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Sagan, is found calling for an alliance between religion and science to save the planet.³² Such invitations do not fully comprehend that for which they are asking, but let us not for that reason hesitate to accept them. Time will not make the church's involvement more welcome. The present crisis makes it necessary. If there would be true 'environmental law', it cannot consist merely of rules supported by force. The authority of true environmental law must be moral, not merely coercive. It must persuade, not merely punish. And the ultimate authority on which it stands must reflect genuine righteousness, not merely brute strength. It is the church that must both guide the way to such reform and invest it with lasting content.

Dr. Fred Van Dyke teaches at Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa. p. 257

IV

Case Studies in Christian Environmental Stewardship

Forgiven Christians can take an honest, even courageous look at what the church is doing and has done in the world, for good and ill. The following section provides some examples of both. Bishop Wayan Mastra explains in lyrical terms the harmony between humanity and nature in his native Bali, and the gentle forms of evangelism that take place in that setting. In contrast, Calvin Redekop and his colleague, Wilmar Stahl, document the unfortunate changes in the ecological practices of the native tribes of the Paraguayan Chaco resulting from their evangelization by the Mennonites. The irony here is that the Mennonites have traditionally been innovators and leaders in the conservation of the land. Finally, Chris Seaton closes the volume on a positive note. Considering the evangelization of youth in Great Britain, he describes the zeal with which they have embraced Christian environmental stewardship. The next generation of Christians may signal a new spirit of faithfulness to the Creator by their care for the creation. p. 259

Environment and the Christian Faith: A Holistic Approach from Bali

Wayan Mastra

³² Carl Sagan, 'Guest Comment: Preserving and Cherishing the Earth—An Appeal for Joint Commitment in Science and Religion'. *American Journal of Physics* 58 (1990): 615.

Bali, an island of 5,623 square kilometers in the east of Java is one of the 13,000 islands in the archipelago of Indonesia. It is very small compared to many other islands. But it is perhaps the most famous and unique of all, bearing epithets such as the 'last paradise' or 'morning of the world'.

The mountains that run across Bali from its western to its eastern tip divide Bali into two parts: South and North Bali. These mountains play a very important role in the life and belief of the Balinese. They are volcanic mountains with two active volcanoes remaining. The craters of the dead volcanoes have turned into lakes that serve Bali as water reservoirs. Bali has four natural lakes and one engineered lake in the mountains. The heavy forests on the slopes of the mountains bring a lot of rain, hold water, and distribute it during the dry season. In fact, rain falls most of the time in the mountains. Since Bali lies in the tropical zone, the weather remains relatively constant all year round. The sun rises at about six o'clock in the morning and sets at about six o'clock in the afternoon. During the day the wind blows from the sea to the mountains creating a refreshing wind. In the night the wind blows from the mountains to the sea bringing cool air. There is a steady rotation of air from the sea to the mountain and back. In the day time, the earth becomes hotter than the sea, so that the air on the island becomes very light and rises to a higher altitude. This causes an air vacuum on the island which is filled by the air from the sea. The sunshine on the sea causes the sea water to evaporate and blow with the wind to the island and to the mountains, bringing rain to their slopes. The rain is stored by the craters, becoming lakes, the natural reservoir of water for the island. The rain water from the mountains and lakes returns to the sea through rivers that flow northward and southward from the mountains. The rivers play a very important role in the life of Bali. As they flow to the ocean, they give life to the rice in the wet-rice field, to the other vegetation, to animals, and to people who live on the plains or in villages in the low lands. The rivers then continue their epic journey to the sea, taking with them all dirt and filth, as well as food for creatures that live in the ocean.

Moreover, because of their volcanic nature, the mountains are considered as the source of eternal fire. The mountains rise far above [p.260](#) the sea level, between 1000 and 3000 meters high. The weather in the mountains is very nice and refreshing, so they remain a source of fresh air. The mountains, especially Mount Agung—the tallest in Bali—has also played the role of bringing a new sign for the day for the Balinese. Every morning the beautiful dawn comes to the top of the mountain. It does not curse the darkness in the valley, but it gives a sign to the people in the plain that a new day is coming. It drives away the cold air of the night and the dangers of the dark. The sun or the light of the world is coming and inviting people to be ready for their daily life.

Water, fire and air are three elements essential for life. Inside the body of a person there are also these three essential elements. If one of these elements is missing from the human body, then the person will die. The source of these three elements is in the mountains. In this way people consider the mountains to be sacred. They direct their faces to the mountains and turn their back to the sea. At night, when they, sleep, people put their heads towards the mountains as the giver or the source of life.

