

# **SACRED SPACE FOR SACRED SUSTAINABILITY**

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The recent United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro from 20 to 22 June 2012 with its ensuing document entitled *The Future We Want* indicates that the world leaders are coming to grips with the costs of development in relation to ecology. Amidst the multivocal discussions in the global summits thus far on the sustainable development, there are emergent discourses that draws the world's attention to the crises of sustainability of our planetary home, the only habitat of humankind. These impending crises focus our attention on the hermeneutics of space and sustainability. In the first section, an attempt will be made to understand the relation of space to place. Space is explained not in terms of its void of meaning but as sacred and spirited which the second section attempts to postulate. The sacredness of space, as the third section argues, has become a counterculture in a world of unbridled resource exploitation. Since space is made sacred by God's indwelling omnipresence that suffuses creation, a theological insight known as sacred sustainability is explained in the fourth section. In the fifth section, a critique of the UN's concept of sustainable development in its exclusion of the transcendental dimension of culture and space is articulated in relation to sacred sustainability. This insight finds an interreligious resonance in the teachings of the other religions as explained in section six. An interreligious conversation on sacred sustainability encourages further interdisciplinary conversation between religion, science and technology. Section seven shows how this conversation leads to greater mutual enrichment. In the last section, both the professional in religion, science and technology are encouraged to engage in multilevel collaboration in order to ensure the holistic sustainability of life for humankind and the earth.

## **1. Relation of Space to Place**

Space is an *a posteriori* concept in relation to place. The scientific view of reality in the past is that space is "absolute, infinite and empty" whereas a plurality of places "was a mere apportioning or compartmentalization of 'natural' space" (Sheldrake 2001, 6). This perception of place is problematic on several counts. First, it presumes that there is "such an objective reality as nature apart from how we interpret it" and second, it assumes that upon such a neutral reality such as nature, humankind is at liberty to impose, exploit and manipulate for self-gain. Such a view favors "an intellectual preference for the universal or the general over the local or the particular rather than then what derives from experiences." (Ibid.) This preference tends to marginalize the particular stories, myths and rituals connected to the historical subaltern communities. (Ibid.)

In the contemporary context, it is more appropriate to explain space as "an abstract analytical concept whereas place is always tangible, physical, specific and relational" and thus

“a sense of place actually precedes and creates a sense of space” (Ibid., 7). Modern European philosophy of place<sup>1</sup> argues that “we come to know in terms of the particular knowledge of specific places before we come to know space as a whole or in the abstract” leading to the conclusion that “spaces receive their being from locations and not from “space” (Ibid.). The interrelation of space to place allows for a discourse on ‘place is space’ that is rich in historical meanings, memory and myths embedded in the religio-cultural traditions of the communities/villages which promotes continuity and ensures identity across generations. Place is space that defines personal and communal vocation and envisioned destiny. Moreover, place is space for the community to stage protest against the unbridled commoditization, ‘financilization’ and desacralization of nature and humankind. Furthermore, place is space for recreation of sacred space so that desecrated places where persons and communities are violated are resacralized. Finally, place is space that “offers access to the sacred” and “perhaps, crucially, relates us to *life itself as sacred*” (Sheldrake 2001, 17).

## 2. Space is sacred

Contemporary explanation of space affects the way we regard space. The space in discussion is inclusive of the space within the human body or “body-space” and space as the entire earth or earth-space, even outer space as in the entire universe. Spaces are made sacred by the indwelling and presence of the sacred Spirit of God. In the indigenous perspective the indwelling and presence of the Great Spirit, the ancestral spirits and nature-spirits make space sacred. By virtue of the omnipresence of God’s Spirit and the Great Spirit, the human body, the earth and the universe are all sacred. The world is therefore spirited, according to the elders, sages and shamans of the indigenous peoples. By extension, the living and non-living beings inhabiting the earth-space are to be considered sacred too.

What makes space and beings sacred is explained by Mircea Eliade (1964, xxii) in terms of hierophany and singularization. Hierophany ranges from the most elementary manifestation of the sacred in some stone or tree to vision quests of the Native Americans and the visions of the Old Testament prophets. Eliade argued that hierophanies contribute to the sacralization of space and all organic and inorganic species found therein.

But hierophanies have the peculiarity of seeking to reveal the sacred in its totality, even if the human beings in whose consciousness the sacred “shows itself” fasten upon only one aspect or one small part of it. In the most elementary hierophany *everything is declared*. The manifestation of the sacred in a stone or a tree is neither less mysterious nor less noble than its manifestation in a “god.” The process of sacralizing reality is the same: the *forms* taken by the process in man’s religious consciousness differ. (Ibid.)

