

## A Greener Faith: Christianity and the Green Party

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*Christian churches and the Green Party call for countercultural action in order to bring into reality a vision of a world characterised by peace, justice and environmental sustainability. But do their underlying beliefs have enough in common for members to work together? This paper reflects on the origins and philosophy of the Green Party, draw parallels with Christian belief and practice, and consider whether environmental threats such as climate change might bring Greens and Christians closer together.*

### Introduction

The emergence of green politics was arguably the most significant political development of the late twentieth century. Green parties were formed in many countries, challenging the long-established political ideologies of conservatism, socialism, liberalism and nationalism, and gradually gained parliamentary representation.

Green politics may be traced back to the environmental movement that emerged in the late 1960s in response to threats to the natural environment. As public concern grew, a major UN Conference in Stockholm in 1972 brought together political representatives from over 100 countries; the same year, the influential *Limits to Growth* report was published. Each raised the profile of environmental issues in the mass media. Campaign organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace were formed and in 1973 Britain's Green Party<sup>1</sup> was launched, initially as PEOPLE and subsequently the Ecology Party. The first green political party in Europe, its founder members included Edward Goldsmith, editor of the *Ecologist* magazine and co-author of *Blueprint for Survival*.<sup>2</sup>

For many years the Green Party struggled to achieve electoral success in Britain, hampered by the prevailing voting system. Even when it obtained 15% of votes in the 1989 European election, 2.3 million in total, none of its MEPs were elected. It was only in the 1999 election, after the European voting system was changed, that its first MEPs took office—ironically with far fewer votes than ten years earlier. The Party eventually overcame the barrier of Britain's parliamentary voting system in 2010, when the first Green MP, Caroline Lucas, was elected in Brighton Pavilion. It has arguably had an influence on British politics merely by fielding candidates, however, pressurising other parties to pay greater attention to issues relating to environmental sustainability.

### Philosophical principles

#### *Ideological origins*

The Green Party's political philosophy was rooted in the countercultural thinking of the 1960s and 1970s. Mainstream politics at the time was dominated by debates over socialism and conservatism, particularly concerning nationalised industries and trade union power; Labour and the Conservatives were far more divergent than today. Green Party members were concerned that both were failing to respond appropriately to issues of global significance, notably environmental degradation and the threat of a nuclear war.

The Party fused ideas from a range of political and philosophical traditions in its early days: conservation of resources and environmental protection, transference of power from a centralised state to regional and local authorities, preference towards small scale institutions, basic income security, animal welfare, technologies based on renewable resources and opposition to militarism, especially nuclear weapons. Among the greatest influences was E.F. Schumacher, who had a Catholic background. In his classic book *Small is Beautiful*, Schumacher expressed ideas on economics and the destructive power of inappropriate scale and technology, around which the green movement coalesced. Early supporters argued that green politics represented a new political philosophy that was beyond the traditional spectrum of left and right.<sup>3</sup>

The Party's philosophical stance implied that much more was required than minor changes in policy: rather, it suggested a shift in the dominant paradigm or world view.<sup>4</sup> Some Party members were motivated by a form of ecological utilitarianism, a desire to look after the Earth for the benefit of future generations, while others were inspired by 'deep ecology', a world view based on a more intimate personal association with other parts and levels of the biosphere.<sup>5</sup> Members were united, however, in a belief that political activity was imperative alongside lifestyle change.

#### *Coherence and culture*

The language in the party's former name, the Ecology Party, is revealing. Ecology, derived from the Greek οἶκος (oikos), meaning 'house', and -λογία (logia), meaning 'study of', is the scientific study of the relationship that human beings (or other living organisms) have with each other and the natural environment. Members felt that by having 'ecology' in its name, the Party would signal that the interdependence of humankind and the natural environment lay at the heart of its underlying world view. Thus the book on green politics most widely read in the 1980s, *Seeing Green*, by leading Party member Jonathon Porritt, was subtitled *the politics of ecology explained*. The decision to change the party's name to Green Party took place in the aftermath of an electoral breakthrough by the German Greens, *Die Grünen*, in 1983; rooted in an academic discipline, 'ecology' had provided philosophical clarity but was considered too technical and inaccessible for the general public.

