

Ecology on One's Knees - published in "The Beauty of God's House," Cascade Books, 2014

I Ecology and the Imagination

Stratford Caldecott is best known for profound work primarily focused on a Catholic vision of reality: on writers like Tolkien and Chesterton; the Christian mysteries, liturgy and the sacraments; interreligious dialogue; and the transcendentals Beauty, Truth, and Goodness as the foundation of education. One might think that anything he wrote on ecology was merely marginal, peripheral to his other writings.

One would be mistaken. Nothing is peripheral; in fact one might say that everything is central, and that his writings on ecology constitute a microcosm of his entire opus. For what Dante says of God's creation - *ogni parte ad ogni parte splende*¹ - each part radiates with its own splendor, (received as a gift from a greater light), which it then reflects back to all others - is true of Caldecott's own work as well. Turning from most academic writing on ecology to Caldecott's is to enter a world of beauty, enchantment, and surprise, where ecology touches upon everything else - theology, mathematics, biology, ethics, physics, music, liturgy - converging and emerging, a dance done with grace and courtesy, ancient truths striking us with new force and freshness.

Caldecott does not have abstract environmental or ecological theories, any more than the apostles had Christologies; they, and he, encountered Christ, and everything springs from this concrete event. For Dante, a single glance from a little Florentine girl in the street pierced his heart and set him on a trajectory that brought him all the way to the throne of God. Caldecott's ecological reflections are rooted in the wonder and delight the human person experiences in the face of the sheer, amazing *being* and *beauty* of particular people and natural things; those reflections grow through art and a true and contemplative science; and do not stop until they flower into the metaphysics of a creation which is embraced within eternity and vibrant in the mystery of Love. The unity to which all creation is called - "a center, which like all centers is smaller than the whole but encompasses and projects everything else"² - is the summing up all things in Christ;³ all of nature is shaped by this *telos*.

The wholeness in Christ may elude us at first: "The more diverse and varied are the productions of nature, the more seemingly distinct from human life and from each other, the more exotic and bizarre, the more nature reveals herself as fragmentary."⁴ But that which is fragmentary cries out for something greater, if only by highlighting its absence: "The modern discovery of ecological interdependence is itself only a pointer towards the mystical whole to which all creatures belong."⁵ Dante, in his final beatific vision, is struck by the revelation of the wholeness of the created order: "In its depths I saw ingathered, bound by love in a single volume, that which is

¹ Dante, *Inferno* VII, 75. The whole is an inexhaustible "ever-greater," not a "totality" that can be encompassed by the human mind.

² Stratford Caldecott. "Creation as a Call to Holiness." *Communio* 30, no. 1 (2003): 161-167. P. 167.

³ Ephesians 1:10

⁴ "Creation as a Call to Holiness" 2003, p. 167.

⁵ "Creation as a Call to Holiness" 2003, p. 167.

dispersed in leaves throughout the universe.”⁶ For Caldecott as well, the book, the “single volume” bound by love, is an especially fruitful cosmic analogy: “The universe as observed by the naked eye is a book of symbols waiting to be read; it is an act of self-expression by God, a theophany imbued throughout with the intelligibility of the divine Logos,”⁷ and each of those symbols “is a kind of gestalt, in which a universal meaning can be glimpsed...the world is transformed into a radiant book to be read with eyes sensitive to spiritual light.”⁸

It is the poetic imagination, the poetic consciousness, that allows us to encounter and “read,” by the “spiritual light” of Love, the great manuscript that is the created order, and in the process re-enchant the desacralized world.⁹ Caldecott does not issue a call to be poetic “rather than” discursive; the poetic imagination is not the modern imagination of feelings alone, but what we might call the analogical imagination in accord with the intellect as a path to truth.¹⁰ He likes to tell the story of Pythagoras, who discovered the laws of harmony by walking by a blacksmith shop. Stopping to investigate what we would call the empirical causes of the different tones he heard, he invented the scientific method at same time that he laid the foundations for western music.¹¹ Pythagoras represents that original unity between mathematics and art, reason and faith, science and religion, and for Caldecott the problems of our culture, including ecological ones, are the result of the loss of that unity, a fissure between a more intuitive knowledge and a “modern” scientific one, which left both as anemic simulacra of what each could be were their inner relationship not artificially severed.

Recovering an “original unity” does not mean merging into one that which we have learned to see as dualistic opposites; it is the univocal imagination that privileges absolute unity, as the equivocal imagination privileges absolute difference. The poetic, contemplative, analogical imagination “marries”- connects through similarity while respecting the difference, in a mutual conditioning - the poles it encounters, marriage being the paradigmatic unity that depends on distinction rather than dissolving it. The ultimate form of this spousal union is Christ, in whose Incarnation the divine and the human meet. For Caldecott, this will mean that there is no final *resolution* of the brokenness, the “dis-ease,” of the ecological crisis through technology or social

⁶ *Paradiso* XXXIII, 85-87 Bonaventure: “From all we have said, we may gather that the created world is a kind of book reflecting, representing, and describing its maker, the Trinity...” *Breviloquium* 2.12 (V, 230., trans. Dominic V. Monti, in *Breviloquium. Works of St. Bonaventure*).

⁷ Stratford Caldecott. “The Science of the Real: The Christian Cosmology of Hans Urs von Balthasar.” *Second Spring*. <<http://www.secondspring.co.uk/articles/scaldecott11.htm>>.

⁸ Stratford Caldecott. *Beauty for Truth’s Sake: On the Re-enchantment of Education*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009. P. 48.

⁹ *Beauty for Truth’s Sake* 2009, p. 49.

¹⁰ Caldecott says “poetic imagination” depends on analogy; the language of the equivocal, univocal and analogical imagination, to which he would be sympathetic, is borrowed from Fr. William F. Lynch, *Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960). Also see D.C. Schindler. “The imagination is, if not the center of the human being, then nevertheless that without which there can be no center, for it marks the point of convergence at which the soul and body meet; it is the place where faith in the incarnate God becomes itself incarnate and therefore truly becomes faith.... Far more than a mere faculty, the Christian imagination is a way of life, and this is because we might say it represents the point of intersection between Christianity and the world. In this case, a starved imagination represents a crisis indeed.” “Truth and the Christian Imagination: The Reformation of Causality and the Iconoclasm of the Spirit.” *Communio* 33, no. 4 (2006): 521-539. P. 522.

