Spring Institute for Lived Theology

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Session #4: Professor Jürgen Moltmann & Willis Jenkins

"The New Earth in which Justice Dwells: The Creative Spirit and Ecological Consciousness"

Willis Jenkins, a graduate student in Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, opened the session and responded to Dr. Moltmann's lecture (much of which was taken from God for a Secular Society, *Chapter 2). Jenkins's doctoral work is focused on Christian theology and environmental ethics.*

Jenkins: Since this isn't so much an academic conference as an exercise in community reflection, I thought that, rather than preparing a formal response, it might be most helpful for me to introduce from my own perspective and my own experience - not just academically but also my work in the church – just how I've found Professor Moltmann's work most helpful and where I've found it bearing the most promise. I'm sure he'll generate conversation easily, so I want to get my word in first!

My main point is simply this: both in our theology and in our practical work we have struggled to integrate environment and faith. Professor Moltmann opens paths for reconnecting biblical faith with life on earth. His theology helps churches imagine how to embody the gospel in an age of ecological crises.

In the past few decades a number of theologians have complained that we somewhere lost the doctrine of creation. They don't mean we stopped saying God created everything and said it was good, but that in both thought and practice we easily forget that we are one of those creatures God made, and that we experience grace as earth creatures. During the same period we find a growing number of theologians, not always the same ones, trying to reclaim a lost sense of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit we struggle to talk about friendship with God. Taking those two lapses in theological memory together, we

could say that our theologies struggle to talk about the meaning of createdness for friendship with God.

Now consider this: between World War I and the end of the Cold War, 95% of whales were destroyed. Probably more than 80% of elephant social groups, and perhaps 75% of the habitat for chimpanzees was deforested while we began capturing them for research. And these are just the creatures we actually like. Military industry also helped show us how to mine coal by exploding the tops off mountains and how to open rainforest roads by dropping defoliant projectiles.

So it seems fitting that Professor Moltmann begins his reflections in the *Source of Life* as a prisoner of war and eventually comes to the Spirit renewing the face of all creation. We are coming out of a century of wars on this earth, and Moltmann's work dares to proclaim hope in the aftermath, the possibility of conversion even in the midst of devastation and loss. The trick of grace, Moltmann suggests, is experiencing the abundance of God right in that very devastation, opening ourselves to God's Spirit from the very cries of anguish.

For a variety of reasons environmentalism and religion got off to a bad start with each other, especially in this country. From the 1960s up until about ten years ago, the two seemed at odds with each other, and for evangelical Protestants, probably anathema. Since the 1990s things have changed a bit, with secular environmentalists and faith groups beginning to cooperate, and now it is the evangelicals sometimes with the most exciting practical and political projects.

Environmental issues are new, complex, and often beyond our conceptual reach, past our linguistic facility. Only in the 1970's did the world begin to acknowledge its powers for making other species go extinct. It was not until the late 1980's that humans began debating anthropogenic climate changes – a problem beyond any political scope. It was not until the 1990s that serious worldwide conversation began about the possible meanings of sustainability. So it's not unreasonable that theology is just catching up, that

we as faith communities have been uncertain how to respond. Humans generally are uncertain.

But for just that reason we must listen anew to the good news, pray and wait upon what the Spirit is saying to us. This is an evangelistic opportunity; to fail to speak the good news here might be to fail almost entirely. I think it was Luther who said something like, I can be fearlessly proclaiming the gospel on every front, but if I fail to speak the good news at the one point the devil presses, then I fail. Folks, the devil is pressing.

That's why Professor Moltmann says so strongly that the environmental crisis is an ecclesial crisis. To fail here to proclaim Christ in word and deed is, as Moltmann writes, practiced atheism, self-excommunication from the resurrected body, sacrilege against God's promise.

But undoubtedly churches have been slow and awkward on practical environmental issues. Even those of us already disposed to worry about them have trouble figuring out how the church would missionally express that concern. We have some idea of what social justice looks like, some ideas about evangelism – but what does an environmental ministry look like? And how does it make sense in relation to other central Christian activities like feeding the poor and visiting the sick? It's great to have a fair-trade coffee hour or a St. Francis Day blessing of the animals; but how do these things connect to the heart of Christian hope? How do they proclaim the grace of createdness? How do they bring our relations with all creation into Christian identity? What does earth have to do with following Jesus?

From my own experience with international mission in the Anglican Communion, these questions were pressed upon me when I got out of college and volunteered for a while with the churches in Uganda. And I found there a mix of all kinds of vulnerabilities of people who are created. There was good preaching about AIDS, surprisingly good preaching about AIDS where I was. There was the development of theologies of indigenous liturgy; there was theological reflection and missional responses to things like

healthcare, orphans, family structures in a post-AIDS society, female empowerment, refugees, reconciliation, and even thoughts about globalization at a surprisingly local level. But at the same time, even though there were environmental issues, ecological issues intertwined with this through and through, such that forests of the people were made more and more vulnerable by environmental degradation - even though that was obvious to everyone and people talked about it - the church didn't seem to have much to say about it. There wasn't much preaching even though there was a fair amount of action. Churches would regularly organize to do things like protect clean water or make sure the wetlands were not disturbed, those sorts of things; but that sort of thing didn't make it into preaching. And I wondered about it. Slowly as I came to see how environment was intertwined with the whole sense of being a community I came to wonder over this quietness. It seemed to me that for those Christians yearning for some deeper understanding of playing a Christian ecological role or for making sense of nature within the Christian story - for some way of understanding environmental care as a Christian practice, as a matter of Christian community - that their faith was left uncertainly disconnected from basic human questions about how to live in a place, what good work means. Forget about biblical topics like "covenant with the land" or "praying in the wilderness", let alone Job's small silence before the Creator's awesome whirlwind or the psalmist joining in praise with all of creation or the city of God flowing with pure streams and overgrown with fruiting trees. Those things are so far removed from our cultural ways of life and faith practices, they seem almost allegorical, just symbols for some interior spiritual thing.