In addition Eliade (1964, 32) clarified that the most elementary hierophanies “are nothing but a radical ontological separation of some objects from the surrounding cosmic zone” and the objects could be some trees, stones and places, “by the mere fact that it *reveals that it is sacred*, that it has been, as it were, “chosen” as the receptacle for a manifestation of the sacred ... and occupies a different, supernatural plane.”

Singularization, in Eliade's exposition, is a process that sacralizes persons. It occurs "by "election," by "choice," of those who experience the sacred with greater intensity than the rest of the community – those who, as it were, incarnate the sacred, because they live it abundantly, or rather "are lived" by the religious "form" that has chosen them (gods, spirits, ancestors, etc.)." (Ibid.)

When a place has undergone the process of hierophanies, spatial sacralization imbues the place with a sense of sacredness and it is regarded as sacred space. Such a space is valued-added with the presence of persons singularized for ritualization of ceremonies in the sacred space. With such an explanation has become countercultural and the contestation of the perception and meaning of space becomes inevitable.

### **3. Sacred Space as a Counterculture**

Contrary to a developmental logic that perceives space as place with resources to be exploited, the indigenous logic promotes sacred space as a counterculture wherein the full human flourishing is made possible only through a sacred relationship with mother Earth and all creatures therein. This counterculture is poignantly articulated in the 2012 Kari-Oca 2 declaration that asserts the sacredness of the human-earth-space. This sacredness calls for a 'new relational paradigm' of *Buen Vivir* (living well) with the earth characterized by the spirit of communal and planetary survival, dignity and well-being.<sup>2</sup> This paradigmatic perception that the earth is sacred enables the indigenous movements at Rio+20 Summit to argue that sustainable development and self-determination are complementary and achievable through the realization of three conditions (a) when the states "recognize the traditional systems of resource management of the Indigenous Peoples" and (b) "respect for full participation in decision-making and the Free, Prior and Informed Consent to policies, programs and projects" and (c) when the indigenous communities secure their "land rights and territorial management and the building of vibrant community economies." (Ibid.) The complementary notions and their ensuing practices constitute the indispensable core of the indigenous cultures of sustainability. This core is the basis of an indigenous counterculture in an age driven by neo-liberal capitalism.

The emergent discourse on sacred space countervails the top-down development model that gains ascendancy and legitimacy under the aegis of global capitalism. In fact this discourse has shored up how elitist and exploitative, even ethnocentric is the capitalistic logic that postulates "that nothing stands in the way of converting the rest of the earth – the "undeveloped world into resources and markets" (Loy 2002, 72-73). The resultant ecological disasters and escalating human miseries due to the desecration of the sacred order has proven the profound irrationality of the capitalist tenets that promotes "greed and venality in the name of self-interest and market competition" (Ali 2002, 142; Hacket 1998, 33) and posits that "fair distribution and sustainability will eventually work themselves out" (McFague 2002, 126).<sup>3</sup> Such irrationality is ultimately unmasked in the preposterous admission that "[All] for ourselves and nothing for other people, seems, in every age of the world, to have been the vile maxim of the masters of mankind" (Adam Smith 1981, book III, 336; see Ali 2002, 142).

In this contestation of two contrastive logics related to space, a new discourse on sacred sustainability that is founded on sacredness of space and creation is in order.

#### **4. Sacred Sustainability: an Emergent Discourse with a Future**

##### 4.1. An Overview

In general sustainability bespeaks of humankind's relationship with Mother Earth. Sustainability is understood particularly in relation to responsible stewardship of the earth and management of the planet's human and natural resources. Since March 20, 1987, the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations linked sustainability to the concept of sustainable development which specifies the kind of "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>4</sup> The Earth Charter Initiative of 2000 portrays "a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace."<sup>5</sup> In 2005, the UN World Summit mentions the "three pillars" of sustainability : (a) ending extreme poverty; (b) ensuring that prosperity is shared by all, including women, youth and minorities; and (c) protecting the natural environment. These three goals can be termed the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development, or, more simply, the "triple bottom line" of sustainable development.<sup>6</sup> The "triple bottom line" is not mutually exclusive as they are mutually reinforcing.<sup>7</sup>

This UN definition on sustainability has by no means achieved the intended consensus. The terms sustainability and sustainable development, the goals intended and the manner of achieving these goals remain open to interpretation and debate. To the environmentalists, there can be no sustainable development without the concomitant degradation of the environment, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species.<sup>8</sup> Others argue that sustainability must have quantifiable limits and intergenerational perspective for all humans and life forms. Most will agree that sustainability embraces a call to action, a task in progress, a political process aimed at the gradual realization of some envisioned goals and values for attaining a sustainable community of life on earth.