Notwithstanding the change in name, the Green Party has sometimes been portrayed by less informed observers as a 'single issue' party. In fact, it has always had policies in the same broad range of areas as the major political parties: 'Green' merely conveys a focus. Putting people's relationships with their surroundings at the heart of politics is fundamental to green politics in the same way that, say, socialism requires a transfer in ownership of the means of production from the capitalist class to the working class. Similarly, just as socialist politics proposes increased public sector ownership, green politics proposes increased societal wellbeing without dependence on economic growth.<sup>6</sup>

The Green Party has had a distinctive political culture. Many members who joined in the 1980s had never before been politically active and wanted to try new ways of 'doing politics'. They rejected the hierarchical structures, combative (as opposed to consensual) decision-making processes and excessive male dominance which characterised the major political parties. This desire for change was even reflected in meeting layout arrangements: the tradition of having experts at a 'top table' and other participants listening passively in rows opposite was typically replaced by a circular arrangement, symbolising scepticism towards experts and a belief that ordinary people's views should be heard. The most visible manifestation of this alternative culture, however, was that for many years the Party rejected the normal practice of having a single leader: until 2008 it had two 'Principal Speakers', one of each gender. It now has a leader, Natalie Bennett, which provides a focus for the media but proved a mixed blessing in the early stages of the 2015 electoral campaign when she gave, in her words, an 'excruciating' interview.

#### *Internal tensions*

Political parties invariably bring together people who share certain core values but hold a range of views and opinions. Like all parties, the Green Party has not been immune from internal tensions. One explanation is that putting ecology at the heart of politics does not lead to definitive policies in areas relating to human relationships (as distinct from our impacts on the physical environment). Issues such as population and abortion, for example, have proven controversial, with the dominant view tending toward tolerance of international migration and support for a woman's 'right to choose'. On the other hand, there has been a general consensus on key environmental policies despite divisions within the wider green movement. The Party has been largely united in opposing new nuclear reactors, for example, even though concerns about climate change have led influential environmentalists George Monbiot and James Lovelock to support them.

Like all parties, the Green Party has had to reflect upon its image and decide whether to compromise on certain principles in order to appear more electable. For example, internal tensions became apparent shortly after membership had grown to unprecedented levels after the 1989 European elections, leading to an equally sharp decline. Some members favoured a more 'professional' public image, including a greater focus on environmental and economic policies, and argued that the Party needed to reform its committee structure to become more effective.

Others wanted to highlight the Party's support for controversial causes such as decriminalisation of cannabis, even if liable to result in negative media publicity, and rejected the proposed change. While the former ultimately won the day, the dispute prompted the resignation of several leading members. More than two decades passed before membership again grew rapidly. When it did, early in 2015, media commentators were quick to expose controversial policies passed at past Party conferences<sup>7</sup> even though the Party's general election manifesto will, in fact, comprise a carefully chosen selection of policies. In recent years the Party has increasingly been associated with the left, in part because a growing number of activists within it have portrayed it as an alternative to 'New Labour'. This, however, remains an ongoing controversy: other members argue that such a label deters prospective supporters from centrist or conservative backgrounds.

### *Faith and spirituality*

One of the more distinctive characteristics of the Green Party in its early days was explicit recognition that human beings have a spiritual dimension. In part this reflected the Party's anti-materialistic philosophy and belief that increased affluence in industrialised societies, even if it is environmentally feasible, is not necessarily desirable. The Party has attracted Christians from across all denominations and has particularly support from Quakers, many drawn by its policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Nonetheless some members regard traditional expressions of religion as outmoded and oppressive, and the Party has also attracted people involved in the New Age movement with pantheistic or neo-pagan beliefs.

In the early 1980s Christians began to meet at Party conferences and in 1982 formed the Christian Ecology Group with two aims: to 'offer insights into ecology and the environment to Christian people and churches' and to 'offer Christian insights to the Green movement'. It attracted supporters from across Christian traditions and although its initial National Co-ordinators, Tim Cooper and Audrey Bryant, were Party members, it welcomed members of other political parties. As membership grew the organisation was renamed Christian Ecology Link (CEL) and recently it was changed again, to Green Christian. At the Green Party's 2015 Spring Conference a new group specifically for Party members was formed.