Professor Moltmann's work, however, has helped us take those biblical metaphors more seriously. He reminds us the coming Kingdom is not just a turn of phrase, but a present experience of the Holy Spirit, a real embodied community. Sabbath is not just rest for the weary, but a covenantal feast with the land. The cosmic Christ is no mere flowery title, but a practical affirmation, that we live in the one through whom all things were made – and therefore as Christians are reborn into creation. When we are born into new life, we are awakened to lives all around us. We have no choice but to follow Jesus in the company of all those other creatures because in the risen Jesus the community of creation

is renewed. So too for Pentecost, for the "Spirit poured out on all flesh:" Moltmann insists that experiencing the life-giving creative Spirit is not esoteric allegory, but a real promise, a presence opening our lives to the presence of God all around us. Professor Moltmann reminded us yesterday that abundance is no disembodied metaphor, but an actual experience of the Spirit. In a similar way, his work in environmental theology reminds us that the new creation is no otherworldly cipher, but an actual promise that we experience through the church's life in the Holy Spirit.

Just that would be enough. It would be enough if Professor Moltmann's work reclaimed for earth its gospel hope and the practical ecological importance of biblical words. But there is *more than enough*.

Professor Moltmann's books come toward environmental issues from many theological angles. Within nearly every theological topic on the syllabus, Moltmann finds its relation to the earth. Environment is not something that just comes up in the doctrine of creation; it is in his treatment of the Trinity, of Christology, of the Holy Spirit, of salvation, and of the last things. Reading Moltmann, we are continually reminded of our createdness, and we are offered resources for exploring those basic human questions through the hope of our faith. Ecology doesn't determine his theology, but neither does he let theological reflection forget its earthly place. Reclaiming createdness at every turn, Moltmann leads nature back into the heart of Christian identity.

Moreover, when we don't let theology forget its earthiness, Moltmann shows us how bringing faith to environmental problems re-opens some central, difficult questions in theology. Facing ecological challenges, we come to ask again how to think of God's relation to the world, what to make of creaturely freedom and how to picture that freedom participating in God's action. He lets us wonder what the teeming earth is up to in God, and how to discern the presence of God amidst it, and to think about why we recoil from aspects of nature at odds with biblical hope. He asks us to reconsider how God's saving promise to us bears hope for the rest of the creatures. Those are difficult, sometimes abstract questions – but at stake in them is how we make a home on earth and in God.

So Moltmann's theology lets our environmental crises illuminate all these questions. He lets those cries of anguish rebirth our theology. And he lets that happen from within biblical exegesis and systematic treatment. Perhaps for this most of all his work is respected by a remarkably wide spectrum of readers. Moltmann is quoted approvingly by covenantal theologians and evangelicals, as well as by revisionary ecofeminists and Gaia theorists. Two days ago at a luncheon, Bill McKibben and an environmental economist – at opposite ends on things – had both read Moltmann's books approvingly and were excited to meet him. And I think that shows the wide-range his work has. His readers seem to sense that Moltmann begins to show how the gospel can address all the earth, and how all creatures somehow participate in grace. Professor Moltmann shows that true environmentalism is not anti-human, and that simply may be his greatest contribution; quite the contrary, it is an invitation into the fullness of life.

Moltmann: Now, my response (laughs). It's on the destruction and healing of the earth, an approach to ecological theology. And I would like to offer first reasons why we have destructed the earth, and then the second part, are there ways out of this danger?

The destruction of the environment which we are causing through our present global economic system will undoubtedly seriously jeopardize the survival of humanity in this century. We must be clear about that. Modern industrial society has thrown out of balance the equilibrium of the earth's organism, and is on the way to universal ecological death. You (Willis) have spoken about the extinction of species on earth. The destruction of the ozone layer of the atmosphere is another point. The sea level will rise so that my home town of Hamburg may disappear along with a lot of islands in the Pacific. I don't need to repeat all these things. The human race can become extinct like the dinosaurs millions of years ago. What makes this thought so disquieting is the fact that we can no longer retrieve the poisons which are rising into the earth's ozone layer and those that are seeping in to the ground. Consequently we don't know whether the die has not already been cast, as far as the fate of humanity is concerned. And this is really troubling. If we were to know that the end is already close we would do nothing; if we

would know that it will take a long time we would also do nothing. But because we are troubled with this uncertainty we still can do something and must do something. I'll remind you of Martin Luther who said, "When the world would come to an end tomorrow I would plant an apple tree today." And this may be good for all of us, to plant apple trees today and not wait until tomorrow or give up.

It's not only the destruction of the environment through modern industry. Indira Gandhi once said, "poverty is the worst pollution," and this is true. And I would add that the worst environmental pollution is war. We still have millions of land mines everywhere in the world, and it's very easy to bring them into the earth but very difficult to detect them and get them out of the earth. And I do not need to remind you of what is in the Iraq soil now – poison and ammunition, etcetera. So it's not poverty as such that is the pollution, but it is the corruption that causes poverty. It is a vicious circle especially in the poorer nations, leading to death: impoverishment leads everywhere to over-population, because children are the only security life has to offer. And over-population leads to the consumption not only of all the foodstuffs, but of the very foundation from which people live. That is why it is in the poor countries that the deserts are growing most rapidly.