¹¹ “Creation and the University: Educating for a Human Ecology.” *Earth Day Lecture. University of St Thomas, Houston*. 15 April 2010. P. 5. See also *Beauty for Truth’s Sake* 2009, p. 91.

science alone; instead, it is unity with God in the Trinity that “is achieved through man (humanity), [which] ultimately enfolds and transforms the entire cosmos.”¹² It is through Christ that a *reconciliation* with nature is possible. These words of John Paul II are often quoted by Caldecott and might serve as a précis of what underlies his ecological vision:

The Incarnation of God the Son signifies the taking up into unity with God not only of human nature, but in this human nature, in a sense, of everything that is “flesh”: the whole of humanity, the entire visible and material world. The Incarnation, then, also has a cosmic significance, a cosmic dimension. The “first-born of all creation,” becoming incarnate in the individual humanity of Christ, unites himself in some way with the entire reality of man, which is also “flesh” – and in this reality with all “flesh,” with the whole of creation.¹³

For Caldecott’s ecology, then, there is certainly no fixation on immediate technical solutions, but neither is there a flight from the immediate problem into abstraction. The part and the whole interpenetrate. He does not ignore population growth, climate change, or deforestation, but sees them in the light of the tensions of existence between grace and nature, the infinite and finite, ontology and history; and more deeply in the primary experience of wonder in the presence of the great gift of Being, of amazement at beauty as an ontological truth; and ultimately in Christ. The Christian analogical imagination, in harmony with the will and intellect, is the means through which creation can be restored and redeemed:

When Adam fell from grace, the whole creation was somehow dis-graced, or put out of joint. The healing of the world therefore cannot be envisaged without a reordering and a healing of the inner world of the imagination, intelligence, and will. This insight is easy to relate to the modern study of ecology and to the broader development of a more holistic worldview in postmodern science.¹⁴

It is the imagination that enables us to look beyond the facts at the surfaces of things to the form, imagination “that interprets, that gives meaning to the world, by ‘joining the dots,’ discovering the otherwise invisible connections between things, events, qualities.”¹⁵ What we call the “ecological crisis,” despite its many proximate causes, is not so much a problem to be solved by recycling or remediation - though they must be dealt with - but is ultimately rooted in a failure of the imagination.

In the second part of this paper we will look at Caldecott’s evaluation of the “First” and

¹² “Creation as a Call to Holiness” 2003, p. 161.

¹³ John Paul II. *Dominum et Vivificantem* 50. 18 May 1986.

¹⁴ *Beauty for Truth’s Sake* 2009, p. 108

¹⁵ Stratford Caldecott. *Beauty in the World: Rethinking the Foundations of Education*. Tacoma, WA: Angelico Press, 2012. P. 122.

“Second” trajectory of views:¹⁶ the utilitarian environmentalism derived from modernity, and the holistic and postmodern responses to it. In the third part we will consider a “Third” trajectory, a Trinitarian, Christocentric cosmology. The fourth continues with Caldecott’s “spiritual anthropology:” *the imago Dei*, the person as microcosm and mediator of the created order, and the call to holiness as the inner link between “saving the earth” and “salvation.”¹⁷ The fifth part is the concluding section.

II. First and Second Trajectories: Modern Environmentalism and Responses

Responses to the ecological crisis, the call to “save the earth” or “preserve the environment,” are often motivated by fear of loss:

...that the loss of species will denude the earth of colorful interest and variety; that the loss of forests will lead to climactic and atmospheric changes endangering health; that overproduction will lead to impoverishment of arable lands and even to desertification; the pollution will kill the rivers and poison the air and land.¹⁸

There is nothing wrong with this; it is a profoundly human response. The suffering, fear, or sadness experienced when facing a debased environment is the disclosure of a brokenness that calls to mind the truth of our interrelationship with nature, with each other, and with God. But as Caldecott says, that fear tends to be reactive, looking first to immediate technical solutions, even though they may bring new problems without getting at the true source of the original issue:

The secular mentality responds to our state of decay and suffering by trying to overcome this weakness through technology. But technology employed without an understanding of the world’s relation to God always tends to make the situation worse. Using technology, we try to anticipate the “glorious liberty of the children of God,” through medicine, drugs, surrogates and avatars. But if we rely on technology to save the world, we end by reducing the world to a machine.¹⁹

How did we get to the state in which our hope seems to lie primarily in technology, a hallmark of what one might call the “First Trajectory” of responses? It began with a paradigm shift. The cosmos was once seen as alive with light and life, radiant with the True, the Beautiful and the

¹⁶ In “A Deeper Ecology” (<<http://theeconomyproject.blogspot.com/2012/10/a-deeper-ecology.html>>) Caldecott refers to M. Taylor’s use of “trajectories” as “a new paradigm for considering the ecological question.” Taylor borrows the term from Pope Benedict XVI, who in *Spe Salvi* 17 speaks of a “programmatic vision” based on science and praxis,” with faith dualistically displaced to the level of “purely private and otherworldly affairs” and replaced with a Baconian “faith in progress,” as “the trajectory of modern times.” Modernity, then, is the “First Trajectory.” The “Second Trajectory” includes various responses to the First; the term is not meant to reduce radically diverse schools of thought to one, but it is simply a way to categorize those that *through their own self-description* deliberately set themselves in opposition to the dualism, utilitarianism, and reductionism of modernity. Pope Benedict calls for a “new trajectory,” discussed later as the Third Trajectory, in *Caritas in Veritate*. See M. Taylor, “A Deeper Ecology: A Catholic Vision of the Person in Nature.” *Communio* 38, no. 4 (2011): 583-620.