On the whole one can say that nature or the environment are very kind and helpful to the people of Bali. The natural scenery is very beautiful. Every day nature smiles at the people. It gives the people enough water for their daily life and for their wet-rice fields, vegetation, and animals through natural springs, lakes, and rivers. The air is always fresh and cool, day and night. The sun shines daily. It is interrupted occasionally by rain, but people have no complaints. In fact people are very thankful, since rain is also needed by their fruit trees and other vegetation. Most people are farmers. Their daily life depends upon their wet-rice paddies and exotic tropical fruit trees as well as animals such as pigs,

chickens, and cows. They can plant rice at any time of the year, because the weather is almost the same year-round. Water flows nicely all year. The sun is also friendly all year.

Life is monotonous, but there is no cause for complaint. People feel that they owe their life to nature. They express their gratitude to nature and the environment through two large festivals of thanksgiving. The first happens after they harvest their wet-rice paddies. The second takes place after they harvest their exotic tropical fruits. During these festivals, women and girls dress themselves in their most beautiful dresses. They walk in procession with big offerings of rice-cake, fruits, meat and flowers that are arranged very beautifully on their heads. At the back, the men and the boys play exuberant gamelan music to accompany the women and the girls who walk in procession in front of them. They go to the temple in order to express their gratitude to the goddess of rice and the goddess of the exotic tropical fruits. p. 261

People teach their children to respect nature. In all villages there are special days every 210 days when people honor plants, animals and tools that are useful for their daily lives. On these days, people cannot cut trees or kill animals or use the tools in celebration of their birthdays. This is the way they express their gratitude to animals and plants and tools that have been very kind and helpful in their lives. People remind their children to respect plants, animals and tools because they owe their lives to them. They are told that when the children were still in their mother's womb, they got their food for their life from their mothers through their navel in their belly. That is why when they are out in the world, they must relate themselves to mother nature through the navel temples which are built in the middle of all villages in Bali.

In this way one can say that the people in Bali have very strong ties to nature and the environment, because they feel that they owe their lives to them. They must express their gratitude through their navel temples. Nature and the environment are very kind and helpful to them. They can be compared to their own mothers who love and care for them. They must live in harmony with nature. They must respect and feel grateful for their environment.

FAITH AND ENVIRONMENT

Balinese consider nature as being very powerful. It is beyond their control, and it is very important for their well being. They look at nature as power or spirit. They depend upon it. They respect nature and express their gratitude to it. The power or spirit of nature manifests itself to the people through fresh air, fresh water, and the fire of the sun. These three elements are essential for their lives and are the manifestation of natural force or power or spirit preserving the creatures in the universe. They look at the relation of the natural power, force, or spirit and the plants as husband and wife. It can be seen very clearly in the relation of water and rice. People consider that the spirit of water marries the spirit of rice. That produces rice for their daily life. Since the main staple of the people is rice, so the goddess of rice and the god of water are very important in their belief. People eat rice three times a day. When people have eaten all kind of food, but they have not eaten rice, then they consider themselves as being still hungry.

The belief in the spirit of nature or the soul of nature leads a person to believe that the person has also a spirit or soul. This is the belief that brings forth the ancestor worship. People believe that the soul or the spirit is eternal. That is why they also believe that the souls or spirits of p. 262 their ancestors are eternal. They believe in life after death, as in the rotations of the sun. There is sunrise and sunset, but it will be continued again the following day. That is why people also believe in reincarnation. Hence in Bali, people are still very strong in their belief in the spirit of their ancestors. People like to go to a medium

or clairvoyant who is capable of talking with the soul of the dead ancestors. People also practice trance dance, when they invite spirits to come and enter a person until the person can dance in trance.

When the Hindus came to Bali, apparently they did not change the belief of the people. They merely gave new names to the natural forces or spirit or soul of nature. So the Hindus who came to Bali gave the name Brahma to the spirit of fire, Vishnu to the spirit of water, and Civa to the spirit of air. These three main spirits of fire, water and fresh air, manifest themselves in the volcanoes, lakes, rivers, sea and the skies. People respect these spirits because they also need them in their lives. If one of the three spirits or elements is missing from their bodies, then the people will die. That is why in Bali, when people build their temple, they must build the temple in the site where the three spirits or elements of life can be seen very clearly. People must feel the presence of water, fresh air and the sun. People must have relation with the three elements of life, as the giver, maintainer, and sustainer of life. The present generation of Balinese Hindu priests and leaders have formed a doctrine of trinity out of these three main elements or spirits of life. When the spirit manifests itself as creator, it is called Brahma, as maintainer is called Vishnu, and as destroyer is called Civa. These three main elements or spirits of life are the manifestation of the one true God, i.e. the Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa.