I believe that this ecological crisis of the earth is a crisis of modern scientific and technological civilization itself. The great project of the modern world is threatened with failure. So it's not just a moral crisis, as Pope John Paul II maintained; it's a religious crisis of the things in which people in the Western or modern world put their trust. I will try to show this in the first section, and shall then go on to show three perspectives drawn from the religious traditions of the Western world, which can lead us from the destruction of the earth to harmony and consensus with it.

The religious crisis of the modern world

The living relationship of a human society to its natural environment is determined by the human techniques by means of which human beings acquire their foodstuffs from nature

and give it back their waste. This "metabolism" with nature is really as natural as breathing in the air and breathing it out again. So this is the normal way of dealing with nature. But ever since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution it has been increasingly determined and governed solely by human beings, and not also by nature. So human technologies are applied science, and all scientific knowledge will sometime or other be technologically applied and utilized, since – as Francis Bacon declared – "knowledge is power". So send your children to the university so that they gain knowledge and they will be powerful. Natural science in knowledge about the power of disposing over things and dominating them.

Now technologies and sciences are always developed under the pressure of particular human interests. We never have them value-free. Interests precede them, direct them, and put them to work. These human interests, for their part, are guided by the fundamental values and convictions of a given society. And these fundamental values and convictions are quite simply what everyone in a particular society takes for granted, because within the system of that society they are self-evident and plausible.

Now if a crisis arises in a life-system of this kind, which links a human society with the nature surrounding it, because nature is dying, the logical result will be a crisis of the whole system, its attitude to life, its life-style, and not least its fundamental values and convictions. What interests and concerns, and what values, rule our scientific and technological civilization? To put it simply: it is the boundless will towards domination which has driven modern men and women to seize power over nature, and is driving them still. In the competitive struggle for existence, scientific discoveries and technological inventions are used by the political will to acquire, secure and extend power. Among us, growth and progress are measured by increase of power, economic, financial and, not least, military.

If we compare our civilization with pre-modern cultures, the difference leaps to the eye. It is the difference between growth and equilibrium. Those pre-modern civilizations were anything but "primitive" or "underdeveloped". On the contrary, they were highly

complicated systems of equilibrium which ordered the relation of people to nature and to the gods. Very complicated systems of equilibrium. It is only modern Western civilizations which for the first time are one-sided, being programmed solely towards development, growth, expansion and conquest. Today we call it "globalization". Why did this come about?

Well, the deepest reason can probably be found in the religion of modern men and women. The Judeo-Christian religion is often made responsible for the human seizure of power over nature, and for the unbridled thrust of the human will for power. Even if ordinary modern men and women do not see themselves as particularly religious, they have at least done everything they could to obey the divine commandment of their own destiny: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it." One might say that they have done more than enough already to meet the target. But this commandment and this image of the human being is more than 3,000 years old, whereas the modern culture of conquest and expansion grew up in Europe with the conquest of America, no more than 400 years ago. So we have to look elsewhere for the reasons. And in my view they can be found in the picture of God which modern men and women have adopted since the time of Renaissance.

Ever since the European Renaissance, the understanding of God in Western Europe has been increasingly one-sided: "God is the Almighty". Omnipotence has been considered the pre-eminent attribute of his divinity. God is the Lord, the world is his property, and God can do with it what he likes. He is the absolute determining subject, and the world is the passive object of his sovereignty. In the Western tradition, God moved more and more into the transcendent sphere, while the world was understood in a purely immanent and this-worldy sense. God was thought of without a world, and so the world could be understood without a God. It lost the divine mystery of its creation, the "world soul", the *anima mundi*, and could be stripped of its magic by science.

Now if human being were bound to see themselves, in complete correspondence with this God, as rulers – that is, as the determining subjects of knowledge and will, standing over

against their world, which was their passive object, and subduing it. God is the Lord, the Almighty over heaven and earth, and the human being is him image on earth and is then the subject of the earth (muffled sentence). Francis Bacon lauded sciences of his time – he was very impressive and influential for Thomas Jefferson as we know, and for Monticello – said "Knowledge is power". At the same time, in his *Treatise on Scientific Method*, René Descartes declared that science and technology make human beings "maîtres et possesseurs de la nature", or "master and owner of nature".

Today this brings us face to face with the decisive question, and this is asked in Bill McKibben's book, *The End of Nature:* is nature our property, so that we can do what we like with it? Or are we humans one part of the wider family of nature, which we have to respect? Do the rain forests belong to us human beings, so that we can cut and burn them down, or are the rain forests the home for a multiplicity of animals, plants and trees, so that they belong to the earth, to which we also belong? Is this earth *our* environment and our planetary *home*, or are we human beings merely guests: guests who have arrived very late on this earth, which up to now has put up with us so patiently and graciously?

If nature is nothing more than our property – unclaimed property, which belongs, it is said, to whoever takes possession of it – then we shall counter the ecological crisis of nature solely by technological methods. We shall try through new products of genetic engineering to make plants resistant to climate and animals of increased utility. By means of genetic engineering we shall breed a new human race which does not need a natural environment at all – merely a technological one. We could in fact be in a position to create a world capable of sustaining our numbers and our practices, but it would be an artificial world – a global space ship, so to speak. Or alternatively we could change our practices, our attitude toward nature, our lifestyles, our numbers, restore and heal nature, and let her live again. But how can we change the way we go about things? Isn't the destruction of nature the result of our disrupted relationship to nature outside and to nature inside our own bodies, to ourselves and to God?

