

Foreword

I confess that I was granted the grace of a favourable year of birth: For I was able to experience my youth in the 1970s, the time when environmental awareness in Germany experienced its first major springtime. Ecological thinking was therefore passed on to me not only through my nature-loving family, but also through the social developments of that time, which have shaped me to this day.

Environmental protection at that time was mainly focused on resource issues—global warming was not yet known about, and the biodiversity problem was known about, but not in its global dimension. So, for countless classmates I became the middleman of recycled paper, which was not yet available in stationery shops at that time. As the son of parents who had no car and no driver's licence, I forwent getting a driving licence and a car at the age of 18 and travelled to meetings and weekend events organised by the Catholic youth association, even over medium distances, mostly by bicycle. My first letters to the editor in regional newspapers also date back to this time, on questions of transport policy and against the Grafenrheinfeld nuclear power plant, which was under construction at the time.

In my first years as a priest, I was able to build well on my earlier experiences. Working in regional environmental initiatives enriched my career greatly, and some contacts from that time have remained until today. While we had to bury the Lohr–Marktheidenfeld–Wertheim railway line at the end of 1990 in a symbolic act because its demolition was to begin a few days later, we were ultimately able to save the Saale Valley Railway between Gemünden, Hammelburg and Bad Kissingen through numerous activities in the years 1993 to 1996—although some of our demands at that time to make transport on this line more attractive are only now being realised. The decades-long commitment to the Hafenlohr valley, to which I could only make a very small contribution, was also ultimately successful. Parallel to this, I was able to get involved in the environmental work of the diocese of Würzburg and support developments there, the fruits of which can still be seen today.

So, I felt it was a lucky coincidence that my habilitation supervisor, Prof. Dr Bernhard Fraling (1929–2013), recommended that I write my habilitation thesis on "Care for Creation in the Conciliar Process of the

Christian Churches 1983–1989" (Michael Rosenberger 2001). In terms of content, for me this meant coming home to a familiar world and the opportunity to combine my two great heartfelt concerns—the Christian faith and environmental protection—in an academic way.

Since then, the themes of Christian environmental ethics have run through my academic research and teaching. In great interdisciplinarity, research projects and working groups emerged that broadened my horizons enormously, but in which I was also able to experience that the specific contribution of theological ethics is desired and recognised as important. I am very grateful for the collegial cooperation and human esteem that characterise(d) these groups.

In addition to my academic work, since 2004 I have been able to support the environmental work of the Diocese of Linz internally and maintain many contacts with the environmental movement externally. Remarkable projects have emerged from this, both within and outside the church. In this context, I quickly made contact with Fridays for Future Upper Austria in March 2019 and was involved in the founding of Scientists for Future Upper Austria and Religions for Future Austria.

This book is therefore indebted to countless people, whose names would never end and would always remain incomplete, which is why I refrain from mentioning them. Those I am referring to, please feel addressed.

A few days before the completion of my manuscript, "Christian Environmental Ethics" by my colleague Markus Vogt, with whom I have been associated for about 25 years, was published by Herder-Verlag. Due to the different theological subjects for which we are responsible—Markus Vogt for Christian social ethics, I for moral theology—we have very different approaches to the topic. The difference in approach, however, is mutually enriching due to the great agreement in our professional assessments. Thus, it is only due to the necessity of completing the manuscript that I could not include Vogt's environmental ethics in this book.

Finally, my thanks go to Charlotte Cremer for her extremely accurate proofreading of the German-language manuscript and numerous valuable suggestions, and to Dr Bernward Kröger of Aschendorff-Verlag for his usual reliable editing of the German edition of the book. I would also like to thank Beate Bernstein from Nomos-Verlag for accompanying the English translation presented here.

With the publication of this book, I hope that it will stimulate and enrich professional discussions beyond the German-speaking world, but above all that the spiritual resources from 2000 years of Christian tradition will give us strength and orientation to walk the path of ecological conversion together.

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Table of Contents

1. "Our House is on Fire." Introduction	15
1.1 The impetus of Fridays for Future	15
1.2 The environmental crisis as a sign of the times	17
1.3 Bound in the bag of life	18
1.4 The structure of the book	20
2. Looking into the abyss. The analytical tool of planetary boundaries	22
2.1 The concept of planetary boundaries	22
2.2 The nine borders and their meaning	23
2.3 Measured variables and measurement of the limits	25
2.4 Key problem 1: Global warming	29
2.5 Key problem 2: The loss of biodiversity	34
2.6 The great acceleration	39
2.7 Regional inequalities. The World Risk Index	40
2.8 The two central causes: Economic activity and lifestyle	42
2.9 Boundaries in an anthropological and ethical perspective	45
2.10 A New Age: The Earth in the Anthropocene	49
3. Building an Ark. Impulses from biblical creation texts	52
3.1 The ecclesiastical aberrations in the interpretation of biblical creation texts	54
3.2 Hermeneutical and exegetical preliminary remarks on Gen. 1–9	57
3.3 Prelude: The vision of a great family of all creatures (Ps. 104)	58
3.4 The Noahide Covenant as a model of justice for the present day	60
3.4.1 God's Covenant with His Creation (Gen. 9)	60
3.4.2 The flood of violence and the lifeboat of the ark (Gen. 6–8)	61