¹⁷ “Creation as a Call to Holiness” 2003, pp. 165-167.

¹⁸ Kenneth Schmitz. *The Recovery of Wonder*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005. P. 118.

¹⁹ Stratford Caldecott. “At Home in the Cosmos: The Revealing of the Sons of God.” *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2012): 105–20. Pp. 111-112.

Good, imbued with meaning and value and an intelligibility that could be known truly, though not exhaustively, by the mind. Persons were made in the image and likeness of the God from whose hand came the gift of the created order, and despite the ever-present reality of human sin, they found their places in communities that were constituent of their very being.

The genealogy of modernity from late medieval Nominalism has been elucidated, as Caldecott points out, by many others from many perspectives - Catholic, Orthodox, Marxist, feminist²⁰ – and there is little need to review its reductionism, dualism, and isolated individualism here, nor its “will to power” in the Scientific Revolution’s goal of mastering nature. For the purposes of this discussion of the person’s relation to natural entities, what is important is that it meant the elimination of “the ‘vertical’ or ‘interior’ dimension of reality - the dimension of metaphysical form, final causality and divine providence, and with that the last remaining possibility of a contemplative science.”²¹ Believing everything can ultimately be captured in its net, this *via moderna* is a triumph of the univocal imagination, which makes of unity an absolute by abstracting and externalizing every part’s relation to the whole; every relation is, then, merely mechanical. This flattened and truncated worldview has resulted in today’s “natural resource managerialism,” a utilitarian stance toward the environment in which human beings (themselves reduced to machine- or computer-like entities) are extrinsically related to a natural world that is instrumentalized for their use and over which they have power to shape to their own often arbitrary ends.

No one writes as beautifully as Caldecott does on what he calls above “contemplative science;” he does not attack science *itself*. Even understood at the most basic technological level, technical environmental fixes – the remediation of contaminated soil, for example – are achievements that have their place. But, he asks, at what cost? “In a society where efficiency and material productivity are the supreme values, and everything is measured, in the end nothing is truly understood, and no one is loved.... Nothing is given; instead, things are bought and sold. There are no covenants, only contracts,”²² that is, only utility, not love.

A different response to the fear of loss (of species, of forests, etc.) followed the truncated rationalism, the mechanism and utilitarianism, of “First Trajectory” environmentalism. It saw additional losses - of community, relationship, and enchantment - and rejected much of the First Trajectory’s reductionism. It also looked to a wider ethics that would encompass not only

²⁰ E.g. Roman Guardini, Louis Dupre, Alisdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Carolyn Merchant, and many more.

²¹ “The Science of the Real: The Christian Cosmology of Hans Urs von Balthasar.” Revised version of *Communio* 25, no. 3 (1998): 462-479. <<http://www.secondspring.co.uk/articles/scaldecott11.htm>>.

²² “A covenant is a mutual commitment that creates a unity of persons so close that it amounts to membership of a family. This is what distinguishes it from a legal contract, which may outwardly resemble it. In a contract, each side agrees to do a certain thing, and once those promises are discharged, the contract ceases. When a covenant is made, on the other hand, a gift of self is exchanged. In other words, each person places his or her own soul in the other’s power. This is a much deeper, more powerful relationship” (*Catholic Social Teaching: A Way In*. London: CTS, 2003. P. 36). Covenants and contracts are not mutually exclusive; contracts of utility may find their place within a larger covenantal relationship.

animals but even the land itself.²³ This “Second Trajectory”²⁴ naturally turned to *holism*, a holism sometimes purely material, while at other times taking the quasi-mystical form of seeing the earth as a single organism, “Gaia.” “Deep ecology” proposed a “bio-centrism” or “eco-centrism” to replace a hierarchy that supposedly privileged “anthropocentrism” (itself an ambiguous term). In all its forms, and perhaps most consciously and deliberately in “emergentism,” it eschewed the transcendent/immanent divide by *equating* transcendence and immanence - a “horizontal transcendence.”²⁵ The difficulty with the rejection of hierarchy and transcendence, says Caldecott, is that even most Christian ecology, such as Christian ecofeminism, along with the “deep ecology” literature that runs alongside it, does not “grasp the paradoxical fullness of the mainstream tradition:”

God is not merely immanent (like a soul within a body), nor merely transcendent (like a Deist watchmaker). He is both, and immanent precisely because He is transcendent, and therefore impossible to circumscribe or limit. As for hierarchy, there is a paradox here which even Dionysius the Areopagite preserved, in his enthusiasm for ranks of angels “ascending and descending on the Son of man” (John 1:51): the different “levels” of creation are ways not of separating creatures from God but of connecting them, and above all a way of manifesting the beauty and grace of God in an ordered cosmos.²⁶

The new term, “ecology,” began to be preferred, and Caldecott too sees the term “environment” as misleading, implying as it does an Enlightenment-inspired dualism, “an opposition between humanity (or whichever species is under discussion) and its surroundings, reducing the rest of nature to a kind of backdrop – and at worst to a complex set of raw materials and mechanical forces.”²⁷ “Ecology” attempts to overcome the fragmentation. Its Greek root meaning refers to the “logic” of ordering one’s home, one’s household:

This original meaning is also what lies behind the use of the word to describe one of the newest of the sciences. The science of ecology treats the whole earth as the “home” of humankind, and studies the ordering of this, our natural environment. What it reveals above all - and what makes it so fascinating - is the complex interconnectedness of all living processes on the planet.²⁸

But at the other end of the spectrum of reaction against First Trajectory environmentalism, many postmodern ecologists saw in deep ecology and the drive to holism a combination of naïveté and univocity that was merely the mirror image of the position they tried to refute. They opted instead for equivocity and the tensions of ambiguity. Some reject the term “ecological,” with its emphasis on “logos” – meaning, pattern, reason - in favor of “ecotonal,” from *oikos* (dwelling),

²³ Aldo Leopold’s “The Land Ethic,” published in *A Sand County Almanac* (many versions available) a year after his 1948 death, was foundational: “The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land.”

