

**Confronting a Triple Threat:
Religion as a Response to Current Social, Political,
and Environmental Crises**

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Abstract

This paper explores how Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* contributes to the spiritual case for holistic intervention in current environmental, social and political crises. Precedents for religion being used successfully in campaigns for policy changes are established using historical examples, including: Tommy Douglas' fight for public health care in Canada, John Muir's work to establish a system of National Parks in the United States, and Desmond Tutu's struggle to end apartheid in South Africa. Similarly, the Pope's Encyclical contributes to the spiritual case for intervention in current environmental, social and political crises by making connections to shared values that transcend religion. Pope Francis makes the case that by making critical, and necessary changes to social, environmental and political policies through an integrated approach, rather than using the historically fragmented approaches that have addressed these crises individually with limited success, humanity will be better able to care for their common home.

Keywords: Pope Francis; Laudato Si; Environment; Religion

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List of Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
CCF	Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
EU	European Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NDP	New Democratic Party
SACC	South African Council of Churches
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA or US	United States of America
WCC	World Council of Churches
WTO	World Trade Organization
YMCA/YWCA	Young Men's (Women's) Christian Association

Chapter 1.

Introduction

“Insanity is repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results.”

- Narcotics Anonymous¹

The world is in a multi-faceted state of crisis. Issues of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation permeate our news feeds with varying degrees of accuracy about the causes and solutions to these crises. Historically, these issues have been approached independently and in fragmented, reactive ways that have yielded limited, short term results. In light of these fragmented attempts within a neoliberal context to solve these crises, Pope Francis has written *Laudato Si* (Praise Be to You: On Care For Our Common Home), an encyclical that calls for a holistic approach that considers the interconnections these issues have to each other. Pope Francis uses St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology and the Pope’s guide, as an example of integral ecology and as an example of how “inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.”² The Pope speaks from a concern for

¹ *An Introductory Guide to Narcotics Anonymous, Revised* (Narcotics Anonymous World Services Inc: 1991), 14, last accessed July 13, 2017, https://na.org/admin/include/spaw2/uploads/pdf/litfiles/us_english/Booklet/Intro%20Guide%20to%20NA.pdf.

² The Holy Father Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* (Vatican: Vatican Publishing House, 2015), §10 http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

humanity as a whole, regardless of religious affiliation, relying on shared values and a desire for the common good to be the goal of any intervention.

The response thus far to these crises of a socio-economic, environmental, and political nature, have not yielded results that provide greater global equality, the great promise of the neoliberalism. The question remains – if the current model is not working what will? In a communication with George Monbiot, a professor from Sheffield Hallam University posed the question “How else can we address the challenge of convincing those who do not share the same values as ourselves of our case?” Monbiot’s response – you don’t. History has demonstrated that the opposition won’t be won over. You can’t win this way. Instead what is necessary is to empower and mobilize people already on side with your cause: “You do not win your opponents over. What you do to be effective...is first, to empower and mobilize people on your side and secondly, to win over the undecided people in the middle. You are not going to win over the hard core opponents who are fiercely opposed to your values.”³ These values are developed largely due to social and political influence, which in many cases are shaped by religion.

In *Laudato Si*, the Pope is seeking those who have shared values regardless of religious affiliation, and calling on them to seek change through action. Empowering and mobilizing people as a way to seek change has a long history in recent years: the Enfranchisement of Women in Canada and the USA in the 1920s, Labour Movements, India seeking independence under the leadership of Gandhi in the 1950s, the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, protests against the Vietnam War in 1960s, and even war itself. In each case, people were motivated by their convictions to seek change.

This paper will examine the role of religion in shaping responses to social, environmental and political crises using, as examples, Tommy Douglas’ fight for public health care in Canada, John Muir’s work to establish a system of National Parks in the United States, Desmond Tutu’s struggle to end apartheid in South Africa, and Pope

³ George Monbiot, “The Pricing of Everything,” *The Guardian*, last updated July 24, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/georgemonbiot/2014/jul/24/price-nature-neoliberal-capital-road-ruin>.

Francis' call for action to respond to modern crises through a holistic approach that includes shared values that transcend religion, as examples.

