Augustine also teaches that because God is the ultimate foundation of existence, every creature manifests the reality of the triune Creator as it bears in itself the mark of the Creator through its measure, form, and weight as indicated in the text of Wisdom 11:20. Augustine does not explicitly identify the persons of the Trinity with any of these three characteristics mentioned by the text of Wisdom 11:20, since for him each divine Person possesses all of these characteristics at the same time, and their perfect unity in the love of the Holy Spirit, makes them act in unison and perfect harmony. Along with this Augustinian doctrinal trend, Pope Francis points out that "the divine Persons are subsis-

904 Cf. Rowan Williams, *On Augustine*, pp. 59-78. The insights presented in this book on God's "needlessness" of creation was previously presented in William's article *Good for Nothing? Augustine on Creation: Augustinian Studies* 25 (1994), 9-24.

905 Augustine, *Gn. litt.* 1, 8, 14.

906 Cf. Augustine, *s.* 126, 3. In here, Augustine explains the fundamental difference between the visible creation and the invisible Creator, even if creation somehow reflects the reality of the Creator.

tent relations” and our world is “a web of relationships” precisely because it is “created according to the divine model”.⁹⁰⁷ The Pope describes how a trinitarian God is the origin and the sustaining principle of creation, and how each of the three Persons in their relational nature is intimately and uniquely present in the world. This beautiful reflection of the Pope can be appreciated more if seen in the light of the Augustinian doctrine that all things in this world were made, not out of necessity, but out of His free will, out of the abundance of His love and goodness (*abundantiam beneficentiae*) which continually directs the world towards its perfection and final consummation in the kingdom of heaven.

Moreover, for Augustine and Pope Francis, God created the world for a sublime purpose of leading all creation toward its fullness in Christ in the kingdom of heaven. For Augustine, creation has a soteriological dimension, continually moving towards that fullness and perfection in eternity. And like Augustine, the Pope teaches that the entire creation is in *statu viae* moving towards universal communion and has as its ultimate destiny the final communion with the Creator—the telos of all creation to be recapitulated in Christ when God will be all in all. This dynamic worldview on creation clearly has echoes of the Augustinian tradition of establishing the link between “protology” and “eschatology”, highlighting the doctrine that the Immanent Trinity does not remain passive or stays on the margins of the evolution of history, but that this God is also the Economic Trinity who continues to act in the midst of the world, actively ushering it towards perfection not only through its salvific interventions, but also particularly through divine providence which sustains all creation and makes it remain in its own being. Only from the Christian holistic perspective, where “Protology” converges with *soteriology* and *eschatology*, can one live a true ecology according to the teachings of Augustine and *Laudato Si’*.

This truth of our Christian faith is also the true foundation of our Christian hope, as Pope Francis beautifully stresses: “God, who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world, the Lord of life, who loves us so much, is always present. He does not abandon us, he does not leave us alone, for he has united himself definitively to our earth, and his love constantly impels us to find new ways forward.”⁹⁰⁸

To achieve an authentic ecological conversion, we have also seen how Pope Francis, along with ecological education, proposes for an authentic “ecological spirituality” capable of motivating and nourishing our actions for the safeguarding of our common home. This type of spirituality is strongly anchored in the incarnational and

907 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, 240.

908 *Ibid.*, 245.

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sacramental vision of the world. It calls to imitate Jesus, the incarnate Word, who when He was on earth, contemplated “the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, or when seeing the rich young man and knowing his restlessness, He looked at him with love (Mk. 10:21). He was completely present to everyone and to everything...”⁹⁰⁹ It is on account of the mystery of the incarnation in which God entered and embraced the whole of creation and sanctified every created reality thereby. Moreover, this ecological spirituality also embraces a sacramental vision of the natural world. It is a spirituality which sees “a subtle mystery in each of the movements and sounds of this world”;⁹¹⁰ it adopted Saint Bonaventure’s doctrine that “contemplation deepens the more we feel the working of God’s grace within our hearts, and the better we learn to encounter God in creatures outside ourselves,”⁹¹¹ and St. John of the Cross’ spiritual insight “that all the goodness present in the realities and experiences of this world “is present in God eminently and infinitely, or more properly, in each of these sublime realities is God”.⁹¹² The Pope however, clarified that “this is not because the finite things of this world are really divine, but because the mystic experiences the intimate connection between God and all beings, and thus feels that “all things are God”.⁹¹³

