

# **Foreword to *Sharing God's Planet - a Christian vision for a sustainable future***

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Early modern religion contributed to the idea that the fate of nature is for it to be bossed around by a detached sovereign will, whether divine or human.

As a counter-balance to this attitude of lofty separation, I want to suggest a Christian reason for regarding ecology as a matter of justice for the human and the non-human world.

Creation is an act of communication. It is God expressing his intelligence through every existing thing. The divine logos spoken of at the beginning of St John's Gospel is that by which everything comes to be. As Maximus the Confessor says, each existent reality is itself a logos - a word, an intelligible structure - which carries in its own specific, unique way the universal logos within it. This implies that each thing communicates the character of God, by virtue of the eternal Word.

So to penetrate the workings of the world, to understand its intelligible shape, is to come into contact with a divine action that is reasonable, consistent with itself. To understand, or more accurately to hear, that which the world communicates, is to hear God's love and God's glory.

To do this, human beings have to tune in; quite simply, to listen, rather than to impose our own prejudiced interpretations of what the world ought to be. In the language of Jewish scripture, true thinking, true knowing of the world is becoming aligned with God's wisdom, which is God's self-consistency in purpose and action.

This can be experienced and understood as a living principle in the universe as it is. The Christian reason for regarding ecology as a matter of justice, then, is that God's self-sharing love is what animates every object and structure and situation in the world. Responses to the world that are unaware of this are neither truthful nor sustainable. To be aware of this is to enter into relationship, for the self-sharing love of God is not simply something we admire, but something in which we fully participate. We are not consumers of what God has made; we are in communion with it.

There is material in this volume that should help to effect a metanoia, a change of perception, that allows us to hear what the world is communicating, and to respond appropriately.

The vision of contraction and convergence as a response to climate change, which is described in this volume, is one that I support.

I have also called upon our Church to undertake an ecological audit of some sort; information about how to do this can be found in Part Three. Such local, internal responses are vital if our voice as a Church is to have integrity.

To these sophisticated responses to the ecological crisis I should like to add a call for simple, accessible ways of learning again what it is to be part of the created order. Receive the world that God has given. Go for a walk. Get wet. Dig the earth.

I commend this volume as a contribution to the Church's thinking on ecological justice.

**+ Rowan Cantuar**