The Pope, as a religious head of state, has tremendous power to influence the behaviour of others, predominantly Catholics. His call for mobilization, to the people of the world, asks them to consider the Earth a common home and take steps both socially and environmentally in tandem to ensure that the common good is pursued in these efforts. The Pope is a representative for Catholics and Christianity as a larger whole, however the values that the Christian faith promotes are not limited to adherents alone. Values such as love, loyalty, stability, belonging, compassion, peace and justice are all part of core values that each of us possess that are strengthened or weakened by our cultural narratives and can be found in the teachings of the major world religions.⁴ The counter-argument that religion is the cause of much suffering, and therefore not a worthy response to our current crises fails to consider the context of religions. Violence in the name of religion often has its roots in other desires such as power, profits, and property – religion is not the cause, but instead is manipulated to serve other purposes. By returning to the core values of a common good we are returning to the 'golden' mean of Aristotle where "moral virtue is a mean... a mean between vices, the one involving excess, the other deficiency..."⁵ Focusing on the common good can be used to identify shared values that can in turn be used to promote positive responses to our current crises.

The Pew Research Center in 2010 released information about the faiths of people of the world. As of 2010, there were approximately 6.9 billion people on the planet, with nearly 5.8 billion people identifying as belonging to a religious group.⁶ The top two faith groups in the study were Christians (31.4%) and Muslims (23.2%). Combined, these two religious groups account for over 50% of the world's population. If a 3rd faith group, Hinduism, is included, the percentage is 69.6% of the world. Even though these religions have different ways of practicing their faith, they all share common values. While religion

⁴ Steven Reiss, "The Sixteen Strivings for God," *Zygon* 39, no.2 (2004): 307.

⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D Ross (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 1999), 32, last accessed June 3, 2017 <https://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/aristotle/Ethics.pdf>.

⁶ Conrad Hackett et al. "The Global Religious Landscape," *Pew Research Center*, last modified December 18, 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>.

may not be the sole source of these values, it is a contributing factor to a broader cultural narrative. These shared values are significant because if the Pope is able to share a message that allows people to connect with these common values, regardless of religious affiliation, it is possible that positive change can occur because “values...are the primary motivators of human behaviour and personality development.”⁷ These shared values are the basis of the common good that the Pope seeks.

In order to explore how the Pope’s encyclical *Laudato Si* contributes to the spiritual case for holistic intervention in light of current social, environmental and political crises, the project will be split into several parts. Part I will establish that there are indeed several crises that demand our attention. Economic crises such as the 2008 market crash and the role of Neoliberalism are examined. In addition, Neoliberalism’s proposed solutions to these problems will be assessed for their effectiveness. Neoliberalism, the dominant economic theory of our time, has contributed to extreme poverty, social exclusion, and environmental injustice in all areas of the world.⁸ In the developed sectors of the globe, this has prepared people to view human relations in terms of competition and has also prepared people to view the crises that we are experiencing as ‘normal’. For some countries any disagreement with this ‘norm’ is characterized as being hostile to individual freedom, which in an age post 9/11 is viewed as less than patriotic.⁹ By failing to acknowledge the challenges and struggles of the poor and relying on economic theories that give privileges to the rich and not the poor, we are setting ourselves up for a world of ever increasing inequality.

Environmental crises such as Global Climate Change and the responses of the various Earth Summits to address it will be assessed for their effectiveness as well, pointing out in particular why they have been ineffectual. The environmental crisis that we are experiencing shows the failure of our various Earth summits.¹⁰ Documents such as the

⁷ Reiss, “Sixteen Strivings,” 306.

⁸ Celia Deane-Drummond, “Environmental Justice and the Economy: A Christian Theologian’s View,” *Ecotheology* 11, no.3 (2006): 302.

⁹ George Monbiot, “Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems,” *The Guardian*, last modified April 15, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot>.

¹⁰ Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason* (London: Routledge, 2002), 79.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports state that “Human influence on the climate system is clear...recent climate changes have had widespread impacts on human and natural systems.”¹¹ While people are invariably acknowledging that some kind of climate change exists, there are some who are hesitant to accept, and even hostile to, proposals to move to sustainable practices. Even if governments pass laws and enact legislation protecting the environment, there are avenues for corporations to cry foul and sue governments successfully, thereby negating positive policies that governments try to enact.¹²

Lastly, current political crises such as the spread of terrorist groups, the refugee crisis, and the rise of populist politics around the world are discussed and proposed actions to fix these crises will likewise be assessed for their effectiveness. Historically, there have been periods of poor governance, inequality, and corruption that have often fueled violence; however, these were relatively localized. We are living at a time of “increasing demands for human rights and political participation,” a time when our world is more connected than ever before and thanks to the Neoliberal encouragement of Globalization, increasingly interdependent.¹³ In our time of interconnectedness, we see the political crises play out across the world via the Brexit, the 2016 American election, the growth of populist politics in Europe, the Refugee Crisis, and terrorist groups such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Part II of this thesis will provide information about the role of religion in society. It will also examine the history of secularization in some parts of the world, the survival of strong religious beliefs and practices elsewhere, and the rejuvenation of religiosity in other areas, especially when linked to activism for social change.