Ok, so much for an analysis of the crisis of which we are in. And now I will turn over to the more positive aspects – whether we can find ways out of the danger. These are three Christian perspectives coming out of the Biblical traditions. (muffled) We have to look at two books: the book of Holy Scripture, and the book of nature. And both are memories, canonical memories; there's the memory of religion in the scripture, and there's the memory of nature outside, and we can read nature outside not as determined systems but as a library of creative wisdom. There's a record in nature, and a memory of nature.

Cosmic spirituality: A paradigm shift in the way we think about ourselves, our society, God and nature, from domination to community.

The first conversion begins with the picture of God, for the way we think aobut God is the way we think about ourselves and nature too. "Tell me what you believe in, and I will tell you who you are." Belief in God, the almighty Lord in heaven, led to the secularization of the world, and robbed nature of its divine mystery. What we need theologically is to rediscover the triune God. I know that sounds dogmatic, orthodox and old-fashioned, but it could nevertheless be true. Even when we simply hear the name of "God the father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit", we sense that the divine mystery is a marvelous community. The triune God isn't a solitary, unloved ruler in heaven who subjugates everything as earthly despots do. He is a God in community, rich in relationships. "God is love."

Father, Son and Holy Spirit live with one another, for one another, and even in one another. "I am in the Father and the Father is in me", says the Gospel of John. If that is true, then we correspond to God not through domination and subjugation but through community and relationships which further life. It is not the solitary human subject who is God's image on earth; it is the true human community. It is not separate, individual parts of creation that reflect God's wisdom and his triune livingness; it is the community of creation as a whole.

According to Christian understanding – I will make just one more dogmatic point – creation is a Trinitarian process: God the Father creates through the Son or Daughter, Wisdom as it is said in the Old Testament, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Seen from the other side, this means that all things are created by God, formed "through God", and exist in God the Spirit. So the power of the creative Spirit is in everything and keeps everything together in the creation community.

I think it's important today to rediscover the Creator's immanence in his creation, so to include the whole of creation in our reverence for the Creator. Through whom, or through what, did God create the world? According to Proverbs 8:22 and following, he created the world through his daughter, Wisdom. And according to John 1 he created the world through the Logos, which is another word for Wisdom (hokmah) in the Old Testament, so whether it is he or she is not so important, at this point at least. We should see both sides. According to Wisdom literature, this creative Wisdom can also be called God's Word of God's Spirit. But it is always the presence of God in all things which is invariably meant, a presence immanent in the world. So this can be a called a transcendent immanence of God, because it is through Wisdom that God forms the community of created beings, who exist with one another and for one another and very often also in one another.

Christian theology has recognized in Christ not just personal salvation but also the cosmic Wisdom through which all things are. We have forgotten about it in our personalistic, individualistic culture of modern times, but in the beginning, as we can read in the epistle to the Colossians, Christ is the divine mystery of the world. The person who reverence Christ also reverence all created things in him, and him in every created being. There is a very beautiful passage in the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, Logion 77, in which Jesus says: "I am the light that is over all, I am the universe: the universe has gone out of me, and the universe has returned to me again. Cleave the wood and I am there. Lift up the stone and there thou shalt find me." So it's not only in scripture, not only in the Christian community or the Christian tradition of human beings, but also in

nature that we find the presence of Christ. And this means that whatever we do to the earth, we do to Christ and to the Holy Spirit. (muffled sentence)

Through Word and Spirit the Creator communicates himself to his creation and enters into it. As the Book of Wisdom says (12:1): "Lord, thou art the love of life, thy immortal Spirit is in all things." How then to we go around with all things if the Spirit is in all things? That we have to learn from your (to Willis) African community, more about the presence of the Spirit in all things.

This was also the way Calvin saw it. From *Institutions*, Chapter 1: "For it is the Spirit who, everywhere diffused, sustains all things, causes them to grow, and quickens them in heaven and on earth…In transfusing into all things his energy, and breathing into them essence, life, and movement, he is indeed plainly divine." So this is John Calvin and the Reformed tradition. We do not expect this so much from Calvin, but he had this idea of the Creative Spirit which is already in all living things. So creation must not just be called, in detached objectivity, a "work of God's hands". It is the indirect, mediating presence of God as well.

Astonishingly enough, it was Christian mysticism which taught us to listen to the language of God in nature again. There is a Nicaraguan poet and revolutionary, who is also a good friend, Ernesto Cardenal. In his book, *Love*, he wrote this for the first time. Now he has a book out praising the presence of God in all things. In this earlier book, *Love*, he writes: "The bird chorus in the early morning sings to God. Volcanoes, clouds and trees shout about God. All creation cries out with a loud voice that God is, is beautiful and loves. Music sings in our ears and beautiful countryside tells our eyes…God's signature is on the whole of nature. All creatures are love letters from God to us. The whole of nature is bursting with love, set in it by God, who is love, to kindle the fire of love in us. …Nature is like God's shadow, reflecting his beauty and splendor. The quiet blue lake has the splendor of God… The image of the Trinity is in every atom… And my body was also made for the love of God. Every cell in my body is a hymn to my creator and a declaration of love."

In case anyone thinks that this is a typically Catholic eulogy in celebration of "natural theology", we may listen to the Reformer John Calvin too, for Calvin saw the presence of God in nature in just the same way. In his *Institutions* he writes: "Wherever you cast your eyes, there is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of his glory." "But," laments Calvin, "it is in vain that so many burning lamps shine for us in the workmanship of the universe to show forth the glory of its Author. Although they bathe us wholly in their radiance…we have not the eyes to see…"

So, this is the first part. The second part is more practical: *Human beings and nature in the covenant with God.*

We believe that God loves his creation and wants to bring its life to its full development and flowering. In God's eyes nothing created is a matter of indifference. Every creature has its own dignity and its own rights, for they are all included in this covenant. That is what is said in the story about Noah: "Behold," says God, "I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature" (Genesis 9: 9-10). It is this covenant "with us" which provides the basis for fundamental human rights.