##### 4.2. A Theological Insight

Sacred sustainability is a theological insight that emerges out of a dialogue with a few renowned indigenous shamans and a subsequent reflection on the initiatory experience of the sacredness of the mystery of life that pervades all of creation.<sup>9</sup> This insight elevates the civilizational wisdom inherent in the indigenous cosmology of sustainability which many renowned elders, sages and shamans around the world expound in relation to the sustainability of life on earth.

##### 4.3. A Working Definition

This definition explains sacred sustainability in relation to the tenet that God is omnipresence. This concept postulates that the indwelling Creative Spirit pulsates through the whole of creation with the sacred power that makes all things, all life forms, all spaces and all persons sacred. This pulsation of the sacred power of the Creative Spirit sustains life in creation. In other words, the abiding presence of the Creative Spirit is the basis for the possibility of sustainability of life in creation. God's Creative spirit is responsible for making creation sacred (hence sacralizes creation) so that creation is suffused with the sacredness of God's sacred power. Conversely, when creation is desecrated and violated by greed it is devoid of this sacred power of the Creative Spirit, sustainability of life in creation is no longer tenable and viable.

This theological insight correlates with a faith response or an anthro-theological response to God's sacred creation. Sacred sustainability calls forth a felt-conviction that sustainability of life on earth and in God's creation is qualitatively possible with an emerging civilization of profound **reverence** and **respect for** all things, all life forms, all spaces and all persons because God's all-pervasive Creative Spirit is intuitively and mystically experienced as **sacredly alive** in all of creation. It is this omnipresence of God's Creative Spirit that **sacredly sustains** all of God's creation.

The ensuing vocation of humankind is to render to creation a "dialogic reverence" which calls on all humans to reverentially behold and respect all things, all life forms, all spaces and all persons in our planetary home due to the pulsating presence of the sacred power of the Creative Spirit. Every breath is a felt-experience and every perceivable presence of life is notional conviction that God's Creative power is sacralizing and sustaining all human lives and all life forms on earth. In this dialogic reverence for creation, human engagement in agriculture, pottery and weaving is as sacred as human involvement in worship as all these apparently mundane activities are actually ways of expressing and manifesting reverence to the all-pervasive sacred mystery.<sup>10</sup>

Reverence for the sacredness of creation will dictate an ethical level of human consumption of the earth's resources that is sustainable of life on earth for all life forms. It will be based on a communal ethics of need-to-use rather than greed-for-profit, resembling the "*Sumaj Kawsay*,"<sup>11</sup> a concept of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia that resonates with the Kari-Oca 2 understanding of "living well" or living in harmony with nature and people, rather than the current focus on producing more goods and stimulating consumption.<sup>12</sup> Only a need-based ethos between humankind and the earth will sustain human livelihood with dignity and security, both for current and future generations. Ultimately only a reverential need-based relationship, rooted in the sacredness of creation, ensures the sustainability of life for humankind, all the other life forms and most significantly, planet earth.

At the same time, the vocation of humankind is a dialogic reverence<sup>13</sup> of the sacredness of persons in interpersonal-cultural-religious relationship. In this relationship, the Other is to be regarded "as our 'neighbour,' 'a helper' (cf. Gen.2:18-20), to be made a sharer, on par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God."<sup>14</sup> The Other is "not only a human being with her or his own rights and a fundamental equality with everybody else,

but becomes the image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>15</sup> The Other is truly an “earthen vessel” (2 Cor4:7), suffused with God’s omnipresence and rightly so, the temple of God’s indwelling Spirit (1 Cor 6:9). By the process of singularization, the other is the one called to ritualize at the sacred space and recreate it as sacred. The Other is truly the embodiment of a counterculture that resists all forms of violent desecration of persons. The sacredness of the Other calls for a dialogic reverence that involves a conscientious option for dialogic relationship for fellow “im-planetted” humans rather than barbarity.<sup>16</sup>

This germinal insight has brought forth an emergent discourse on sacred sustainability that posits that the omnipresence of God is a sacred indwelling that suffuses creation and thus sacralizes the earth as a sacred space. This emergent discourse finds the UN model on sustainable development inadequate to sustain a culture of sustainability.

### **5. A Critique of Sustainable Development**

As a theological insight of reality, sacred sustainability finds the UN model on sustainable development wanting in a religious understanding of space and culture.<sup>17</sup> In the 1987 and 2012 UN documents, space is understood in an immanent and secular sense as place inhabited by humankind of the developed and developing nations, from the different socio-economic classes, located in the marginal, regional and international communities, playing their roles as major or lesser stakeholders. In the 1987 UN document, space is a world where humans promote sustainable development through the political, economic, social, production, technological, international and administrative systems.<sup>18</sup> In the 2012 UN document, space refers to the global society in which sustainable developments calls for “poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development.”<sup>19</sup> In steering the document clear of any particular religion, the UN has rendered the discursive perception space void of any cultural and religious meanings.