Along this long list of spiritual writers, we have added the spiritual insight of Augustine on the created world; for him, the things around us are form of sacrament, signs and semiotic instruments that invite human being to go beyond, to transcend, and to discover the Creator, but in themselves they are not “gods”. In the face of this modern pantheistic worldview, which on some occasions can even be hidden in a Christian or biblically inspired thought, taking the form of a crypto-pantheistic environmentalism, Augustine’s doctrine on creation can shed light on how we should look at creation and discover its proper place in the natural order of things. According to the Bishop of Hippo, the goodness and beauty of creation are primarily signs which reminds us of the Creator. And being signs of something beyond themselves, their

909 Ibid., 226.

910 Ibid., 233. Cf. Ali al-Khawas, Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch [ed.], *Anthologie du soufisme*, Paris 1978, 200.

911 Ibid., Cf. Saint Bonaventure, *In II Sent.*, 23, 2, 3.

912 Ibid., 234. Cf. St. John of the Cross, *Cántico Espiritual*, XIV, 5.

913 Prof. Pedro Castelao of the Pontifical University of Comillas suspected though that the most probable reason why *Laudato Si’*, in dealing with Creator-creatures relationship, did not make reference to any of the great Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, etc., despite Pope Francis best effort to be inclusive of all religions and faith, is the fact that the said religions tend to view ‘god’ to be less personal in nature and are inclined to perceive the material world as the result of an emanation from a ‘divine entity’ like the ‘sun with its rays’ or the ‘ocean with its waves’. Cf. Pedro Castelao, *La «cuestión ecológica» y la teología de la creación*, en *Cuidar de la Tierra, cuidar de los pobres, Laudato si’ desde la teología y con la ciencia*, ed. por Enrique Sanz Giménez-Rico, 2ª Edición (España: Sal Terrae, 2019), 70-74.

splendid beauty and harmony should lead us towards the beauty of God Himself. For this reason, Augustine invites us to strip environmentalism of its pagan elements to be able to transcend towards the Creator. There is no ‘goddess nature’; there is only an omnipotent God who, moved by pure love and mercy, has created everything from nothing.⁹¹⁴ After all, the world is contingent and need not to exist,⁹¹⁵ yet it has existed because of the abundant goodness and generosity of the Creator. For this reason, creation is a living and patent sign that must lead man to meet his own maker, as Augustine says: “contemplate the beauty of the world and praise the Creator’s design: see what He did and love the One who did it. But remember mainly this: love the One who made it; because you, who love Him, are also made in His image”.⁹¹⁶

Towards the end of our investigation, we also found that even the very title of the encyclical *Laudato Si’*, “Praise be to you, my Lord”, which Pope Francis quotes from the *Canticle of Creatures* composed by St. Francis of Assisi in the year 1225, has, in fact, echoes of the first line of Augustine’s *Confessions* (written between the years 397 and 400), as it exhorts praise to the Creator: “*Laudabilis valde*,”⁹¹⁷ “Great are You, O Lord, and greatly to be praised!” For Augustine and Pope Francis, the very existence of creation is to render glory and praise to God. Creation itself becomes an animate temple where the praise of God resounds. In this cosmic liturgy of praise however, human beings have a special role. They are called not only to pray and sing along with all creation in the cosmic liturgy but also to become the very voice of creation’s praise of the Creator. It is the unique vocation of human beings to become the voice of the entire creation’s unspoken worship of God, as Augustine notes: “The dumb earth has a voice, it has a face.”⁹¹⁸ It is through human being, who possesses reason and freewill that “the heavens declare the glory of God, the moon worships God, the waters and showers of rain, the dew and all creation, venerate God and give glory to God.”⁹¹⁹ And referring to St. Francis of Assisi, the Pope writes: “whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures in

914 Cf. Augustine, *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 2, 4: Also *Gn. adu. Man.* 1, 6, 10. CSEL 91, 76/1-3: “Et ideo Deus rectissime creditur omnia de nihilo fecisse, quia etiamsi omnia formata de ista materia facta sunt, haec ipsa materia tamen de omnino nihilo facta est.”