²⁴ See note 16.

²⁵ See for example Ursula Goodenough and Terrence E. Deacon, “The Sacred Emergence of Nature.” *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

²⁶ Stratford Caldecott. “Lost in the Forest? Some Books on Ecology.” *Second Spring*. <<http://www.secondspring.co.uk/articles/scaldecott8.htm>>.

²⁷ *Beauty for Truth’s Sake* 2009, p. 105.

²⁸ *Catholic Social Teaching: A Way In* 2003. P. 44.

and *tonus* (tension).²⁹ Among their intentions are the rescuing of the beauty of the particular, the importance of the body, the sensuousness of the flesh; in a word, the reality of the finite within historical horizons. There is much that is beautiful and true and good here, especially when they reject a totalizing rationalization of reality, and champion intersubjectivity and local solutions.

Yet they miss the mark. Not only does their equivocal imagination reject meaning – logos – abandoning it in favor of ambiguous tensions (any meaning is merely provisional and fleeting *local* meaning); the person, whom Caldecott (and Catholicism) sees as central,³⁰ is as lost here, dissolved into the congeries of social forces, as he is when reduced to another transitory node in the web, or just another bioform.³¹ Caldecott is one of the great explicators of the recognition by John Paul II and Benedict XVI that ecological issues cannot be set in opposition to persons and the “life” issues related to them, but are profoundly interwoven; “human ecology,” he says, “is inseparable from environmental ecology, because respect for nature must include respect for ourselves, for our sexuality, and for human life in all its stages and manifestations.”³² That “radiant book” Caldecott calls us to read is indeed a “single volume bound by love;” as Pope Benedict XVI says in a passage often quoted by Caldecott:

The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations: in a word, integral human development. Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other.³³

Despite his criticisms, Caldecott finds much to be said for these attempts, however incomplete, to protect and preserve either unity or difference. The very thing that postmodern theorists reject – a flight from finitude, limitation, history – is precisely what the Incarnation overcomes, and is the only true way to overcome. That God would take on human form *within history* means that the limitation and finitude of created beings are great goods, not things to be escaped. At the same time, sacramental theology reveals that because all creatures, constituted in relation to God

²⁹ Romand Coles. “Ecotones and Environmental Ethics.” *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and the Environment*. Eds. Jane Bennet and William Chaloupka. Minneapolis, MI: University of Minneapolis Press, 1993. Also, some postmodern ecologists writers use the language of “reconciliation,” “agape,” “generosity,” “caritas” and other terms borrowed from Catholicism, but emptied of their Catholic content.

³⁰ There are many schools of personalism that see the person as free, not determined; as relational, not merely individual; and as of central importance, not reduced to equivalence with other entities. The distinctive Catholic form is based on love, and sees that “the inner structure of love is revealed as Trinitarian. In any complete act of love the self of the lover is simultaneously given, received, and shared. To be united with another through love is not to lose one’s distinctive identity but to be confirmed in it.” (*Beauty in the World*, 2012, p. 33).

³¹ Holists see entities only as processes, temporary phenomenal constructs in an endless flow. In these philosophies of identity, as Benedict XVI says, the boundaries between persons, and between persons and the natural world, “are absorbed, are revealed as provisional” (*Truth and Tolerance*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2004. P. 34). Those who reject holism have their own forms of nominalism that deny the integrity of persons and the things of nature; see especially David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003) for cogent counter-arguments.

³² Stratford Caldecott. “At Home in the Cosmos.” Conference paper for *Renewing the Face of the Earth*, Oct. 2009. P. 5.

³³ *Caritatis in Veritate* 51.

and gifted at every moment with the act of existence, are open interiorly to infinite mystery,³⁴ they are endless epiphanies of meaning and not merely ambiguous tensions or temporary crystallizations.

While Caldecott sees that all things have their own separate integrity, he perhaps writes most sympathetically on those who long for unity. A great convergence of forces, from the Romantics to the “gentle empiricism” of Goethe to phenomenology to the “participatory physics” that followed Heisenberg, meant that rather than seeing other living things as resources ready to hand, one sees that all things are interdependent, and that the world is “more than a mechanism, more than the sum of its parts.”³⁵ He is certainly, in a sense, a holist - “every gesture we make, every breath we take, every mouthful we eat, every sight we see connects us to the entire fabric of creation, on which we depend, and which we affect in our turn”³⁶ – though his holism will involve a deeper ontology than the Second Trajectory provides. Before turning to Caldecott’s vision, there is one last point to be made:

Though Caldecott’s Christian ecology has much in common with these responses to First Trajectory environmentalism,³⁷ much if not most recent ecological thinking has *blamed* Christianity. Lynn White’s 1967 “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,”³⁸ a staple in anthologies of environmental essays, was the seminal paper that set the agenda for later debates in environmental philosophy and ethics. It traced the ecological crisis to the biblical creation story; to Christianity’s supposed belief in “perpetual progress;” and to its contrast with a paganism that sees nature as divine. Christianity, it said, “established a dualism of man and nature,” insisting that “it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.” This opened the door for later theorists to claim that Christians focused on “anthropocentrism,” leaving natural entities with no “intrinsic value.”

In response to White, Caldecott agreed with those who said that “the exploitative mentality we have seen develop in recent centuries is not rooted in Christianity at all, but arises from a gross misunderstanding.”³⁹ The “dominion” of Genesis is not “domination” but stewardship, as Caldecott and other writers have eloquently explained. The absolute separation of nature and grace, with its “two-story” transcendent, eternal Above and its transitory Below, is derived, even if wrongly, from a neo-scholasticism that perhaps tried too hard to preserve God’s freedom at the expense of ending up closer to dualism, or even to Gnosticism. The biocentric/anthropocentric, intrinsic value/instrumental value oppositions descend from the dualisms of the Enlightenment, not Christianity. Both the notion that Christianity demands “perpetual progress” to the extent of “using up” the created world, and that paganism can reveal to us a kind of divine immanence in nature while Christianity gives us only a distant, absolute dictator ruling over a desacralized and inert universe, are antithetical to Catholic teaching. The former derives from the Baconian drive

³⁴ Stratford Caldecott. “A Theology of Gift.” *Resources on Faith and Public Life*. Blackfriars, Oxford. P. 5. <<http://www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk/resources.php?category=1>>.