Even the understanding of culture is devoid of the religiosity of the sacred. Culture has been so hollowed that it has become a godless and/or god-free matrix of life in which humans and the physical/material reign supreme. The closest the 2012 document comes is the recognition in no. 58 (j) of the importance of “cultural heritage, practices and traditional knowledge, preserving and respecting non-market approaches that contribute to the eradication of poverty.”<sup>20</sup> The same document alludes to the importance of the emerging cultural values of inclusiveness and people-centeredness<sup>21</sup> and conservation, regeneration, restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges.<sup>22</sup> Such a notion of sustainable development that “aims to promote harmony among human and between humanity and nature” is admittedly very anthropocentric. In other words, sustainable development is driven by what Kasi (2012, 171) believes to be “an anthropocentrism that is a major concept in the field of environmental ethics and environmental philosophy, where it is often considered to be the root cause of problems created by human interaction with the environment.”<sup>23</sup> Anthropocentrism, Kasi believes has molded humankind into *homo*

*economicus* who is “an undersocialized loner, concerned only with maximizing his/her own preferences in order to become ‘better off’” (ibid., 176).

The UN has operated on a notion of culture and nature that is dominated by scientific positivism. As a global agency with the noble aspirations of guiding humanity, it is important for the UN to integrate culture and religion with its multidisciplinary advocacy for sustainable development. In the opinion of Chandrakunnel (2012, 146) “science and technology need to have its own other, the sacred to complement it and lead it to the realization of fullness in an absolute sacred reality.”<sup>24</sup>

With this discourse on sacred sustainability that posits the world as a sacred space, it is urgent that culture be included as the fourth pillar to sustainability development. Only the inclusion of the “transcendent reality as the ultimate beginning and end of the cosmic processes,” so that such foundational “belief in the spirituality and sacredness of the Supreme Consciousness can only guide the progress of humanity.” (Ibid.)

## **6. An Interfaith Perspective**

Christianity is not alone in this theological exposition of the sacredness related to the beliefs of culture and how the inherent sacredness is fundamental to the sustainability of the environment and creation. The African religious traditions have always maintained the indispensable interconnection between humankind and creation.<sup>25</sup> Life is a relational web that includes creation, ancestors and humankind. To the Tanzanians, the sacredness that sustains the Bomaswa hill has been the basis of its preservation from exploitation. The local inhabitants may have stripped the surrounding forests for wood and charcoal to build and warm their houses, but Bomaswa hill has remained a sacred space.<sup>26</sup> Hinduism upholds that nature is a sacred gift. Many of its tenets promote the inseparable human-divine partnership. Humankind is enjoined to exercise an ethical stewardship over creation. By virtue of the sacredness of nature, Hinduism enjoins humankind to hold the land in trust for God and the common good of all humankind. Trees and plants are regarded as sacred as they are sustained by the Gods and Goddesses who dwell in them. *Ahimsa* or non-injury dictates that any desecration and exploitation are deemed as irreligious and sacrilegious.<sup>27</sup> Likewise in Buddhism, the interrelationship between human morality and natural environment is shaped by a cosmic sense of harmony between heaven and earth that manifests itself in a concern and compassion for all living beings. Humankind needs to live a responsible relationship with the earth and all creatures therein.<sup>28</sup> In Islam respect and responsibility not only defines but sustains the ethical relationship between the creation and creation. Taoism declares Tao as the way that nourishes, transforms and sustains all relationship with all things, especially the location and role of humankind in the universe.<sup>29</sup>

Given this interfaith expose on the sacred as the basis of sustainability, it can be argued that the future of an emergent discourse on sacred sustainability is in establishing its interreligious foundations so that all the religions are involved in the culture of sustainability of creation. Moreover the future of this discourse lies in an inclusive multidisciplinary conversation, more urgently between science and religion.

## 7. Interdisciplinary Collaboration on Sustainability

Sacredness as the basis of sustainability provides a “dialogical grammar” for science and religion to engage each other. The Church acknowledges that the world God created “was very good” (Gen 1:31)<sup>30</sup> and sacred as creation shared in God’s holiness. Science regards our planetary home as sacred and deserving of our respect and care.<sup>31</sup> Indeed both science and religion have acknowledged the sacredness of creation as a gift of God to humankind and should be regarded with loving reverence.