915 Augustine, *ciu.* 11, 4. PL 41, 319: “Sed quid placuit aeterno Deo tunc facere caelum et terram, quae antea non fecisset? Qui hoc dicunt, si mundum aeternum sine ullo initio, et ideo nec a Deo factum videri volunt, nimis aversi sunt a veritate et letali morbo impietatis insaniunt.

916 Augustine, *s.* 68, 5. PL 38, 439: “Vide pulchritudinem mundi, et lauda consilium Creatoris: vide quod fecit, ama qui fecit. Tene hoc maxime, ama qui fecit; quia et te ipsum amatorem suum ad imaginem suam fecit”.

917 Augustine, *conf.* 10, 8.

918 Augustine, *en. Ps.* 144, 13.

919 Cf. Leontius of Byzantium, *Apologetic Sermon II on the Holy Icons*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J. Migne, 161 vols. (Paris, 1857-1928), 93: 1604.

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his praise.”⁹²⁰

Finally, in his dynamic vision of the created world which constantly progresses onwards in the providential care of its Creator until its completion in God Himself, the Pope admonishes us that “in union with all creatures, we journey through this land seeking God...*Let us sing as we go.* May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope.”⁹²¹ This beautiful piece of exhortation recalls Augustine’s famous “*canta et ambula*” as he invites the pilgrims of the City of God to walk their way not with the sadness of sin and despair, but with the joy of love and faith as he says: “So now, my dear brothers and sisters, let us sing, not to delight our leisure, but to ease our toil...Sing, and keep on walking...make progress in goodness, progress in the right faith, progress in good habits and behavior. Sing and keep on walking.”⁹²² And as Pope Francis concludes his prayerful reflection which is both “joyful and troubling” by offering two prayers, the first to be shared with believers of other religions and the second among Christians, Augustine can only sing one song of praise to God in union with the rest of creation which sings and proclaims the beauty, goodness, and greatness of God: “You have stricken my heart with Your word, and I loved You. Also, the heaven, and earth, and all that is therein, behold, on every side they say that I should love You...”⁹²³

It is significant that the encyclical *Laudato Si*’ was issued on the day of the solemnity of Pentecost in 2015, a day in which Christians all over the world commemorate the work of the Spirit of God in creation and in redemption. As generations of believers had been praying down through the centuries, we too can pray today with the Psalmist: “Send forth your Spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth” (Psalm 104:30). We pray that the same Spirit who hovered over the formless waters at the dawn of creation; who overshadowed Mary on the day of the Annunciation which culminated in the supreme act of Incarnation; who descended like a dove over Jesus on the day He

920 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, 11.

921 Ibid., 244.

922 Augustine, *s.* 256, 3. Trans. By Edmund Hill, OP. From the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Vol. III, ed. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2007). PL 38, 1193: “Modo ergo, fratres mei, cantemus, non ad delectationem quietis, sed ad solacium laboris. Quomodo solent cantare viatores; canta, sed ambula; laborem consolare cantando, pigritiam noli amare; canta et ambula. Quid est “ambula”? Profice, in bono profice. Sunt enim, secundum Apostolum, quidam proficientes in peius. Tu Si proficis, ambulas, sed in bono profice, in recta fide profice, in bonis moribus profice: canta et ambula. Noli errare, noli redire, noli remanere. Conversi ad Dominum.”

923 Augustine, *conf.* 10, 8. Translated by J.G. Pilkington. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). PL 32, 782: “Percussisti cor meum verbo tuo, et amavi te. Sed et caelum et terra et omnia, quae in eis sunt, ecce undique mihi dicunt, ut te amem, nec cessant dicere omnibus, ut sint inexcusabiles.”

was baptized by John the Baptist in the river Jordan as He inaugurated his messianic ministry; who raised Jesus from the claws of death on Easter day... may this same Spirit also open our minds to understand the meaning of Christ's word: "stop making my Father's house a marketplace," and inflame many hearts today with the "zeal" for the care of our common planetary home. Glory and power be His forever and ever!

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