Out of this covenant "with us and our descendants after us" follow the rights of future generations. Which we very much need to be told to take care of, because to some extent we live on the cost of future generations to take care of our debts and the ways of living we are leaving behind.

Out of this covenant "with us and our descendants after us and with every living creature" follow the rights of nature. And I think we should translate this time of cosmic spirituality I spoke about into the legal system of rights and duties in our society.

Before God the Creator, we and our descendants and all living things are partners in his covenant, and enjoy equal rights. Nature is not our property. But we are not just part of nature either. All living things are partners in God's covenant, each in its own way. So all living things must be respected by human beings as partners and confederates in

God's covenant: the earth brings forth; human beings are God's image on earth. Anyone who injures the earth injures God. Anyone who hurts the dignity of animals hurts God.

Today, now that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has become generally accepted, it is time to draw up a Declaration of Rights of Nature which will be generally accepted too. In so far as nature – air, water, and land, plants and animals – is at the mercy of acts of violence committed by human beings, it must be protected by human law. A first attempt to free nature from human despotism and caprice was the World Charter for Nature, proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 28 October 1982. And we had a new declaration, a World Charter on Nature, in 1992. It is true that this charter does not yet go so far as to concede to nature rights of its own, and to recognize it as the subject of is own rights. But there are approaches in what is said which indicate that it is reaching out for ways to get beyond the anthropocentric and egotistical viewpoint of the modern world, according to which nature is only there for human beings as "unclaimed property". "Mankind is a part of nature," says the preamble of the two world charter declarations, and, "Every form of life is unique, warranting respect regardless of its worth to man." I think this is important but we have to work to bring the two declarations into harmony and into a kind of integration because all declarations of human rights start with human dignity, which is unique, and that every human being is a subject and must not become an object of slavery, etcetera. The nature declarations always start by saying mankind is part of nature. So how can we reconcile these two viewpoints? This is a theoretical question.

Now if this earth, together with all living things, is God's creation, then its dignity must be respected, by religious bodies anyway, for God's sake, and its continued existence must be protected for its own sake, not for our human sake. Because nature is being destroyed by economic forces of the free market, it must be put under the special protection of the state. By virtue of is constitution, the state has to respect human rights of all its citizens; and in the same way, I think, by virtue of its constitution, protect the rights of stricken nature.

I would therefore propose that the following sentences should be included in our constitution (German constitution): "The natural world is under the special protection of the government. Through the way in which it acts, the state shows respect for the natural environment and protects it from exploitation and destruction by human beings for its own sake." So, we think that every democratic government has two responsibilities: First, to protect the people, and second, to protect the land. Whether this will change things is another question, but to have it at least in the constitution, we can refer to it and reclaim it.

Another event was the German Animal Protection Act of 1986. This is the first German law which no longer views animals merely as human property, but sees them as "fellow creatures" of human beings, and protects them in their dignity as such. I quite from the introduction, "The purpose of this law is to protect the life and wellbeing of the animal out of human responsibility for it as a fellow creature. No one may inflict pain, suffering or harm on an animal without reasonable grounds." I know that you (the United States) also have in your Declaration of Independence the term "All men are created equal," but we have never had the term "creation" or "creature", though, in our legal tradition. This was the first time.

To call animals "fellow creatures" is to recognize the Creator, the creature and the community of creation. The theological word "creation" is more appropriate than the philosophical term "nature", because it shows respect for God's rights to his creation, and therefore restricts the rights of human beings: God has the right of ownership – human beings only have the right of use.

Ok, out of this we made a declaration in a meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, in Seoul in 1990, and made the proposal to the United Nations Conference in Rio in 1992.

My last point now is more biblical I think than the other things. It is the *rediscovery of the Sabbath as God's wisdom*, not only for human beings every week – and for every Professor, every five years I hope – but also for the earth, divine ecology.

For a long time men and women viewed nature and their won bodies only under the dominating interest of work. This meant that they perceived only the utilitarian side of nature, and only the instrumental side of their bodies. But there is an ancient Jewish wisdom which teaches us to understand nature and ourselves once more as God's creation. We find this wisdom in the celebration of the Sabbath, the day of rest, on which human beings and animals find peace and leave nature in peace.

According to the first of the creation stories, the Creator "finished" the creation of the world by celebrating the world's Sabbath: "And God rested from all his work." Well this is a good question for theological examinations: Did God create the world in six days or in seven days? And what did God do on the seventh day? Well he rested, and this was the crown of his creative work. God rested from all his work, and through his resting presence, God blessed his creation. God was no longer active, but God was wholly present as Godself.

The seventh day is rightly called the feast of creation. It is the crown of creation. Human beings are not the crown of creation because there is something on the seventh day which crowns them together with all the other creatures. Everything that exists was created for this feast. So as not to celebrate the feast alone, God created heaven and earth, the dancing stars and the surging seas, the meadows and the woods, the animals, the plants, and last of all human beings. They are all invited to this sabbath feast. All of them are God's fellow celebrants, each in its own way. That is why God had "pleasure" in all his works, as the psalms say. That is why the heavens declare the glory of the Eternal One. Everything that is, is created for God to rejoice over, for everything that is, comes from God's love.

This divine sabbath is "the crown of creation" – not the human being. On the contrary, human beings, together with all other created beings, are crowned by the divine "Queen Sabbath". Through his sabbath rest, the creative God arrives at his goal, and people who celebrate the Sabbath recognize nature as God's creation, and let it be God's beloved creation. So I think the sabbath is wise environmental policy and an excellent therapy for our own restless souls and tense bodies.