Science and technology has done irreparable damage to humankind and the earth which amounts to what the Appeal for Joint Commitment in Science and Religion described as “crimes against Creation.”<sup>32</sup> The same letter acknowledged that “a much wider and deeper understanding of science and technology is needed” and that “there is a vital role for both religion and science” in a manner that there will be “a spirit of common cause and joint action to help preserve the Earth.”<sup>33</sup> Yet this group of scientists agreed that “the Earth is the birthplace of our species and, as far as we know, our only home.”<sup>34</sup>

This scientists’ declaration that the earth is “our only home” complements the theological sense of “gift” in the church’s teachings that “nature is a gift of the Creator”,<sup>35</sup> inferring that the earth is “God’s gift to all people.”<sup>36</sup> Both science and theology value the earth as a common “treasure” for humankind. The scientists (1990) admitted the need for “a much wider and deeper understanding of science and technology is needed” through a “radical changes not only in public policy, but also in individual behavior.” The same concern is echoed in *Caritas et Veritate* (2009, no. 71) in which Benedict XVI appeals for “professional competence and moral consistency” and in his Message for the World Day of Peace (2010, no. 5) calls for “a lifestyle marked by sobriety and solidarity.”

Such complementarity of views serves as common premises for greater dialogue and collaboration between science, technology and religion. Pope John Paul II (1988) issued a clarion call to both parties: “you are called to learn from one another, to renew the context in which science is done and to nourish the inculturation which vital theology demands. Each of you has everything to gain from such an interaction, and the human community which we both serve has a right to demand it from us.”<sup>37</sup> This clarion call has enabled science and religion to make further progress in the terms of interdisciplinary enrichment and critique.

Recent science has generated the chaos theory (J. Gleick 1988,3; J.P. Crutchfield, J. D. Farmer, N. H. Packard and R.S. Shaw 1995, 35-48) and the quantum theory to understand the origin and structure of the universe. Henry Novello (2012, 230) has demonstrated how chaos theory uses deterministic equations to “show that very small fluctuations in initial conditions can produce very large and unpredictable changes in macromolecular states.” Quantum theory explains that (K. Ward 2008, 96-97) “there are millions of such small changes, some of which will produce unpredictable effects on a large scale.”(ibid.)<sup>38</sup> Theology inculturates these emerging scientific knowledge and articulate a bottom-up approach in which “God acts at a lower level of complexity in nature to influence the processes and properties at a higher level”

and conversely in a top-down approach “God acts at a higher level of complexity so as to influence processes at lower levels” (Ibid., 231).

The interdisciplinary dialogue needs to encourage both parties to engage in a multilevel collaboration aimed at furthering the sacred sustainability of life in creation.

## **8. Sustainability through Multilevel Collaboration**

Creation that is sustained by God’s sacred presence encourages professionals in religion, science and technology to realize that there is a need to respond to the God who is already active at all levels of society and thus collaborate with the most noble life-giving impulses in the different cultures and religions.

This theological horizon orientates the professionals in science and technology to attain the greater moral good for all humanity and the earth. In no. 24, the Special Report on Ecology (2011) maintains that scientific and technological knowledge can be directed to “areas such as clean energy production, energy efficient architectural design, water reclamation, microbial degradation of pollutants, and sustainable agriculture hold promise for climate change mitigation.”<sup>39</sup> In no. 26, Special Report on Ecology mentioned that the strategies of integrated management of resources calls for further scientific research on the properties and potential use of resources. This involves the “innovation of more efficient processes of photosynthesis, phytochemical and biochemical transformation, of new technologies of materials, and new energy sources.”(ibid)

At the same time, science and technology “have opened up the possibility of organizing a sustainable economic process” that is “grounded in the generation of a more complex, dynamic, and flexible technical structure, integrated with the global ecological process of production and reproduction of natural resources.” (ibid) This emerging economic process “offers more versatile options for sustainability” in that “it allows for better space distribution of productive resources and more equitable access to social wealth” in contrast with “those that emerged from the valuation of resources by means of market signs and sectorized economic planning.”(Ibid.)

Second, the discourse on sacred sustainability encourages science to seek collaboration at all levels of society. In no. 25 the Special Report on Ecology (2011, 26) urges professionals to be “willing and able to learn from those working on the ground, the peasants and laborers.” At the same time, this collaboration “needs supportive external institutions” ranging from “local groups and institutions capable of managing resources effectively” and finally “policies that support these features.”(ibid) This multilevel collaboration leads professionals to “revaluate, revive and improve an ensemble of traditional techniques and to develop new practical and scientific expertise.”(ibid.)