³⁵ *Beauty for Truth’s Sake* 2009, p.105.

³⁶ Stratford Caldecott. *Christianity Ecology*. EWTN. <<http://www.ewtn.com/library/ISSUES/CHRISECO.TXT>>. Originally published in *Catholic World Report*, August-September 1996.

³⁷ Especially with eco-phenomenology.

³⁸ *Science* 10 March 1967: 1203-1207.

³⁹ Caldecott, “Lost in the Forest: Some Books on Ecology.” *Priests and People* 9:2, 1995. Reprinted in *Second Spring*, 2002. <<http://www.secondspring.co.uk/articles/scaldecott8.htm>>.

to control nature, and the latter from a misunderstanding of the doctrine of Creation, so important to Caldecott's ecological and cosmological vision, to which we now turn.

III The Third Trajectory: A Trinitarian Cosmology

To borrow from C.S. Lewis, one of Caldecott's favorite authors, the Second Trajectory's "deep ecology" knows the "deep magic" of relationality, but it only goes as far back as "the dawn of Time" – it is still entirely immanent. Since time itself is created, one must look "into the stillness and the darkness before time dawned" in order to discern "a magic deeper still,"⁴⁰ not as a flight from time into an abstract eternity, but as the fullness and flowering of time. Holism is right that we are related to everything else, but that is not simply because we share the same space, because we are physically or chemically or biologically made of the same "stuff," or because, true though it may be, we are profoundly interdependent in a material or social sense. Caldecott is one of the seminal thinkers of a "Third Trajectory" of thinking, echoing Pope Benedict XVI's call for a "new trajectory"⁴¹ which is a rediscovery of the ontology of relation, but understood through love,⁴² and rooted in a proper understanding of creation.

The deeper ontological truth of creaturely being is to be found in the Trinity, says Caldecott; it is the "hermeneutical key," the key that opens every lock, including the doctrine of creation.⁴³ What is it about the Trinity that enables it to do this? First, the Trinity is where unity and diversity, union and distinction, similarity and difference, find their source and summit, not as dry metaphysical terms but as the living reality of Love.

The unity-in-distinction of the Trinity is the basis for an analogy that runs right through creation as a kind of watermark: the analogy of "spousal" union between subject and object, self and other. The life of love revealed in Christ promises to each of us no mere absorption into the Beloved, but our own integrity and fulfillment in the very measure we give ourselves away.⁴⁴

That "give ourselves away" leads to the second point: a theology of creation as Gift. Caldecott embraces the understanding of the Persons of the Trinity not merely as substances, but substantial relations of love, the giving and receiving of love between the Persons which overflows, so that every creature receives its being and its life as a gift: "Creation is an act of the Trinity, and existence is a participation in the Trinity – a participation in the Trinitarian act of

⁴⁰ Quotations are from C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994. P. 178.

⁴¹ *Caritas in Veritate* 53. He is referring to a deeper view of the category of relation as it relates to the development of peoples, but he also speaks of going beyond two mistaken views of nature, in which we see nature either as an "untouchable taboo" (as some pantheists and holists do) or "abusing it" (as the technical domination of Baconian science does). *CV* 48.

⁴² The relation between ontology and love is that Being is revealed as "love made concrete" (*Beauty in the World* pp. 148-149).

⁴³ "A Theology of Gift," p. 2. And note that there is no "impersonal Absolute" above or prior to the Trinity; there is no unified essence *behind* the Trinity from which the Persons proceed. Yet there are not three Gods, but one: "Each Person in himself... is indistinguishable from the Godhead as such... Each Person is centered or grounded not in himself but in the other... The 'Godhead beyond God' is (evangelical) love." "Trinity and Creation: An Eckhartian Perspective." *Communio* 30, no. 4 (2003): 695-714. P. 707.

⁴⁴ "The Science of the Real: The Christian Cosmology of Hans Urs von Balthasar." Revised version of *Communio* 25, no. 3 (1998): 462-479. <<http://www.secondspring.co.uk/articles/scaldecott11.htm>>.

giving, receiving, and being given.”⁴⁵ God as self-giving love is at the heart of the mystery of creation and is the archetypal model, as both the formal and final cause, of all relationships in the created order.⁴⁶

The metaphysics and theology of gift thus restores a dimension to nature long since stripped away by Nominalism and its successors. It re-establishes the priority of relationship over object, of person over thing, and therefore a sense of natural interiority, of true metaphysical depth, and the wonder that is the root of philosophy.⁴⁷

Here, contemplative science, the fruit of the poetic and contemplative imagination, is returned. Cartesian dualism lacked the imaginative dimension entirely, and the dualistic divisions of first trajectory environmentalism are not overcome by privileging one over the other, in antagonistic opposition between persons and nature. On the other hand, the univocity and equivocity of the second trajectory responses do not go far enough. The beings of the world are not unified only by biology or physics, as the many holists would have it, nor do they exist side by side in an uneasy, agonistic truce, as many postmoderns would have it. Instead,

The world...is a community of creatures, open to a destiny which transcends them all. Each and every creature is an expression of the loving attention of God. Each reflects in a unique way some aspect of the infinity where each becomes eternal. Through participation in Christ, the creation dies, but it also rises, a new heaven and a new earth; and in that new earth there is a holy city which is also a garden, “coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”⁴⁸

The contemplative, poetic imagination unveils the truth that persons and the things of nature, like faith and reason, the world and God, or subject and object, are poles, distinct realities which nonetheless are united, as in a marriage. The “new trajectory” Benedict XVI asked for points, then, to an ontological relationality of love. Created beings – both persons and the things of nature – have a triadic structure, a relation from and toward and in God, making all creatures our ontological siblings. To discern the traces of the Trinity in creation is an ancient Christian intuition: the “distinctive insight” of the Church Fathers, especially Athanasius, the Cappadocians, and Maximus the Confessor, was “to identify all being – even stones and stars – in the light of the Trinity as essentially rooted in the relational and personal.”⁴⁹ And Caldecott refers us back to Aquinas, who said that every creature carries the trace of Trinity “(1) in being created as an individual, (2) in having a form, and (3) in being related to other things.”⁵⁰ This is the “radiant wholeness which accompanies the creature like a star, reflecting within the particular limits of creaturehood the inexhaustibility of the divine goodness as always more.”⁵¹

⁴⁵ “Theology of Gift,” p. 5.