Table of Contents

3.5	The Peace of Creation as a Utopian Model for Dynamising the Present	63
3.5.1	Man and animals in the garden of paradise (Gen. 2–3)	63
3.5.2	The great house of life of creation (Gen. 1)	65
3.6	The guiding principle of the peace of Creation and the norms of Creation justice	74
3.7	The Sabbath as the Basic Principle of Creation Justice	79
3.8	The tree of life as an archetypal symbol of Creation justice	80
4.	Celebrating Creation. Liturgical expressions of care for Creation	86
4.1	"All like the altar vessels". Creation spirituality in the liturgical stance	88
4.2	"Embracing the world". Creation spirituality in sacraments and sacramentals	89
4.2.1	Baptism as a sign of the great flood	91
4.2.2	The Eucharist as the thanksgiving of all creatures	92
4.2.3	The other sacraments	98
4.2.4	The earth rite of burial as a return to the earth	100
4.3	Tuning in with Creation. Creation spirituality in (liturgical) prayer	101
4.3.1	The Lord's Prayer	101
4.3.2	The Liturgy of the Hours	102
4.3.3	The missing lament prayer	104
4.4	Sharing the Easter Bread. Creation spirituality in the church year	106
4.5	Promising goodness. Creation spirituality in the blessings	111
4.5.1	Blessings around nutrition	112
4.5.2	Blessing of herbs	114
4.5.3	Blessing of the waters	114
4.5.4	Blessing of the animals	115
4.5.5	Blessing in the killing of animals. A missing person report	117
4.6	As the church "do not remain silent". Creation Day and Creation Time	119
4.7	Celebrating outdoors. Creation as a space and time-giver for the liturgy	120

4.8	Still room for improvement. A conclusion	123
5.	Respecting the dignity of creatures. Basic concepts of environmental and animal ethics	124
5.1	Anthropocentric approaches	128
5.2	Pathocentrist/ Sentientist approaches	134
5.3	Biocentric approaches	138
5.4	Ecocentrist/Cosmocentrist/Holistic Approaches	143
5.5	Inherent worth/dignity as ascription of an individual moral status	148
5.5.1	The normative content of the attribution of inherent worth/dignity	149
5.5.2	The necessary incommensurability of inherent worth/dignity	151
5.5.3	The bearers of inherent worth/dignity. Methodological preliminary remarks	154
5.5.4	The bearers of inherent worth/dignity. The fundamental decision	156
5.5.5	The theological deepening of the attribution of inherent worth/dignity	161
5.5.6	The emotional power of holistically based biocentrism and its spiritual deepening	169
5.6	Moral individualism and the common good principle	171
5.7	Epilogue: Being born and dying as cornerstones of ethics of Creation	177
6.	Thinking of children and grandchildren. Sustainability as intergenerational justice	179
6.1	History of the concept and idea of sustainable development	180
6.2	Systematic reflection on the concept of sustainable development	184
6.2.1	Sustainable development as a concept of justice	186
6.2.2	The three "pillars" of sustainability	187
6.2.3	What is replaceable? Strong versus weak sustainability	190
6.2.4	The five rules of ecological sustainability	192
6.2.5	The concept of sustainability and holistically based biocentrism	195

Table of Contents

6.3	Sustainable climate protection	196
6.4	Sustainable biodiversity conservation	202
6.5	Sustainability and population policy	212
6.6	Sustainability as a link between different discourses	217
7.	More than greenwashing. Ecological conversion	220
7.1	The concept of the “great transformation”	220
7.1.1	A “transformation of value attitudes”	222
7.1.2	Existing power relations as the biggest obstacle	223
7.2	The Concept of “Ecological Conversion”	226
7.3	Conversion as an apocalyptic programme	229
7.3.1	Apocalyptic figures of thought in the perception of the world	230
7.3.2	Apocalyptic figures in theological interpretation	233
7.3.3	"Laudato si'" as gentle apocalypticism	235
7.4	The added value of a theology of conversion for the project of the great transformation	236
8.	Putting a price on values. Structural changes towards an eco-social market economy	238
8.1	Common good versus individual good. The problem of the commons	238
8.2	Structural change models for the eco-social market economy	243
8.3	Eco-social market economy in a global context	251
8.4	(Post-)Growth?	253
9.	Living well instead of having much. Virtues of Creation Spirituality	258
9.1	Gratitude as appreciation of the given	259
9.2	Humility as becoming free through limitations	260
9.3	Reverence as stepping back from the mystery	261
9.4	Justice as impartial engagement	263
9.5	Moderation as harmony with Creation	264
9.6	Enjoyment as a taste for life	266

9.7 Serenity as being free from oneself	267
9.8 Devotion as the willingness to give oneself to others	268
9.9 Epilogue: Living simply	270
10. Engaging serenely. The environmental movement between indifference and burnout	272
10.1 A new understanding of (God-)trust	273
10.2 Hope as letting something happen	274
10.3 Hope as refraining from success	276
10.4 Hope as the certainty that something has meaning	277
10.5 Epilogue: Bound in the bag of life	279
Bibliography	281
Index of passages from the Bible and magisterial texts	307
Register of persons	313