Third, professional scientists and theologians are encouraged to be contextual and interreligious in their endeavor. This means that learning has to be inter-contextual rather than

confined to the more familiar context of one's research and teaching. Such inter-contextual engagement will enable the professionals to go beyond the use of a human reason (Perumpallikunnel 2012, 115) that is context-specific, imbued with a Cartesian<sup>40</sup>, secularist and 'this-worldly' reductionist conception of nature and culture.<sup>41</sup> In contexts that value the divine, human reason realizes an innate capacity for self-transcendence and experiences its infinite openness to a sense of awe and mystery. The professionals who dialogue with mystics of the other religions will be helped to arrive at a genuine mystical experience of the divine emerging from the very heart of humane existence. This sense of self-transcendence connects the professionals to a religious sense of the divine 'beyond' all the religions and yet 'within' the world and creation. In theological terms, the experience of transcendence opens up the heart to be touched by a God "who comes to mind" rather than "from the mind" and "who ultimately "is in consciousness and awakens the desire for God" (Urbano 2009, 320, 321). In this manner the humans are "slowly and gradually led to a path that commences with an unwavering responsibility to a neighbour and culminates in a faith to a Wholly Other" (ibid., 322).<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

The crises of sustainability has spurred the UN to generate a model of development that is sustainable. In the multivocal discussion on sustainable development, Indigenous Peoples alerted humankind to a cultural notion of space as sacred and creation as spirited. The specific contribution out of a dialogue of the Christian faith with indigenous religiosity is a theological insight of sacred sustainability that finds resonances in the sense of the sacredness of creation in the tenets of the other religions of the world and more particularly the cosmology of sustainability at the core of indigenous cultures. Creation that is suffused with God's omnipresence is a sacred space wherein the inclusion and practice of sacred sustainability ensures the intergenerational survival of humankind and our treasured planetary home. The emergent discourse on sacred sustainability of creation impinges on science and technology to integrate transcendence within their discourse as much as the UN to incorporate culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. Only by beholding human-earth space as sacred and realize how the omnipresence of God sustains life in the human-earth space will humankind be able to understand and promote sacred sustainability of all forms of life and ensure a sustainable future for all humankind and the earth.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> According to Philip Sheldrake, "philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Gaston Bachelard and Edward S. Casey have re-embraced the conviction that place is prior to space... In his essay 'An Ontological Consideration of Place', Heidegger insisted that 'place is the house of being'" to the extent that to be a person (Heidegger's *dasein*) is "literally 'to be there', to be in a particular place." See Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces For The Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity*, Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, 7. Also see 'An Ontological Consideration of Place,' in Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being*, ET New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958, 19.

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<sup>2</sup> This is a new paradigm that is expounded and proposed at Rio+20 Declaration of The International Conference of Indigenous Peoples on Self-Determination and Sustainable Development” which declares that “cultures are new ways of being and living with nature, underpinning our values, moral and ethical choices and our actions... We believe that all societies must foster cultures of sustainability, and that Rio+20 should highlight culture as the most fundamental dimension of sustainable development... We call upon the world to reestablish dialogue and harmony with Mother Earth and adopt a new paradigm for civilization based on *Buen Vivir* in the spirit of survival, dignity and well-being” [Online] Retrieved from <http://cupuladospovos.org.br/en/2012/06/indigenous-peoples-international-declaration-on-self-determination-and-sustainable-development/> [Accessed on November 19, 2012]

<sup>3</sup> In fact to “allow the market mechanism to be sole director of human beings and their natural environment...would result in the demolition of society” (Polanyi 1957, 73), civilization and Mother Earth altogether.

<sup>4</sup> See article “sustainability” [Online] Retrieved from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainabilitylopedia> [Accessed on Oct 2, 2012]

<sup>5</sup> The Earth Charter Initiative (2000). "The Earth Charter." [Accessed on November 21, 2012]

<sup>6</sup> See article “Sustainable humanity: Need of the Hour,” [Online] Retrieved from <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/20122195052606548.html> [Accessed on Feb 12, 2012]

<sup>7</sup> See United Nations General Assembly (March 20, 1987). "Report of the World Commission on Environment and *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*; Transmitted to the General Assembly as an Annex to document A/42/427 - Development and International Co-operation: Environment; Our Common Future, Chapter 2: Towards Sustainable Development; Paragraph 1"United Nations General Assembly [Online]Retrieved from <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm> [Accessed on November 21, 2012]

<sup>8</sup> Little wonder, ecological economist Herman Daly asked, "what use is a sawmill without a forest?" See Herman Daly and John Cobb Jr., **THE COMMON GOOD: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future**, Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> I was initiated by a renowned shaman by the name of Garing Bin Muntalan of the Murut ethnic community of Sabah, East Malaysia, from July 19-21, 2001 in a stream near to his village called Bantul.