⁴⁶ Stratford Caldecott. “The Marian Dimension of Existence.” *Being Holy in the World: Theology and Culture in the Thought of David L. Schindler*. Eds. Nicholas J. Healy and D.C. Schindler. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2011. P. 284.

⁴⁷ “A Theology of Gift,” p. 5.

⁴⁸ “Creation as a Call to Holiness” 2003, p. 167.

⁴⁹ Stratford Caldecott. *All Things Made New*. San Rafael, CA: Angelico Press, 2011. P. 27.

⁵⁰ Caldecott 2011, p. 36. (Referencing the *Summa Theologica*, ST 1 Q.45, Art.7).

⁵¹ “A Theology of Gift,” p. 5.

That “more” is more than one could ever descry through the univocal imagination or the equivocal imagination alone. All of creation, as a gift of the Trinity, is ordered towards the Incarnation and reconciliation in Christ, in whom all the metaphysical fractures are healed, without either being absorbed into the other. We are able to grasp something of this great mystery through analogy, which links seemingly different and even seemingly irreconcilable things with one another across the created and uncreated order, and which is “at the foundation of poetry, theology, and science.”⁵² The poetic imagination depends on interplay of likeness and difference that is the heart of analogy, a “marriage of the particular and the universal in the eye of the heart.”⁵³

That this should be the heart of Caldecott’s ecological vision should not be a surprise. The sense that the world “comes fresh from God’s hand and that its natural qualities express aspects of his beauty”⁵⁴ must be reawakened if ecology is to be anything more than a tug-of-war between technical crisis management and those who fault the policies of such management for the crisis; between a “shallow ecology” that tries to save nature by applying bureaucratic and technocratic remedies and a “deep ecology” that wants to “let it be”; between totalizing theories that try to capture all meaning and those from whom all meaning escapes.

We turn now to Caldecott’s anthropology, in which the acting person, through the “integration of ethics with spirituality and cosmology” is revealed as the link between ecology and redemption; for the person, “the stewardship of creation is nothing less than the service of Christ.”⁵⁵

IV The Third Trajectory: The Imago Dei and the Call to Holiness

What is ecology, in the light of a Trinitarian, Christocentric cosmology? It is not simply a “subject”; it is a practice, a way, a discipline. Like all disciplines, it has its own integrity, and like all disciplines it cannot be fully understood without “the human person who is the subject and in a sense the object of all these disciplines.”⁵⁶

Returning again and again to Romans 8:19 (“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God”⁵⁷) Caldecott interprets it in light of the person as “microcosm” - a term used by medieval thinkers - a “little cosmos” reflecting God’s beauty and “containing all

⁵² *Beauty in the World* 2012, p. 151.

⁵³ *Beauty for Truth’s Sake* 2009, p. 47 (and see 46-48).

⁵⁴ Chesterton review VOL. XXXIII, Nos. 3 & 4, Fall/Winter 2007, Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J. P. 541. In this article Caldecott reminds us of the need for the poetic imagination: “Paradoxically, perhaps, it is in the imaginary worlds of Narnia and Middle-earth that this sense may be regained. Both Lewis and Tolkien possess a strong sense of the natural and mysterious beauty of the earth, of its animals and plants, its weathers and seasons, its wide spaces—and the even wider field of the stars above. These things are lovingly described by them in a way that can enable us to look with fresh eyes at the real world around us” (p. 542).

⁵⁵ “At Home in the Cosmos” 2012, p. 119.

⁵⁶ “Creation and the University” 2010, p. 8.

⁵⁷ And continuing in 8:20-23: “For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

the elements of nature, and faculties or powers corresponding to both animals and angels.”⁵⁸ Pope John Paul II gave new life to the notion of “man as microcosm,” as an image of God - the *imago Dei*⁵⁹ - as well as a compact representation of the ordered cosmos. Affirming the bond between persons and the rest of creation, the Pope, says Caldecott,

sought to recall us to our original mission as stewards and priests of nature, receiving the creation from God’s hand, cultivating it or making it fruitful, and giving it back to him in sacrificial worship.... Man was intended to be the mediator of creation, the one in whom all things connect, through whom all things are reconciled, the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15-20). This high calling is fulfilled in Christ, the new Adam, into whom we are baptized when we receive the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰

Thus, as did Maximus the Confessor, he linked the status of microcosm with the role of mediator - “Adam’s role in the cosmos is a priestly and mediatory one”⁶¹ - and what follows from seeing the person as both microcosm and mediator, says Caldecott, is that ecological disorder in the macrocosm is in a very real sense “*our fault*, being a reflection or projection of our own interior dis-ease,”⁶² our own alienation from God. As John Paul II said, sin, the refusal to submit to God, destroys the person’s internal balance with detrimental effects: “Wounded in this way, man almost inevitably causes damage to the fabric of his relationship with others and with the created world.”⁶³

The person may be a “micro-cosmos,” an image reflecting the whole within the part, but, says Caldecott,

Even the animals and stones can claim as much. Every created thing is made in the “image” of God, in the sense that it forms an *analogy*. But a true “likeness” is something more than analogy. To be in the likeness of God something must participate in the dynamic relationship of Son to Father and Father to Son in the Holy Spirit. The realization of this likeness to God, which is the final perfection of our nature, depends on the use we make of our freedom with the help of grace....⁶⁴

Something more, involving the person’s freedom, is necessary for the reconciliation and redemption of creation. The Second Trajectory ecologists, as we have pointed out, saw the need to turn to ethics, and the insight that there is a connection between morality and the well-being of nature goes as far back as the Hebrew Scriptures:

⁵⁸ “At Home in the Cosmos” 2012, p. 107.