A tendency towards liberalism and inclusivity in Party thinking hints at syncretism or universalism but it also implies tolerance. Significantly, the Party has often described its political approach with reference to a phrase commonly used in Catholic social teaching, 'the common good'.<sup>8</sup> Less positively, tensions with Christians emerged in 2012, when a councillor on Brighton and Hove City Council, Christina Summers, was expelled from the ruling Green group in response to her vocal opposition to same-sex marriage. Freedom of religious belief was evidently judged secondary to gay rights, a questionable act given that the Party claims not to favour a 'whip' system for voting. Hopefully this will prompt greater Christian involvement in the Party rather than withdrawal. Other Christians have had a more positive experience: indeed, the Green Party's first two members of the House of Lords, George MacLeod, founder of the Iona Community, and Tim Beaumont, an Anglican minister, were both committed Christians, while in Canada the Green Party leader, Elizabeth May, one of its 2 MPs, is also a committed Anglican.

### **Key principles of green politics**

The Green Party's 'Philosophical Basis' starts as follows: 'A system based on inequality and exploitation is threatening the future of the planet on which we depend, and encouraging reckless and environmentally damaging consumerism. A world based on cooperation and democracy would prioritise the many, not the few, and would not risk the planet's future with environmental destruction and unsustainable consumption.' Such thinking leads to the four key elements (or 'pillars') of green politics: environmental sustainability, social justice, grassroots democracy, and peace and nonviolence. These are considered below from a perspective of Christian belief and practice.

### *Environmental sustainability*

The Green Party's most essential principle is to protect the environment and preserve it for future generations, although the perceived threats have shifted over the decades from pollution and resource depletion to 'peak oil' and climate change. The climate threat is seen as indicative of a systemic problem, being 'just one sign of the stress our economies and lifestyles put on the environment'.<sup>9</sup>

Although not at the forefront of the environmental movement, Christians have long expressed environmental concern. For example, the World Council of Churches first adopted a programme of commitment to 'Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation' (JPIC) at its Vancouver Assembly in 1983. Active engagement has increased in recent

decades, partly due to the educational and campaigning work of organisations such as Green Christian and A Rocha, but also because Christians in aid and development organisations have become more aware of the effects of environmental degradation on the world's poorest people, including threats posed by climate change.

More generally, creation care, a phrase derived from Genesis 2:15, has increasingly been regarded as an essential part of mission work in sharing the gospel. Thus the international Lausanne Movement, a leading influence on evangelicals, included the following in its 2010 Cape Town Commitment: 'If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says "Jesus is Lord" is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.'<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile the current Pope, Francis, speaks frequently about caring for creation, and a forthcoming encyclical on the subject is likely to raise its prominence among Roman Catholics. Within the Anglican Church, former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has argued that 'running out of a world to live in is a mark of our unfaithfulness' and that Christians should not consider environmental issues 'a secular fuss imported into the church'.<sup>11</sup> Even so, practical care of God's creation has been regarded by some Christians as secondary to personal spirituality. This indifference has partly arisen because church teaching in the West retains imprints of a spiritual/material dualism inherited from Greek philosophy. Some Christians are wary of involvement in politics, whatever its form, for the same reason.

Certain Christian traditions, notably Eastern Orthodoxy, have retained a more holistic world view and offer profound insights that inform environmental theology.<sup>12</sup> Process theology, too, has attracted interest among Christians inclined towards green politics, in part due to *For the Common Good*, an influential book co-authored by economist Herman Daly and theologian John Cobb.<sup>13</sup> Process theology places greater emphasis on Christ's immanence and incarnational action in the world than mainstream theology and adopts a view of God's presence known as pantheism, a belief that God envelops all things: 'in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). This enables Christian encounters with nature to be genuinely spiritual experiences while avoiding the pantheism implicit in other forms of green spirituality. In pantheism God's 'essence' is independent of the world but his 'experience' is given to him by the world. Although some theologians are concerned that this blurs the line between God and the world, others such as Jürgen Moltmann, author of *God in Creation*, are sympathetic.<sup>14</sup>

Some Christians may be reluctant to participate in green politics. For example, they may see within the Green Party a nature-focussed philosophy in which humankind is in a wrong relationship with God's creation: worshipping nature (Rom 1:25) or denying that we are a special creation (Ps 8:6). Some may believe that to argue that the Earth has 'limits' denies the power of God to provide blessings. Proponents of prosperity theology, for example, interpret certain Old Testament passages as firm promises that a life faithful to God will result in material reward; consequently they may associate affluence with faithfulness to God (cf. 1 Tim 6:9) and be unconcerned about environmental threats. A potential objection for Roman Catholics is the Party's commitment to a lower birth rate in order to reverse population growth, reflected in its policy on contraception. This could be seen as contradicting the command to 'be fruitful and increase in number' (Gen 1:26), the view of children as blessing and the importance placed upon biological descent in the Old Testament. In short, while Christians may be sympathetic to the Green Party's approach to environmental policy, some will have concerns arising from their particular beliefs.