In some other areas or countries, perhaps nature is not quite so kind and helpful to the people. So the people cannot live in friendly terms with nature. Where the climate is harsh—such as too cold, too dry or too hot—so that vegetation, animals, and people must work hard for their lives, then the people cannot appreciate nature. In fact, they will see nature as a constant enemy to be conquered. It creates a constant feeling of fear and danger for the people, so that they look at nature as hostile and destructive for them. People have to struggle against nature and they must try hard to conquer it. They have to develop protective techniques in order to use it to their service. They cannot live on friendly terms with nature, so they have to build shelters to protect themselves from nature.

People tend to cut their relation with nature. When they build places of worship, they also build them in such a way that they cannot have relation with the nature. They build a very thick wall; the windows are [p. 263](#) closed and given stained glass, so that people cannot see nature outside. Eventually, they also look at the world as bad—to be conquered and defeated. They also formulate a theology that looks at the world as being bad, and it must be avoided. They look at nature and the world as devils. In fact, they also look at human flesh as a source of evil, as something to be denied and avoided.

They will develop science and technology that brings in invention after invention, that give a feeling of security against nature. These inventions will also destroy nature and themselves. When they are coupled with greed, they want more and more security and pleasure for themselves, eventually leading them into suicide and the destruction of nature. The world becomes warmer; the ozone is being destroyed. Life will become harder and harder.

ENVIRONMENT AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

The world religions can be divided into two categories that are related to their origin. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were born in the desert areas of the Middle East. In the desert areas the weather is very harsh. There is not enough water. People struggle to find and possess an 'oasis'. The people who can get and possess an 'oasis' or a well or spring of water can survive. And the people who do not have an oasis or well will die. That is why the people are intolerant toward other people. They bring that feeling of intolerance into

the teaching of their faith. That is why the adherents of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are known as being intolerant toward other religions. They have experienced many religious wars and conflicts.

Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism were born in tropical areas of India along the Shindu, Gangga, and Brahmaputra rivers, where water was never a problem. That is why the adherents of these three religions are considered as being tolerant in their relation with other religions. So environment plays an important role in shaping the character of the people, and is brought into the teaching of their religion. One can look at Christianity and Islam in Indonesia. The spirit of ecumenism among churches in Indonesia was much stronger than that in Europe and America. In fact the spirit of intolerance toward other faiths or religions was imported to Indonesia by missionaries who came from Europe or America. The same thing happened with Islam.

In Indonesia, Moslems, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and adherents of primitive religions can live in harmony and solidarity with each other. Perhaps this is because of the contribution of the environment of Indonesia and of Bali in particular. Some time ago, the adherents of all p. 264 religious groups in Bali formed an organization called Badan Musyawarah Antar Agama (Agency for Consensus between Religious Groups). Many problems between religious groups are solved; deep feelings of friendship are developed between leaders of the religious groups because they meet regularly. This is the contribution of nature and the government.

The government recognized the religious diversity to be found among the Indonesian people, as well as in traditional customs, languages, ethnic groups, and wealth. If one put the map of Indonesia on the map of Europe, it would cover the whole of Europe from Spain to the Ural Mountains and from Norway to Italy. In trying to unite so many differences into one nation, the government does not impose one language that is spoken by the majority of the Indonesian people, but the Malay language remains the national language because Indonesians are of Malaysian stock.

The government formulated a philosophical basis for the constitution that is called 'Pancasila', meaning five principles. They are: (1) Belief in one God, (2) Humanity, (3) Nationalism, (4) Democracy, and (5) Social Justice. The government traces the first principle back to the ancient belief of the Indonesians in the existence of one supreme being or one God, at the time before they knew Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity. None of their four recognized religions mentioned above is native to Indonesia. All of them are imported religions from the Middle East or India. All religions have a universal nature. Islam has 'dakwah', Hinduism and Buddhism have 'upanisadha', and Christianity has 'mission'. These concepts express their efforts to spread their religions into all parts of the world. That is why all the great religions of the world have come to Indonesia and have been embraced by the Indonesians. Thus, the government does not impose any of the major religions as a state religion. In doing this, the government tries to accommodate all people who believe in God, whether God goes by the name of Allah, Yahweh, God, or Ida Sang Hyang Widhi Wasa. The government encourages all people to observe and practice religion in a civilized way, that is, in a spirit of mutual respect for one another.