⁵⁹ There is nothing dualistic about this: “...human bodiliness participates in the *imago Dei*. If the soul, created in God’s image, forms matter to constitute the human body, then the human person as a whole is the bearer of the divine image in a spiritual as well as a bodily dimension.” *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*. International Theological Commission, 2002.

⁶⁰ “At Home in the Cosmos” 2012, p. 108.

⁶¹ “At Home in the Cosmos” 2012, p. 107.

⁶² *Beauty for Truth’s Sake* 2009, p. 108.

⁶³ 1984 Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliation and Penance* 15.

⁶⁴ “Creation as a Call to Holiness” 2003, p. 166.

There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds and murder follows murder. Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell within it languish, and also the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air; and even the fish of the sea are taken away.⁶⁵

Likeness to God and participation in the life of the Trinity will certainly encompass upright action. Ethical thinking in ecological circles, though, has tended to focus on “rights,” not only of nature, but even of inanimate natural objects and landscapes. Caldecott points out that it is difficult to develop “an adequate moral theory based on rights alone that can address the need to conserve natural resources and biodiversity,”⁶⁶ not least because rights require concomitant responsibilities. Nor is extrinsic moralism - the ubiquitous “ecological police” lecturing one on recycling or what car to drive – the answer. Ecological damage, he says, is clearly more the result of things like human greed and selfishness; more important than “codifying a list of rights belonging to nature or to animals, and then legislating to enforce them, [is] to become the kind of people who are never cruel to animals or needlessly destructive.”⁶⁷ Putting the emphasis back on the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, he says, would lay the foundation “for a way of life that would be truly sustainable over time.”⁶⁸

Holiness calls us through and then beyond the cardinal virtues to the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love, *which* then re-invigorate the cardinal virtues. Love is the form of all the virtues and faith the necessary path; in his ecological discussions Caldecott turns to hope. Tolkien gave the Elves two words for “hope” - first, Amdir (“looking up”) or optimism, and Caldecott says, “The assumption that the ecological crisis can be solved, that big corporations can be persuaded to change their ways, these fall under the heading of Amdir.”⁶⁹ Yet it isn’t enough: “The fact is that we can struggle for a better world, we can fight for the trees and animals and defend the coral reefs, but optimism or Amdir alone cannot sustain us.”⁷⁰ Tolkien’s second word is Estel (“trust”), the hope that stems from natural trust in the being of things. It gives, says Caldecott, a certain sense of detachment, but atheists are deprived of even this natural piety. And so “many environmentalists are falling into despair...without ‘the greater hope’ that Christianity offers, environmentalism will end in fanaticism....”⁷¹ That greater hope, which Tolkien *expresses* but does not explicitly speak *about*, is not a hope in some pie-in-the-sky afterlife, which could act as an excuse for inaction, but a hope in “the present and in the eternity to which the present is inseparably connected.”⁷²

⁶⁵ Hosea 4:1-3

⁶⁶ *Beauty for Truth's Sake* 2009, p. 108.

⁶⁷ “At Home in the Cosmos” 2012, p. 119.

⁶⁸ *Beauty for Truth's Sake* 2009, pp. 108-109.

⁶⁹ “At Home in the Cosmos” 2012, p. 110.

⁷⁰ “At Home in the Cosmos” 2012, p. 110.

⁷¹ Stratford Caldecott. “At Home in the Cosmos: The Franciscan Redemption of Ecology.” Greyfriars Lecture, Taylor Institution, Oxford. 5 May 2010. PP. 11-12.

⁷² Caldecott points to a fragmentary prophecy in Tolkien’s “Debate of Finrod and Andreth” that makes it plausible for the Incarnation to “make sense” as a future possibility in the pre-Christian *Lord of the Rings*. “Estel, then, means trust in God,” he concludes. Stratford Caldecott, “The Lord and Lady of the Rings,” *Touchstone*. <<http://touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=15-01-051-f>>.

The “revealing of the sons of God” of Romans 8 fleshes out to mean that “the children of God are revealed in a life of holiness.”⁷³ Borrowing a phrase from Hans Urs von Balthasar and Benedict XVI, the person, living a life of faith, hope, and love, finds his fulfillment in the “cosmic liturgy.”⁷⁴ The difference, says Caldecott, between a universe and a cosmos “is not morality so much as prayer,”⁷⁵ which overflows with thanksgiving, *eucharistia*, the liturgy of the Church:

The true liturgy and eucharist begin where philosophy begins, in amazement and gratitude, in praise for the sheer existence of so much beauty, so much actuality. Forests and mountains, deserts and stars, animals, plants and insects are here and gone in a day, and their existence is fraught with sorrow, but God made them. In our obscure desire to unite ourselves with the Giver, to find the source and thank him, somehow, for the community of being, we begin to recall the reason we were made, and to play our part in the redemption of the world.⁷⁶

Caldecott says that “the heart and core of this cosmos made Church is the Virgin Mary.”⁷⁷ The discussion of the person as microcosm and mediator, helping to redeem, through the call to holiness, the creation waiting in eager longing for the revealing of the sons of men, is incomplete without Mary and her “yes” to God, and the “yes” we must all embrace in order to “play our part in the redemption of the world.” Caldecott quotes David L. Schindler approvingly in a passage he himself might have written:

The whole world, in and through the church, is destined for a transfiguring espousal with Jesus Christ.... This marriage is understood in the radical and comprehensive sense as a Eucharistic exchange intended to leave not even the smallest particle of the cosmos unwed. The terms of the offer of marriage are established by Trinitarian and Christic love, and the marriage is made actual only through the Marian fiat....⁷⁸

V Conclusion

After all this one might ask, “Doesn’t this just amount to a general enthusiasm? Where are the practical considerations?” Benedict XVI said, “The Church does not have technical solutions to offer” but rather is open to the truth found in any branch of knowledge, unifying its separate fragments, and mediating it “within the constantly changing life-patterns of the society of

⁷³ “At Home in the Cosmos” 2012, p. 119.