<sup>10</sup> See Bede Griffiths. *A New Vision of Reality: Western Science, Eastern Mysticism and Christian Faith*, ed. Felicity Edwards, London: HarperCollins Publishers, 279.

<sup>11</sup> The same concept of the Bolivian indigenous peoples is known as *sumak kawsay* in Quechua (Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia) and *Suma qamaña* in Aymara (Bolivia and Peru), thanks to the August 16, 2010 email communication of Xavier Albo, SJ [Accessed on August 16, 2010]

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, the law would give nature legal rights, specifically the rights to life and regeneration, biodiversity, water, clean air, balance, and restoration. Bolivia's law mandates a fundamental ecological reorientation of Bolivia's economy and society, requiring all existing and future laws to adapt to the Mother Earth law and accept the ecological limits set by nature. In practical terms, the law requires the government to transition from non-renewable to renewable energy; to develop new economic indicators that will assess the ecological impact of all economic activity; to carry out ecological audits of all private and state companies; to regulate and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; to develop policies of food and renewable energy sovereignty; to research and invest resources in energy efficiency, ecological practices, and organic agriculture; and to require all companies and individuals to be accountable for environmental contamination with a duty to restore damaged environments. For more information, kindly see “The Law of Mother Earth: Behind Bolivia’s Historic Bill,” published in *Truthout*, Friday 22 April, 2011. [Online] Retrieved from <http://www.truth-out.org>; accessed on August 20, 2010. [Accessed on November 22, 2011]

<sup>13</sup> For a more detail explanation of “dialogic reverence” in the light of the Catholic Social Teachings, see Jojo M. Fung, “GRIEVANCE AND GROANING: A Theological Reflection on the Uprising and Tsunami,” *Asian Horizon*, Vol. 5, no.2, June, 2011, 372-380.

<sup>14</sup> See John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 30.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, made a remark “Between dialogue or barbarity, we choose dialogue” on the occasion of the memorial mass in Rome on March 6,

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2011, for Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's Catholic minister for religious minorities who was assassinated by Muslim extremists in Islamabad, Pakistan on Mar 2, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> See the 1987 UN Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development entitled *Our Common Future*, Chapter 2: "Towards Sustainable Development," which was transmitted to the General Assembly as an Annex to document A/42/427 - Development and International Cooperation: Environment.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 81. The UN calls for the pursuit of sustainable development that requires (a) a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making; (b) an economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis; (c) a social system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development; (d) a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development, (e) a technological system that can search continuously for new solutions, (f) an international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance, and (g) an administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction. Also see the 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly held on 11 September 2012 which adopted the Resolution 66/288 (UN A/RES/66/288) of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development entitled *The Future We Want*, no. 4 which "reaffirms the need to achieve sustainable development by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, and promoting the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supports, inter alia, economic, social and human development while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration and restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges."

<sup>19</sup> See UN Resolution 66/288 (UN A/RES/66/288) *The Future We Want*, no. 4, "We recognize that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development." [Online] Retrieved from [http://conspect.nl/pdf/Our\\_Common\\_Future-Brundtland\\_Report\\_1987.pdf](http://conspect.nl/pdf/Our_Common_Future-Brundtland_Report_1987.pdf) [Accessed on December 2, 2012]

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* and the reference is made under section III entitled "Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty Eradication." No. 58 affirms that the green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should recognize the relevant contribution of traditional cultures and knowledge.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 31, "We emphasize that sustainable development must be inclusive and people centered, benefiting and involving all people, including youth and children. We recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are important for sustainable development and our common future. We reaffirm our commitments to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making." Also see no. 64, "We acknowledge that involvement of all stakeholders and their partnerships, networking and experience-sharing at all levels could help countries to learn from one another in identifying appropriate sustainable development policies, including green economy policies."

<sup>22</sup> See UN Resolution 66/288 (UN A/RES/66/288) *The Future We Want*, no. 4 which "reaffirms the need to achieve sustainable development by promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, and promoting the integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems that supports, inter alia, economic, social and human development while facilitating ecosystem conservation, regeneration and restoration and resilience in the face of new and emerging challenges."

<sup>23</sup> See Rayappa A. Kasi, "Anthropology versus cosmology: A Schism in Cosmogogenesis," *Journal of Dharma* 37, 2 (2012), 169-190.

<sup>24</sup> Prof. Dr. Mathew Chandrankunnel, CMI, "In Support of A Sustainable Green Earth: A Paradigm Shift from *Homo Faber* towards *Homo Custos*," *Journal of Dharma*, 37, 2 (2012), 129-146.