Most people are contented with Pancasila, because they are convinced that it is in conformity with the codes of political and social ethics that their society must embrace. Pancasila also teaches them the way to live in a plural society. They avoid the western way of democracy that the majority rules. Instead, they impose the indigenous democratic way of thinking that stresses agreement or consensus. They agree to disagree, avoiding the majority and minority approach. p. 265 Pancasila has also curbed the spirit of religious radicalism and extremism, so that religious radicalism has never gained popular support.

And religious extremists can be controlled and can be easily localized. In that way, Indonesia is able to avoid the kind of religious conflict found in Ireland, Lebanon and Yugoslavia.

Pancasila does not eliminate missionary activity. Every religious group is allowed to propagate its teachings, but not in a derogatory manner. Each one must try to avoid insulting the other religious group. This is the background of Christian faith in Bali. All religions of the world can be found in Bali, and all their adherents can live in mutual respect.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENT

People have always asked themselves: 'What is life?' 'Where does life come from?' 'What is the purpose of life?' People try to fulfill their lives. They try to discover more meaning than to eat and to multiply. Balinese divide people's characters into five groups. First, there are people who are like ants. Ants work hard only to eat. No matter how much food they have in their hole, they will continue to work hard to find and collect food. There are people who, like ants, work hard to collect food and wealth. Secondly, there are people who are like crickets. They are people who want to enjoy life. They try to get food to fill their stomachs, and as soon as they fill the stomach, they will sing to enjoy life. They do not think of tomorrow. That is the way of people who want to be easy-going and to enjoy life. Thirdly, there are people who are like snakes. They are the lazy and cruel people. When the snakes get food to fill their stomachs, they will go to sleep. The snakes will sleep as long as their stomachs are full. As soon as they are hungry, they will go out again. They are very cruel and have no compassion for their victims. Fourthly, there are people who are like monkeys. Monkeys will work hard to find food to fill their stomachs. When they have eaten, they do not know how to sit still. They will jump from one branch to another until they are hungry again. They look serious but do not know how to sit still to meditate and to contemplate. That is why they achieve nothing in their lives. Lastly, there are people who are like caterpillars. These caterpillars will work hard to get food to fill their stomachs. But as soon as they get food, they will sit still to meditate or to contemplate. They change themselves into cocoons and eventually into butterflies. People who know how to meditate and to contemplate will concentrate their minds like the sunlight that is concentrated into one focus. People who know how to meditate or to **P. 266** contemplate will be able to make great achievements in their lives. That is why concentration of mind is needed. All great achievements in life are the result of concentration.

As Christians, we need concentration of mind. We need to focus our mind on our relation to nature and its Creator. We try to contemplate life so that we can contribute in a way that will be useful to God the Creator, Maintainer and Sustainer of the universe. James, in his letter asks the meaning of life: 'What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes' ([James 4:14a](#)). It is true that life is very short and quickly disappears. The psalmist likens life to grass. It flourishes like a flower of the field. When the wind passes over it, then life will be gone. But the love of God is forever for the people who fear God. And God will give righteousness to the children's children of those who keep God's covenant as well as to observe God's commandment ([Psalm 103:15-18](#)). The psalmist acknowledges that life is very short, but it will have a meaning when it is related to God's love.

Moreover life must be viewed as a grace of God. People can live only when they have the breath of life that is given by God ([Gen. 2:7](#)). So life is a grace of God the Creator, Maintainer and Sustainer of life. God gives people a time to live, so that they can take part in God's creation in a way that preserves and takes care of the Earth. In this way, they

preserve the goodness of the world as it is intended by God in creation. God enjoys creation and gives people dominion over it to maintain and to preserve it ([Gen. 1:27-31](#)). God gives the breath of life to the plants, animals and people. The breath of life is the thing that unites the plants, the animals, and the people. God gives plants everything that they need in their own place. They have a purpose to give food to the animals and people that God has created.

God gives breath of life and words for communication to the animals, so that the animal can survive. The animals need words for communication so that they can ask or inform their fellow animals where they can find food for their survival. God does not provide food in their place of birth. That is why they need words for communication. Animals must also spread the plants in this world.

God gives people the breath of life, words for communication, and mind or sense of understanding. People are given perception or sense of understanding so that they know what is right and what is wrong in the sight of God. It is intended so that people know how to participate in God's creation by maintaining and preserving the order of creation. That is why people are given dominion over nature.