⁷⁴ Caldecott has often referred to John Paul II’s statement that the Church needs to breathe with “two lungs,” incorporating the Eastern church’s liturgical and iconographic cosmic vision. He refers to Pope Benedict’s adoption of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s expression “cosmic liturgy” to characterize Maximus the Confessor: “Jesus, the one Saviour of the world, is always at the centre of this solemn ‘liturgy’. ... Jesus Christ is the reference point that gives light to all other values. This was the conclusion of the great Confessor’s witness. And it is in this way, ultimately, that Christ indicates that the cosmos must become a liturgy, the glory of God, and that worship is the beginning of true transformation, of the true renewal of the world.”

⁷⁵ “At Home in the Cosmos” 2012, p. 107.

⁷⁶ “At Home in the Cosmos” 2012, pp. 119-120.

⁷⁷ Stratford Caldecott. “Cosmology, Eschatology, Ecology.” *Communio* XV, no. 3 (1988): 305-318. P. 313.

⁷⁸ David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church*. *Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism and Liberation*. Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996. Pp. 21-23. Quoted in Caldecott, “The Marian Dimension of Existence” (see note 46).

peoples and nations.”⁷⁹ Caldecott has written about third world-debt and population growth, about industrial pollutants and genetic exploitation, and turning to his writing on natural law, economics, distributism, and development, one can find a wealth of connections to day-to-day environmental issues, all of which could benefit from his insights: “I find that environmentalists are often acting on instinct,” he says, “and tend to be unaware of the coherent philosophical support that they could find in Catholic social teaching, based on natural-law principles such as the common good, the equal dignity of all persons, solidarity, and subsidiarity.”⁸⁰ Yet the point of this study is that his contribution is unique. It goes beyond policy specifics, beyond illuminating Catholic philosophy and social teaching, however brilliantly he does those things. In the end, it even goes beyond the rescue of the analogical, poetic, Christian, contemplative imagination, to that which contemplation beholds and is enraptured by: not the ambiguous tension, *tonus*, of “ecotonicity,” but the *logos* of ecology, named in the Gospel of John: Jesus Christ, the Word (*Logos*) of God.

For Dante, looking more deeply in the “single volume bound by love,” the beatific vision resolves into the *imago Dei*, the Face of Christ. For Caldecott as well, in the vision of “the Radiance of Being”⁸¹ all things are sacramentally embraced into that Face: “To be created is to be made in the image of the Son. Even stones and stars, plants and animals, fungi and viruses are aspects and fragments of that image.... The *whole*, too, is an image: the cosmos is not merely an assembly of individuals but a unity that itself receives existence from God and reflects his beauty.”⁸²

This vision of the radiance of Being, of a cosmos “transfigured, eternalized, perfected *in its living integrity*, which includes all that is good in the creatures that currently adorn it,”⁸³ passing through the refining fire of Christ’s death and resurrection, “marries” the most current ecological, cosmological and theological thinking, and at the same time is a *ressourcement* of the ancient Christian view:

They may not have had (or needed) the term “ecology,” but the ancient writers were deeply aware of the interrelatedness of the natural world, and of man as the focus or nexus of that world.... [It is] a profound insight which remains valid, and the present

⁷⁹ *Caritas in Veritate* 9. And see *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*. International Theological Commission, 2002: “We must note that theology will not be able to provide us with a technical recipe for the resolution of the ecological crisis, but ... it can help us to see our natural environment as God sees it, as the space of personal communion in which human beings, created in the image of God, must seek communion with one another and the final perfection of the visible universe.”

⁸⁰ “Session V - Response from Mr. Stratford Caldecott.” Colloquium, *The Ethics of Climate Change*. Blackfriars, Oxford, 17 November 2007. <http://www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk/climatechange/Respondents_V.html>.

⁸¹ The title of his 2103 Angelico Press book. “Reality is dazzling, it is full of radiance, the radiance of beauty. And yet our capacity to respond... requires something of us. It requires us to resonate with that mystery, so that there is something in us that resembles it, something connatural with it. That capacity, that depth is opened within us by the experience of love, in the moment when we understand ourselves to possess a meaning and destiny of our own. Until that moment we have no way to connect with the beauty that we see.” (“Creation and the University: Educating for a Human Ecology” 2010, p. 19).

⁸² “Creation as a Call to Holiness” 2003, p. 165.

⁸³ *Catholic Social Teaching: A Way In* 2003, p. 47.

ecological crisis could only have developed in a world that has forgotten it, or forgotten to live by it.⁸⁴

Something Caldecott said of the great saint of ecology, St. Francis, applies to him as well (though he would vigorously protest the comparison!) He said that Francis “is not the end-point, but rather a pointer, a signpost towards the great reconciliation of Christians in one and the same calling. That can only be achieved by the following of Christ in the flesh, through death to resurrection, bringing with us the whole of creation.”⁸⁵ To borrow a phrase from one of Caldecott’s favorite authors, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Caldecott’s ecology is ecology “on one’s knees,” for

The cosmos itself is not complete until the image of the Trinity is perfected in the world by the self-offering of creation to the Father, in the Son, through the Spirit, accomplished through man. The ultimate perfection of creation is achieved through Christ, microcosm and mediator, in whom alone, through the Church that is his extended Body, the universe as a whole is personalized....Until it is subsumed into the love of God through being offered in the eternal sacrifice of the Son to the Father in the divine Liturgy, the cosmos can have only a shadowy existence. But within the Liturgy it is brought within the Trinity, where all of reality is eternally present in glory.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Beauty for Truth's Sake* 2009, p. 107.

⁸⁵ “Creation and the University” 2010, p. 13.

⁸⁶ “Creation as a Call to Holiness” 2003, pp. 166-167.