Mystics always have a mountain in the soul to climb up – "seven storey mountain" it was called by Thomas Merton. But that's just the sabbath, the seventh day, turned now into the soul. It would be much easier, instead of going to therapy and meditation weekends, to celebrate the sabbath every Sunday.

The Sabbath has another significance too: the significance of the Sabbath year for the land and for the people who live from the land. Leviticus 25:4 says: "In the seventh year the land shall keep its great Sabbath to the Lord."

According to Exodus 23:11, every seventh year Israel is not to plant or till the ground, but is to let is rest, so that "the poor of your people may eat." According to Leviticus 25, every seventh year Israel is not to plant or till the ground, so that "the land may come to rest." The social reason is complemented by the ecological one. I think this is an important connection between the social issues and the environmental issues.

For the book of Leviticus (26) this sabbath rest for the land is of paramount importance. All God's blessings are experienced by the obedient, but the disobedient will be punished. How?

Leviticus 26:33 says: "And I will scatter you among the nations…and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste."

Why? "Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall celebrate and enjoy its sabbaths."

This is a remarkable interpretation of Israel's Babylonian exile – we might even call it an ecological interpretation. God wanted to save his land. That is the reason why God permits his people to be defeated and to be carried off into captivity. God's land is to remain unworked for seventy years! By the time the seventy years are over, it will have recovered, and God's people can return to the land promised to them. We might call the sabbath year for the land God's environmental policy for those he has created, and for his earth.

Now, this is an old story of Israel. All ancient agrarian cultures were familiar with the wisdom of fallowing, as a way of preserving the soil's fertility. When I was young, every fifth year the arable land in North Germany was left unplanted, so that plants and animals could return, and we children could play there. It was only the great empires which exploited the fertile regions non-stop, in order to feed their armies and their capital cities, until the soil was exhausted and became a desert. That is what happened in Persia, Rome, Babylon, and perhaps also to the Mayas on the Yucatan peninsula.

Today the fallowing principle has almost entirely disappeared from agriculture. Its industrialization means the introduction of more and more chemical fertilizers into the soil. Monocultures have replaced the old rotation of crops. And the result is that artificial fertilizing has to be intensified, and the soil and the crops are increasingly polluted. This is not from my wisdom, but from my daughter, my third daughter, who is working as an agricultural specialist in an institute in Stuttgart.

The end will resemble the end that Israel of old experienced. The uninterrupted exploitation of the land will lead to the exile of the country population, and in the end to the disappearance of the human race from the earth. After the death of the human race, God's earth will then celebrate the great sabbath which modern humanity has hitherto denied it. If we want our civilization and nature as we know it to survive, we should let ourselves be warned, and permit the land "to celebrate its great sabbath". The celebration of the sabbath, and reverence for "the sabbath of the earth", can become our own healing and the healing of the earth from which we live. And behind the sabbath of the earth in

Israel, I think there is a kind of religion of the earth which we must respect as the relationship of the earth to God and God to the earth. The earth was the first creature of God, not we. So we live from this first creature of God and must respect it that way.

How would it be if we were to include in the festivals of the church year an "earth day", to celebrate the creation tormented by us human beings? An "earth day" of this kind is unofficially celebrated by many congregations and churches in America on 22 April. In Europe we are working to have an "earth day" on April 27, because this was the day of the Chernobyl disaster.

On "earth day" we should bow before the earth and beg for forgiveness for the injustice we have inflicted on it, so that we may once more be accepted into community with it. On "earth day" we should renew the covenant which God made with Noah and us and our descendents and all living beings.

[Question & Answer time]

Willis Jenkins's response to Professor Moltmann:

I want to start by asking a question, and it's a series of questions that I think relates to how the conversation was going at the end there (of the Q & A time) about eschatology and the new creation and what this means for our present regard to the earth. And I think that Rydell and Liz were really on to something because eschatology has been at the, maybe not the center, but it's certainly been animating your (Moltmann) theological project for years.

So I have basically one general question that remains open for me, a question about how we participate in this new creation, but I'm not sure precisely what that question is so I'm

going to ask it by asking about 30 questions, and Professor Moltmann can use that to say whatever he wants about the future of the new creation. (laughter)

I actually hope it's sort of practical too because yesterday you gave us concrete examples of experiencing the coming Kingdom: we experience the new creation as we create communities of abundance. We get a first taste of life without struggle, without rivalry, without competition, a first taste of life without scarcity, suffering or death. What, then, is the analog for environmental ethics? How do we experience life in God's peace within an ecological community whose health depends on competition, whose vitality runs on death, whose remarkable species are adapted to scarcity and formed out of vulnerability? Sabbath practices like car-free days might portray an alternative human community, but how are they a foretaste of nature's transfiguration? What does it mean to respect and care for creatures who are thoroughly formed by transience and death? That is to say, what mission practices correspond to understanding nature in messianic light?

You prioritize our future in God's coming throughout your work, in many subtle ways, but I have in mind particularly these distinctions: the difference between nonhuman nature as we know it and the coming kingdom; the experience of God in creation now versus the full indwelling of God then; the way the coming of God from the future transfigures and transforms nature into something almost unimaginable to us fro this creaturely world.

You portray nature groaning for liberation not only from human destruction but from its own cycles of death and its own transience. So what does that mean for today's environmental management decisions? You write that in the Spirit of the resurrected Christ we are oriented toward the earth because of its future, when God's indwelling presence irradiates all the cosmos as God's home.