All these gifts of God have the same purpose and destiny: to [p. 267](#) preserve the order of creation as it is intended by God. Plants, animals, and people must fulfill each other, so that they fulfill their task in this order of creation. People are invited to direct and use their life to God, the giver of life. They must kneel and confess to God that God is the Creator, Preserver, and Sustainer of this universe ([Rom. 14:11-12](#)).

People in Bali have a tradition and belief that they should direct their life to the giver of life. Balinese look at the universe as being microcosm and macrocosm. The body of a person is a microcosm and the universe is a macrocosm. When people are still in the womb of their mother, then they get their food for life from their mother which is given through their navels. When the baby is born and joins the people in the world, then it has to have a relation with mother nature who gives food to it through the navel temple that is built in the center of every village in Bali. People must also direct and put their head in the direction of the life giver. Perhaps this can be compared to Paul's writing: 'Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is fruitful, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things' ([Phil. 4:8](#)). To think about good things, to think about God means to direct the mind to the good things and to God the giver of life. This experience can be compared to Abraham's experience when he was in Shechem. He felt that God was present to him, and he built an altar in that place as a symbol of his relation to God ([Gen. 12:7](#)). This is also the experience of Jacob in Bethel. There he built an altar as a symbol of thanksgiving to God who led and preserved him during his journey ([Gen. 28:18-21](#)).

The relation to God as Creator, Preserver and Sustainer of life must be maintained through obeying God's laws and commandments ([Psalm 1:1-6](#)). In Jesus Christ people are called to preserve the integrity of creation as it is intended. In Jesus Christ there is Good News for the whole creation ([Mark 16:15](#)). In Jesus Christ there is Good News for plants, animals, and people, because all of them are loved by God. God wants all of them to be very good. God wants all of them to love the precious gift of life, and to use that gift for the glory of God's name. God wants all creatures to live in peace and harmony with each other, as it was in the creation story.

The Bali church also wants to participate in God's creation. When the church builds a building, it looks like a garden. In Balinese culture, a garden is more than a place of beauty: it is a sacred retreat where serenity reigns, pleasing the senses and elevating the mind. It is like a miniature Garden of Eden where one can feel close to the Creator. Our church

encourages members to love nature. They try to build a garden [p. 268](#) in their compounds and villages. A garden like the garden of Eden or Gethsemane is a right place for communion with God. By directing the mind into a beautiful garden, people will be reminded of the purpose of God's creation.

God wants to make this world a beautiful place to stay, and for us to participate in preserving the integrity of creation. Perhaps it will be easier to do so, if they want to hear Christ's calling: 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me' ([Matt. 16:24](#)). It means that everyone who answers Christ's call must be ready to deny the desires of the flesh. People in Bali compare the body of a person with a chariot that is pulled by five strong horses. So the driver must control the five horses. One can control the desire of the five senses, when one lets Christ be the driver of his life, so that one can be motivated by love ([Ephes. 3:17](#)). God is love, Christ is love, and the fruit of the Spirit is love ([1 John 4:8](#), [John 10](#), [Gal. 5:22](#)). When love has become the motivation of our life, then we can have compassion for the creatures and the environment around us. It is only love and compassion that can teach us to love and to honor life. Life is very precious, and it can be found in all creatures in the environment. Life is the one thing that creatures possess in common. Life is a gift of God; it unites all creatures, so that they can live to love one another, in harmony and solidarity. It is only in this way that one can maintain and preserve the environment: following the order of creation as it is intended by God, the Creator, Preserver, and Sustainer of this universe.

Dr. Wayan Mastra is a former Bishop and chair of the Protestant Christian Church in Bali.
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The Impact on the Environment of the Evangelization of the Native Tribes in the Paraguayan Chaco

Calvin Redekop and Wilmar Stahl¹

TRADITIONAL NOTIONS AND PRACTICES OF THE CHACO NATIVES

The Paraguayan portion of the Chaco Boreal is situated East of the Paraguay River and north of the Rio Pilcomayo—250,000 square kilometers of scrub forests intermingled with grass plains. In precontact days, a dozen different Indian tribes had adapted their cultural systems to this particular environment, with a rather diversified foraging economy. Organized in hunting bands numbering thirty to fifty individuals, they covered areas of approximately 100,000 hectares each, gathering a variety of some fifty different

¹ The senior author, Calvin Redekop, is a native of the United States while the junior author, Wilmar Stahl, was born in Paraguay and has lived there ever since.