¹¹ IPCC 2014, *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, eds. The Core Writing Team, Rajendra Pachauri, and Leo Mayer (IPCC: Geneva, 2014), 2, last accessed December 30, 2016, http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_wcover.pdf.

¹² Monbiot, “Neoliberalism,” *The Guardian*.

¹³ UN Political Affairs, *Strategic Plan 2016-2019*, 3, last accessed July 2, 2016, <http://www.un.org/undpa/sites/www.un.org.undpa/files/DPA%20Strategic%20Plan%202016-2019.pdf>.

Part III will consider examples of how social, political and environmental crises have been approached by modern Christianity* as a way to campaign for changes in public policy. Social justice advocates such as Tommy Douglas and Desmond Tutu promoted solutions to combat poverty, racism, and inequality. Tommy Douglas' belief in the Social Gospel and personal experiences during the Great Depression led him to pursue a political career that applied "Christian principles to politics and government" as he sought to help solve the cause, rather than the effect of people's problems.¹⁴ Desmond Tutu was able to "mobilize international support from churches around the world for freedom, justice, and democracy for all in South Africa" by advocating for peaceful protests of the apartheid regime and calling on communities to celebrate their religious differences.¹⁵ Douglas and Tutu, while no means part of a Catholic movement, wedded their faith to social change as a way to change public policies. John Muir advocated for the environment by employing a religious and spiritual argument to protect nature from destructive human activities. He popularized the idea that "society had a responsibility to wisely use and restore the natural resources of the nation."¹⁶ Muir persuaded the general public, and the government of the United States, that wilderness had value by promoting tourism and demonstrating that "nature was indeed a utilitarian resource – though for spiritual, not consumptive purposes."¹⁷ In his writings and activism, Muir continuously "[invoked] God and Christ as players" in his quest to secure protection of the wilderness by putting the "fate of trees into a religious context."¹⁸ Muir, despite the 'mystical' quality of his environmental thinking, actively worked to change public policies that resulted in the creation of a National Park system. Although these campaigns were successful in addressing their

* Modern Christianity will be defined as an era of response stemming from the developments in Industrial/population growth coupled with global imperialism from the mid-19th century.

¹⁴ T.C. Douglas, Chris Higgenbotham, *The Making of a Socialist: The Recollections of T.C. Douglas*, ed. Lewis Thomas (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1982), Canadian Electronic Library, DesLibris, 69, <http://deslibris.ca.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/ID/405697>.

¹⁵ Mohammed Haron, "Peace Profile: Desmond Mpilo Tutu," *Peace Review* 26, no.4 (2014): 583.

¹⁶ Ronald Eber, "Wealth and Beauty: John Muir and Forest Conservation," in *John Muir: Family, Friends and Adventure*, eds. Sally Miller and Daryl Morrison (Albuquerque: New Mexico Press, 2005), 108.

¹⁷ Daniel J. Philippon, "Domesticity, Tourism, and the National Parks in John Muir's Late Writings," in *John Muir: Family, Friends and Adventure*, eds. Sally Miller and Daryl Morrison, (Albuquerque: New Mexico Press, 2005), 160.

¹⁸ Barbara Mossberg, "If Trees are Us," in *John Muir: Family, Friends and Adventure*, eds. Sally Miller and Daryl Morrison, (Albuquerque: New Mexico Press, 2005), 183.

singular objectives, their methods were fragmented and did not include integrated solutions that wove environmental and social considerations together in tandem.

Part IV of this thesis will establish that there is a way to bring these historically fragmented approaches together to offer a holistic solution that is long-term. The Pope, in *Laudato Si*, brings the social justice and ecology streams of Christian thought together and also includes a third stream, the political. In advocating for ‘Our Common Home’ Pope Francis calls for dialogue and action to seek solutions to our social, political and environmental crises. The “fragmentation of knowledge” creates difficulties when trying to solve “the more complex problems of today’s world, particularly those regarding the environment and the poor.”¹⁹ Pope Francis argues that “we are faced with not two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.”²⁰

Politics are also woven into the Pope’s take on how change can be achieved. The Pope acknowledges that change can be difficult, but it is possible if political will is present. In general, there have been “weak political responses” to confront the crises of the world today, and the Pope encourages “politics which [are] far sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis.” But above all “a change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic, and social power.”²¹ The Pope’s encyclical, *Laudato Si*, makes a contribution to the spiritual case for intervention in current ecological, social, and political crises by lobbying for changes in public policies. Earth is our common home and as such, humanity has a responsibility to make the necessary changes to ensure its care through social, environmental and political means. By using language and shared values that transcends his own religion, the Pope is able to connect with a wider audience, and calls

¹⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §110.