Again, this would be easier if death and transience appeared only contingent phenomena in nature, but they seem intrinsic to the way nature runs, the way nature natures. So how do we manage our lands for those kinds of kingdom values? What value does

biodiversity have if it seems like it depends on intense competition? What becomes of ecological orders and natural flux? If there are no tsunamis in the Kingdom, does that mean there are no plate tectonics on the New Earth? It seems like a place where we aren't really creature anymore, maybe not necessarily in the way Christian theology talks about it, but in the way our best environmental writers talk about it.

I could ask the same question a different way by asking: just how innovative is the Spirit? How terribly new is the new creation? You say somewhere that nature is not just a parable of the future, but a promise to be fulfilled – implying that there is some continuity between nature as we know it and the coming kingdom. I think you mean to say grace is at once new and entirely natural, that it doesn't arrive with violent interruption. You sometimes call this continuity, this glorification of nature, and occasionally suggest deification might be the appropriate way of thinking about this, this innovation of the Spirit.

My practical question is: how does human work participate in that process of glorifying, of that transfiguring movement of the Holy Spirit? How does human creativity, how do our economic projects, work with the Spirit glorifying nature? And – most importantly – what are the signs which discriminate good creativity from demonic destructiveness? I ran into Micheal Northcott – who wrote *Christianity and Environmental Ethics* – at a conference and I asked him why he didn't use eastern orthodox views of divinization more in his own work and he said it's because, in his own experience, he had seen priests in Romania blessing factories as an example of human creativity…divinizing it into the new creation, and he thought – I don't know where the theological stop is for that. I thought that was a pretty good answer.

I said in my introduction that Bill McKibben and this environmental economist, Mark White, both loved your work. That is a true complement and also a vulnerability because they both think you're on their side. (laughter)

So, I'm wondering…. Matthew Whelan (a participant in the Spring Institute) is in agricultural school in Latin America, and he's there clearly from his own faith commitments. Practically put, should or could he, from his faith commitments, want to focus on genetic engineering for large-scale monocrop production, or should he be looking for small-scale, ecologically conceived organic plots? And how would he know which is the more intense participation in the Spirit of the New Creation?

I think this relates to – because I know that you (to Moltmann) prefer the latter, the small organic plots, because you've said as much – I think my question relates to, and it's not coming together well in my head just yet, your background, call it pneumatological cosmology, the Holy Spirit and our ecological spirituality. There's this dynamism, there's this change, that we participate in that illuminates our fundamental relatedness to all the earth. And then at the same time, you want to talk about the rights of nature, and I thank you for that. But the models for some of us can sit uncertainly – a fundamental relationality with a model of justified non-intervention, or justified interventions presumed non-intervention, or of negotiated space between creatures rather fundamental relatedness.

You'll remember (to Moltmann) at lunch Bill McKibben said "progressives can sometimes be suckers for anything that looks like progress", and he was talking about himself. If we care for the environment in light of our orientation to the future, how can Christians not be deceived by false visions of progress? When you spoke about the experience of the Spirit as exuberance, creativity, riches, wealth, eternal life, you made clear that doesn't mean the spirit of unbridled consumer capitalism. But that doesn't seem to be the language Bill McKibben wants: about limits, about scarcity, about finitute, about "maturity". Is Christian environmental ethics calling for something entirely different than that model?

Ok, that's way too many questions. It's entirely unfair, I know. But I'm writing my dissertation on these things…. (laughter). Please just forgive me one last question, because I think this one might get at the heart of it, of what I'm trying to ask.

You have criticized theologies which restrict the scope of salvation to just humans, insisting that we must recognize the cosmic scope of Christ's work. Your theology consistently reminds us that God's love does not find us living in a blank matrix, nor even, as you say, in an "environment", if that means some instrumental resource bin. God comes to us as creatures already interrelated with a world of creatures good for their own sake, to which our lives must somehow conform, by which our senses are taught, and according to which our minds are formed.

So, if we live and move and have our being by earth, how does earth shape the way we live and move and have our being in Christ? How is our own glorification mediated by the creaturely world?

Moltmann: Well, thank you very much for your unending questions (laughs). I'm certainly not in the position to answer these questions, but I'm looking forward to reading your dissertation. (laughter) I hope that you find at least two answers for the 30 questions and will pass the examination. (laughter)

I think the difference between the human world and the non-human world with regard to redemption and the new creation is not so different. We can take the analogies of what we ourselves experience and enlarge them to the creatures around us. As the apostle Paul did in Romans 8: We are saved, but by hope our bodies are not yet redeemed; with our bodies we are in contact and solidarity with the whole groaning creation. And so he enlarges the hope he feels in himself to the whole groaning creation, that the groaning is not in vain. But they all are longing for the freedom of the children of God.

One should not make this modern differentiation between, here is the human and there is the non-human world, to restrict. We are part of the natural world and we are earth creatures, as you yourself (Willis) have said, so whatever happens to us in terms of the Holy Spirit and renewal, being born to a living hope, also happens to the nature around us. Sometimes we see it better in the symbols of nature; if we read nature symbolically,

for example in spring when nature is reborn, and is blooming and full of expectation. And if you look at the parables of the Kingdom of God, Jesus uses more analogies of spring than of wintertime.
But how this works in special questions, I cannot answer that at the moment. But if you say that death appears to be only a contingent phenomena of nature, it's part of the order of nature, and we are also part of that order. So if we have hope through death to resurrection, why should we not have hope for the nature around us, which is also dying - for the resurrection of that nature?