Biblical hermeneutics is relevant: the Bible was written at a time when our impact upon the natural environment was far less than today and, likewise, our ability to effect change: the 'balance of nature' came about because population was restricted by disease rather than human intervention. Disregarding this context may help to explain different Christian approaches to environmental issues. For example, in the Old Testament a good harvest is interpreted as a sign of God's blessing in response to people's obedience. In the contemporary world, while Christians may still regard a good harvest as a blessing, scientific knowledge is used to explain crop yields. If Christian discussion on, say, climate change, is framed in terms of our general obedience before God, as distinct from our responsibility to act in response to scientific evidence, Christians may be less likely to choose appropriate consumption patterns.

### *Social justice*

The second pillar of Green Party philosophy is commitment to social justice. The weak and powerless are most at risk from environmental degradation, both in a national and global context. An example of how the Party proposes to address social justice in Britain is its longstanding commitment to a 'citizen's income scheme' through which all

British citizens would receive an unconditional regular payment sufficient to meet their basic needs. In addition, as environmental taxes tend to be regressive because the poor spend a higher proportion of their incomes on fuel, fiscal reform would be used to create a more equitable economic system. The Party is committed to reducing global inequality too, by reforming the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund in order to better reflect the interests of poorer countries, promoting fair trade and increasing overseas aid.

Many within the church will sympathise with this agenda, although perhaps from a different starting point. Green politics began with concern about environmental sustainability and then addressed its implications for different social groups. By contrast, Christian NGOs such as Tearfund started from a commitment to address poverty and, having identified environmental degradation as a threat to the poor, now address issues such as climate change. Christians hold a range of opinions on how social justice should be tackled. Some favour greater government intervention, reflecting sentiments in Ronald Sider's classic *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, while others adopt the more radical, anti-capitalist stance of liberation theology; either stance would reflect views held within the Green Party.

Justice for people who have been discriminated against or treated unfairly in the past is an important theme in the Party. It is no coincidence that Britain's first Green-led Council and first Green MP were elected in Brighton, a town sometimes described as Britain's 'gay capital'. Most Christians sympathise with policies to oppose discrimination, whether on grounds of gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation, but many will feel uneasy with the Party's support for gay marriage and, if otherwise sympathetic to the Party's policies, need to consider how to address this.

Women have often found involvement in conventional politics difficult. Within the Green Party, eco-feminists have not only played an important role in shaping policies but have helped to ensure that its internal culture and structures do not inhibit women from participating; the fact that for many years each of the two Principal Speakers had to be of a different gender is a good example. Their influence has, however, meant that Party policy considers abortion as a woman's 'right to choose'. While some Christians may accept abortion in certain circumstances, many will see as anomalous a political philosophy that in principle advocates sacrifice on behalf of future generations, but in practice favours the rights of an adult woman over those of an unborn child. That said, it would be wrong to place responsibility for this kind of sacrifice on women without also addressing factors that may make it hard for them to choose life over abortion (e.g. domestic violence and poverty) and challenging attitudes to sexuality (e.g. the objectification of women, sexualised media) and inadequate sex and relationships education.

#### *Grassroots democracy*

The third principle of the Green Party is to reduce hierarchical and large-scale structures in favour of more local and consensual decision-making processes. Grassroots democracy reflects the early influence of E.F. Schumacher and anarchist-inspired writers Leopold Kohr and Murray Bookchin, who were critical of the power held by the nation state and by powerful global corporations. The Party characterises Britain as excessively centralised, globalised and monetarised, and favours decentralised governance and a more locally-driven economy. The latter would create greater equity and stability in the financial world and reduce the excessive freight of mass-produced goods. In the sphere of work, many employees of large organisations have narrowly defined roles that give them little influence over their employers' policies; the Party favours smaller-scale and co-operative business models.