<sup>25</sup> A case in point of the African Religion is the story of the Kunda people of the Mambwe District in Eastern Zambia who regard the ancestral land as sacred. When the land developers pressurized them to sell their land they refused to sell because it is totally inconceivable to be disconnected from their present semi-arid and unproductive

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land. See Special Report on Ecology, "Healing a Broken World" *Promotio Iustitiae*, 106, 2 (2011), 1-68. [Online] Retrieved from [www.sjweb.info/sjs/PJnew](http://www.sjweb.info/sjs/PJnew) [Accessed on November 28, 2012]

<sup>26</sup>Special Report on Ecology, "Healing a Broken World," no. 65, p. 41.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., no. 66, p. 41.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>See no. 451 in *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican, Rome: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2005), 255.

<sup>31</sup>An open letter entitled "Preserving and Cherishing the Earth" to the religious community declares that "As scientists, many of us have had profound experiences of awe and reverence before the universe. We understand that what is regarded as sacred is more likely to be treated with care and respect. Our planetary home should be so regarded. Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment need to be infused with a vision of the sacred. At the same time, a much wider and deeper understanding of science and technology is needed. If we do not understand the problem, it is unlikely we will be able to fix it. Thus, there is a vital role for both religion and science." [Online] Retrieved from [http://www.earthrenewal.org/Open\\_letter\\_to\\_the\\_religious\\_.htm](http://www.earthrenewal.org/Open_letter_to_the_religious_.htm) [Accessed on December 29, 2012]

<sup>32</sup>In 1990 a group of well known scientists like Carl Sagan, Hans Bethe, Freeman Dyson, Stephen Jay Gould issued an open letter to the religious community in which they admitted that "We are now threatened by self-inflicted, swiftly moving environmental alterations about whose long-term biological and ecological consequences we are still painfully ignorant: depletion of the protective ozone layer; a global warming unprecedented in the last 150 millennia; the obliteration of an acre of forest every second; the rapid-fire extinction of species; and the prospect of a global nuclear war which would put at risk most of the population of the Earth. There may well be other such dangers of which we are still unaware. Individually and cumulatively, they represent a trap being set for the human species, a trap we are setting for ourselves." [Online] Retrieved from [http://www.earthrenewal.org/Open\\_letter\\_to\\_the\\_religious\\_.htm](http://www.earthrenewal.org/Open_letter_to_the_religious_.htm) [Accessed on December 29, 2012]

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>See Benedict XVI's World Day of Peace Message 2012, no. 6. [Online] Retrieved from [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20091208\\_xliii-world-day-peace\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace_en.html) [Accessed December 29, 2012]

<sup>36</sup>Benedict XVI's encyclical, *Caritas et Veritate*, no. 48. [Online] Retrieved from [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html) [Accessed on December 30, 2012]

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>See Henry L. Novello, "God's Action of Furthering Nature in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *Pacifica*, 25 (2012), 217-238; see also Keith Ward, *The Big Questions in Science and Religion*, West Cohshohocken PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2008. For chaos theory, kindly see James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science*, London: Heinemann, 1988 and James P. Crutchfield, J. Doynne Farmer, Norman H. Packard, and Robert S. Shaw, "Chaos", in *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications, 1995 and Ilya Prigogine and Isabella Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*, London: Heinemann, 1984; On the relation of quantum theory to God, see Thomas F. Tracy, "Particular Providence and the God of the Gaps", in *Chaos and Complexity: Scientific Perspectives on Divine Action*, Vatican City State: Vatican Observatory Publications, 1995.

<sup>39</sup>Special Report on Ecology, "Healing a Broken World", p. 24.

<sup>40</sup>Orla O' Reilly Hazra (2012, 153) argues that the "Cartesian coed is based on a sense of radical separation from aspects of self, each other and earth...to the extent that the earth is no longer sacred" since "Cartesian culture is secular." See his article, "Awakening the Cartesian Dreamer: Universal Values in Solidarity with an Evolutionary Universe," *Journal of Dharma* 37, 2(2012), 147-168.

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<sup>41</sup> Perumpallikunnel (2012, 115) defines secularism as “a system of moral and social action firmly established on human reason, shaped exclusively by ‘this-worldly’ considerations, irrespective of religious beliefs” and warns that “whenever and wherever secularism had supremacy it turned out to be autocratic, irrational and blind.” See Kurian Perumpallikunnel, “Beyond Bounds of Faith and Secularism: Brave Horizons of Mysticism,” *Third Millennium*, 15 (2012), 108-124.

<sup>42</sup> Rayan C. Urbano, “A-Dieu: Approaching the Divine,” *Budhi – A Journal of Ideas and Cultures*, 33, 1,2,3 (2009), 309-322.