So I don't see why one must make such a strong difference with environmental ethics. This is your special point. Before we think what we must do, I think we should think about what we should let be. Let earth recover its own fertility. We should not try to correct what we have poisoned with new fertilizers, etcetera, but let the earth recover its own fertility. The earth can do that, in many places. Even the elephants – you counted how many were disappeared – at the moment the elephants are growing in numbers more than human beings like there to be (in Africa). So nature has its own strength. We must not always be creative by doing something. It can be very creative to withdraw and give space to a living being to grow up. Giving birth to a child is a labor, but then if the child grows up the parents must take their care back, so that the child can develop its own freedom, etcetera. So to take oneself back can also be very creative. But it's not our symbol of creativity.

I think this is one of the wisdoms of the Sabbath. At the moment that you do not work but let things be for one day you all of a sudden see what nature is and also what your own life is, and what your own being is. So being is more than having and doing.

I think Bill McKibben's idea of maturity is very helpful. Instead of progress and growth… To speak about maturity would mean that humanity comes of age and becomes wise in dealing with its own possibilities; and we need this wisdom as an ethics of science, how to deal with scientific discoveries and technological possibilities. We are like children: we started with the discovery of atomic energy, and then – apart from

atomic bombs – atomic power plants; but nobody knows where to leave the atomic waste. So this is like starting with an airplane and not knowing how to land. And with biogenetics it's the same: we are starting something – wonderful, great, half of the biogenetic reports are fact and the other half fiction – but nobody knows how these genetically changed plants work because you cannot retrieve them, you cannot take them back if you think something went wrong. We are like the sorcerer's apprentice who learned the first formula to get the broom to work, but when the broom filled the house full of water he had not learned the formula to get rid of the broom and to bring it back to rest. So we have learned a lot of formulas which dominate the world but to switch them off. We are not masters of our own mastery; we are not lords of our own lordship. We are caught up in this idea of progress, and this is like adolescent children. Therefore maturity would lead from science to wisdom. And we must learn more wisdom in dealing with these things.

Let me just add a few ideas so that you have the whole spectrum of what is in my mind.

With this progress is power – knowledge is power, over nature, over our own genetic life, etcetera. I think this is very poor. If we only speak about the growth of power – technological, economic, military and financial – because power itself is not a humane goal. Every year we are better equipped to attain what we want. But what is it that we really want? We have no vision. To pile up more power and more power doesn't work. Now in order to avoid destruction of the earth's systems and the world's exploitation, it is certainly good to concentrate on the integrity of creation and the protection of the environment and to protect life through bioethical agreements. But this is conservative ethics. There's nothing wrong with it, but conservative ethics is always coming a few minutes too late. It's better to develop a new model for human goals and purposes of globalization and to examine the meaning and meaninglessness of progress.

I think we have such a model. We can find it in the old concept of *oikumene*? The Greek word, *oikumene*, is a concept which means "the whole inhabited circle of the earth". From this statement we can move to the goal of a habitable earth, and humankind to be

indigenized in this earth system. The household of the earth should be prepared to give a home and a function for the human race, as well as it has given a home and a function for species. Dostoyevsky once said, "Every ant knows the formula of its anthill; every bee knows the formula of its beehive. They know it in their own way, not in our way. Only humankind doesn't know its formula yet."

If there is a humane goal for the progress and globalization of power, I think it should be this indigenization of human beings in the earth system, for the earth can survive without human beings, but we human beings cannot survive without the earth. It follows from this that the human system must be integrated into the general conditions of this living earth system and not the opposite, where nature is subjugated by human domination. Only strangers exploit nature, denude forests, fish out the seas, and then – like nomads – move on. The inhabitants of those regions, however, will defend the livability of the land, sea and air. Many conflicts today between economic and ecological interests are conflicts between foreign corporations and inhabitants of that region.

What is the attitude of humanity as a whole to nature? Are we strangers on earth, or are we inhabitants? I think this earth system is destined to become the common home of all earth creatures, and shall become the home for the community of all living beings. And in this respect we should remember that the life system of the planet earth is not our property; it's God's property, as Psalm 24 says, because the earth shall become the home of the Divine. "On earth as it is in heaven", we say in the Christian prayer. So when the Eternal One comes to dwell on earth, then the earth will become the temple of God. And this is a great biblical – Jewish and Christian – vision for the earth. The final promise: "Behold the home of God is among the mortals. He will dwell with them and they shall be his peoples" (Revelation 21:3). This is the final shekinah, the cosmic indwelling of God, and this is according to our religious tradition, the divine future for the earth. And then we will already know how to deal with the earth as the temple of God. And we'll keep all God's creatures holy. We are not lords and owners of the earth. We are not destined to do that, but perhaps one day become the priests of the earth - to represent God

before the earth, and the earth before God, until we see and taste God's presence in all things, and perceive all things in the coming glory of God.

So the earth on which we live is not just a temporary place where we are as long as our life goes on, but it is destined to become the temple, the home of God. And therefore we must preserve everything because it is, in this respect, holy. I think this is a vision – the habitable earth and humankind ready to live on this earth and to dwell on this earth, and overcome the estrangement from the earth and from ourselves. But in comparison with the other species, the human race is a latecomer, and therefore we have not yet found our place and our role in the earth's system; but the other creatures have already, and this should bring us to listen to the other creatures and see how they function in the earth's system and what their role is, in order that we may one day know about our formula. If we see the ants and the bees, how they function, this is all the memory of nature, the wisdom which is built in nature. And I think we can learn from this how we may one day human kind can perhaps become the nerve system of earth. But up to now, by trying to dominate nature, we have not found this formula to survive earth through a sustainable way of living.

Whenever I have the Lord's Prayer in mind and pray it, this "on earth as it is in heaven" is the most important sentence for me. Is earth so much of value? Yes, it is.