Again, this vision is consonant with Christian thinking. Fostering strong, local, community-based action has historic roots in Christian traditions such as monasticism. Belief that decisions should be made at the most local level, is rooted in the principle of subsidiarity, which is derived from Roman Catholic social teaching. Indeed, in many Christian traditions there has been a longstanding emphasis on the need to disperse power widely in society, both to empower people to fulfil their various callings before God and to prevent unjust concentrations of power that could threaten the weak. Christian traditions vary in their interpretation of where power in governance should reside, of course, as evidenced by the wide range of ecclesiologies, although they coalesce around a belief that governing authorities are, in general, ordained by God (Rom 13:1).

While concerned for the well-being of people across all continents, Greens argue that local communities should be far more self-reliant, aiming to produce most of what they need themselves and trading excesses with neighbours. This suggests a potential tension between globalism and localism. Dismantling huge, globalised power structures might free the poor from oppressive relationships and reduce environmental abuse. On the other hand, investment

in highly technical products such as, say, medical equipment, often requires global-scale companies. Moreover, small local businesses are not immune from being irresponsible and exploitative. Christian understanding is that human beings are social and relational creatures, and are intended to rely upon each other, share skills and (to some degree) engage in trade. Many will agree with the Green Party that a shift towards localism would increase the prospect of more appropriate relationships and less environmental damage.

Similarly, the appropriate level of political governance is not straightforward. Many problems that green politics addresses are global in scale and cannot be solved by local action, or even by a single nation. Giving more power to international authorities such as the United Nations or even creating some form of 'world government' have been proposed. The former may have some merit, but the latter is unlikely to be supported by either the Green Party or by Christians, who would regard handing significant power to a remote global authority as in conflict with the subsidiarity principle. Most would prefer individuals and communities to give practical effect to the adage 'think globally, act locally' by, for example, taking account of global concerns in their consumption patterns.

#### *Peace and non-violence*

The Green Party philosophy's final pillar is support for non-violent conflict resolution wherever possible and a strong reticence to engage in military activity. The Party has always supported unilateral nuclear disarmament. It portrays war as a logical consequence of undesirable attitudes: male aggression, a desire to assert power over other people and an insatiable demand for natural resources. Instead, it seeks a world in which power, influence and wealth are shared more fairly and more widely: 'These are the foundations of peace and security for all. Secure peoples, at ease with themselves and with others, seek peace rather than war.'<sup>15</sup> Greens thus aim to curb the arms trade and cut defence spending, nationally and worldwide, and to negotiate a reduction in the world's nuclear arsenal. The Party is not, however, pacifist; it argues that armed forces should be used solely for peacekeeping, preserving social justice and protecting the weak, and must operate in line with international agreements.

While Christian views on war and peace vary, they are generally based on principles established over many years known as the 'just war' theory. These are subject to differences in interpretation and do not prevent ethical quandaries: some Christians are pacifist, while others support war in certain circumstances, whether for national defence or to overthrow an oppressive regime or prevent military threats overseas. That said, many Christians express deep reluctance to use military force and regard non-violent conflict resolution, as advocated by the Green Party, as in keeping with the words of Christ: 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Matt 5:9). In protests over the US-led war in Iraq, for example, Christians and Greens were prominent among campaigners against British military intervention.

#### **Shared perspectives and dilemmas?**

There are evident areas of overlap in Christian theology and green politics. Each has a vision of a utopian future: in the case of Christianity, the Kingdom of God, or *shalom*, and in the case of green politics, sustainable development based on systemic change and less materialistic lifestyles. In both cases an idealised future is seen as slowly breaking into our world but ignored or resisted by people who cannot see its merits or necessity. From a Christian perspective there is a crucial distinction: *shalom* is ultimately dependent on restored relationships with God.

Christians and Greens share a critique of modern notions of 'progress', typically measured by growth in economic output, which reflects their anti-materialism. They do not shy away from advocating changes in consumerist lifestyles, in contrast with the mainstream political parties, although this brings a further challenge: those who advocate a more ethical lifestyle are susceptible to cries of hypocrisy if they do not live up to their ideals, and prospective supporters may be inhibited by such a threat.

All political parties need to consider which policy instruments are liable to prove most appropriate and this may be shaped by their views on human nature. Should the Green Party's inclination be to educate and inform, in the hope that people will adopt green values and behave accordingly, or to legislate in order to ensure that only the appropriate forms of consumption are possible by, for example, banning harmful products and services? Andrew Dobson<sup>16</sup> suggests that promoting an ecological consciousness is important because a legislative approach implies having to fight every battle; people might regard action in a few areas, such as recycling, as sufficient, rather than striving for more comprehensive change. On the other hand John Barry<sup>17</sup> argues that the personal transformation required, even if possible, would take a considerable amount of time, and that measures need to be introduced that

acknowledge people's current attitudes. Such debate on alternative approaches to freedom and discipline are mirrored within Christian churches.

A further challenge faced by Christians and Greens alike is communication: what is a correct balance between presenting the negative (for example, that we live in a broken world) and positive (that there is a different way forward)? Greens are sometimes criticised for focusing on 'doom and gloom', and Christians for focusing on human sinfulness. Both appeal to people's sense of a need for change and demand short term sacrifice for future benefit. Linked to each is the question of urgency, although forecasting is fraught with uncertainty. When environmentalists predict imminent disaster they either lose credibility when the system proves more resilient than expected or risk the response that it is too late to respond. Christians are warned not to try and guess 'the day or the hour' (Matt 24:36) of Christ's Second Coming; when fringe groups have disregarded this they have similarly lost credibility when the 'end times' have failed to happen.

### **Prospects for green politics**

What are the prospects for the Green Party in the coming election? Opinion polls in early 2015 showed that it was attracting around 6% of the vote, although for 18-34 year olds the proportion doubled, to around 12%. Given a desire to attract the young, churches should take note.

Proposing to restrain consumption in order to achieve environmental sustainability at a time when many people are suffering the effects of 'austerity' policies introduced in response to past financial mismanagement is a powerful challenge to Greens and Christians alike. Austerity has become a loaded term: it reflects a laudable commitment to reduce debt but has taken the form of reduced public services to the needy, while leaving the financial system largely unreformed, which appears unjust. The Green Party has criticised the Government's approach and proposed greater public sector investment. An injection of funding to increase economic activity perhaps appears at odds with the Party's customary support for 'degrowth' and 'prosperity without growth',<sup>18</sup> but its intention is to improve the well-being of the poor and vulnerable at a difficult time. Concepts such as 'simple living' and 'frugality' have previously been promoted as alternatives to stressful, materialistic lifestyles; in future they will need to be very carefully presented in the light of the hardships caused by austerity-related policies.

Climate change remains the most widely publicised environmental issue, and mounting scientific evidence and public concern, combined with an inadequate response from the major parties, has increased the Green Party's political credibility. The Party typically argues for the strongest and most urgent response in the climate change debate. The scientific evidence should help church leaders to win their ongoing battle to motivate more Christians to take environmental issues seriously. As the effects of climate change are increasingly seen in human suffering, Christian teaching that fully embraces God's creation and the interconnectedness of nature ought to become more evident, which should encourage many more Christians to support the Green Party.

Greens have described their thinking as the politics of hope, while Christians place their hope in God for the future. Richard Bauckham<sup>19</sup> makes a helpful distinction between 'ultimate' and 'proximate' hope, the former being the promise of ultimate reconciliation and restoration, and the latter our hopes for the near and medium term future. To the Christian, the former is guaranteed while the latter, being partly conditional on human action, is not. Yet God's redeeming work means that our ultimate hope should stimulate our proximate hope, fuelling our love for creation and other people even when what is achievable may seem limited. Translated into secular language, this may represent a helpful message for the Green Party, staving off extremes of undue optimism or despair: we must live out what we feel called to do and strive for a more sustainable future because, even if we do not fully succeed, we will thereby play our part in making the world a better place.

The Church of England was for many years described as the Tory Party at prayer. In future, might the Christian church, Anglican or otherwise, be portrayed as the Green Party at prayer? Time will tell. Striving for peace, justice and sustainability while challenging undue concentrations of power and excessive materialism, the Christian church and the Green Party are logical allies. A good proportion of Christians will consider supporting the Greens in the coming election, many for the first time. Is there empathy in both directions? The Green Party certainly needs support from sympathisers within the church, which environmental scientist Sir John Houghton refers to as 'the nation's largest NGO'.<sup>20</sup> The Party seeks a renewed and transformed society in which people seek 'the common good'; many Christians will rightly share their vision.

## Suggested Further Reading

- John Barry, *Rethinking Green Politics: nature, virtue and progress* (Sage, 1999).
- Tim Cooper, *Green Christianity* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1990).
- Andrew Dobson, *Green Political Thought* (4<sup>th</sup> edn) (Routledge, 2007).
- Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation* (SCM, 1985).
- Jonathan Moo and Robert White, *Hope in an Age of Despair* (IVP, 2013).
- Jonathon Porritt, *Seeing Green: the politics of ecology explained* (Blackwell, 1984).
- E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: a study of economics as if people mattered* (Sphere, 1973).

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- <sup>1</sup> 'Green Party' refers to the Green Party of England and Wales; there are separate Green parties in Scotland and Northern Ireland with similar philosophies and policies. The term 'Greens' is used to refer to Party members, whereas the 'green movement' refers to a wider grouping of environmental activists.
- <sup>2</sup> The late Edward Goldsmith was uncle to one of the greener among current Conservative MPs, Zac Goldsmith.
- <sup>3</sup> Jonathon Porritt, *Seeing Green: the politics of ecology explained* (Blackwell, 1984).
- <sup>4</sup> Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: science, society and the rising culture* (Wildwood House, 1982).
- <sup>5</sup> Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology* (Gibbs M. Smith, 1985).
- <sup>6</sup> Other parties, by contrast, argue that 'green growth' is required to create the economic capacity necessary to invest in renewable technologies and environmental protection and to eradicate poverty.
- <sup>7</sup> Matthew Holehouse, 'Drugs, brothels, al-Qaeda and the Beyonce tax: the Green Party plan for Britain', *Daily Telegraph*, 26 January 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/green-party/11356354/Drugs-brothels-al-Qaeda-and-the-Beyonce-tax-the-Green-Party-plan-for-Britain.html>; Tim Cooper, 'Ready for Power?', [http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/professor-tim-cooper/green-party-2015-election\\_b\\_6799806.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/professor-tim-cooper/green-party-2015-election_b_6799806.html).
- <sup>8</sup> Green Party, 'Green Party: We must rebalance our economy so that it works for the common good', 17 November 2014, <http://greenParty.org.uk/news/2014/11/17/green-Party-we-must-rebalance-our-economy-so-that-it-works-for-the-common-good>.
- <sup>9</sup> Green Party General Election Manifesto 2010, 33, [http://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/resources/Manifesto\\_web\\_file.pdf](http://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/resources/Manifesto_web_file.pdf).
- <sup>10</sup> Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action*. 24 October 2010, 1.7.A.
- <sup>11</sup> Anglican Communion News Service, 'Environmental change not "a secular fuss imported into the church" but a moral issue', 1 November 2012, <http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2012/11/environmental-change-not-a-secular-fuss-imported-into-the-church-but-a-moral-issue.aspx>.
- <sup>12</sup> See, for instance, writings by Paulos Mar Gregorios and John Zizioulas.
- <sup>13</sup> Herman Daly and John Cobb, *For the Common Good* (Beacon Press, 1989).
- <sup>14</sup> A helpful review of panentheism is at <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/rogereolson/2012/08/whats-wrong-with-panentheism/>.
- <sup>15</sup> Green Party General Election Manifesto 2010, 42.
- <sup>16</sup> Andrew Dobson, *Green Political Thought* (4th edition) (Routledge, 2007), 38-39.
- <sup>17</sup> John Barry, *Rethinking Green Politics: nature, virtue and progress* (SAGE, 1999), 13, 29.
- <sup>18</sup> Tim Jackson, *Prosperity without Growth: economics for a finite planet* (Earthscan, 2011).
- <sup>19</sup> Richard Bauckham, 'Ecological Hope in Crisis?', *Anvil* 29, no. 1 (September 2013), 43-54, <http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/anv.2013.29.issue-1/anv-2013-0004/anv-2013-0004.xml?format=INT>.
- <sup>20</sup> Zoe Cormier, 'Divine Intervention', <http://www.greenlivingonline.com/article/divine-intervention>.