²⁰ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §139.

²¹ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §54; §197; §206.

people to mobilize, especially when the current responses to multiple crises have been ineffective.

Chapter 2

Overview of Modern Crises

In the history of modern capitalism, crises are the norm, not the exception.

– Nouriel Roubini²²

Current Economic/Social Crisis

Neoliberalism, an economic theory of the 20th and 21st century, is based on the transfer of control of public sector economic factors to the private sector, and supports competition as a way to increase monetary wealth. The term ‘neoliberalism’ has become increasingly ambiguous and diverse “across numerous disciplines” as it has morphed from “its conceptual crib in economic policy, political economy and the states vs markets debate, towards issues of power and ideology.”²³ As such, it has expanded to include as part of its concept “broader political, ideological, cultural, and spatial phenomenon.”²⁴ Although there is ambiguity in the way that neoliberalism is defined this does not deny “what has come to be described as neoliberal.”²⁵

In operation since the Thatcher/Reagan years, Neoliberalism has set the stage for an acceptance and normalization of extreme poverty, social exclusion and environmental injustice. Criticisms of this economic model do so through calls for social equality, livable wages and environmental protections and are often characterized as being Communist, or Socialist –against “Western” values of democracy and individual freedoms. However, by failing to acknowledge the challenges and struggles that are experienced by the poor which

²² Nouriel Roubini and Stephen Mihm, *Crisis Economics: A Crash Course in the Future of Finance* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010), Google Book Preview, 11, last accessed July 17, 2017, www.goo.gl/NgGffP.

²³ Rajesh Venugopal, "Neoliberalism as Concept," *Economy and Society* 44, no.2 (2015): 171; 169.

²⁴ Venugopal, “Neoliberalism as Concept,” 170.

²⁵ Venugopal, “Neoliberalism as Concept,” 184.

are further amplified by environmental degradation, and other conditions that are permitted by neoliberalist policies, we are accepting a world of ever increasing inequality.

Neoliberalism was introduced as a response to Keynesian economics that called for state intervention and accountability in businesses following the Great Depression. After several market failures leading up to the 1980s, Neoliberalism was a move back to laissez-faire policies that extended to include political and social spheres as well. Although it was introduced as a viable and accepted option as an economic theory under Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s, it was not a new idea. Between 1945 and 1980, Neoliberalism had an incubation period where it “generated intellectual coherence and matured politically. It grew into a recognizable group of ideas, and also into a movement.”²⁶ After 1980, with support from world leaders, Neoliberalism was integrated into many emerging global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). For business, “Neoliberalism had the added appeal of appearing of being at one with traditions and myths of American individualism,” which made it an easy idea to sell to business and an easy idea to accept for consumers.²⁷ This myth of American individualism as the ideal basis for a global economy was, and is, not restricted to America; it has spread beyond North America to much of the Western World.

The myth of individualism is the idea that “the birth of [America] was founded upon the premise that the individual existed in some fundamental sense prior to society and had a range of rights that should be protected against communal interests.”²⁸ This is especially evident in the American Declaration of Independence which states that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” which suggests that the only equality that people need they are born with, and, the *pursuit* of Happiness is not

²⁶ Daniel Stedman, *Masters of the Universe: Hayek, Friedman, and the Birth of Neoliberal Politics*, (Princeton University Press, 2012), 7, last accessed December 6, 2016, <http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i9827.pdf>.

²⁷ Ibid, 9.

²⁸ Mark Solovey, review of “The Myth of American Individualism: The Protestant Origins of American Political Thought” by Barry S Shain and “Conspicuous Criticism: Tradition, the Individual and Culture in American Social Thought from Veblen to Mills” by Christopher Shannon, *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 36, no.1(2000): 65-67.

something to be confined within any imposed boundaries.²⁹ Neoliberalism supports this view in a variety of ways: competition, pursuance of personal goals, and free range economics. Neoliberalism has been summed up effectively by political and environmental activist George Monbiot:

“[Neoliberalism] sees competition as the defining characteristic of human relations...it maintains that ‘the market’ delivers benefits that could never be achieved by planning. Attempts to limit competition are treated as inimical to liberty... inequality is recast as virtuous: a reward for utility and a generator of wealth... efforts to create a more equal society are both counterproductive and morally corrosive. The market ensures that everyone gets what they deserve.”³⁰

In a world that is becoming increasingly globalized, thoughts and actions that put the individual above the community have serious moral and ethical implications. Decisions that are made individually do not occur in a vacuum. In the 21st century, Neoliberalism is pushing a global agenda that has distinct themes of “privatization of the public sphere, deregulation of the corporate sector, and lower corporate taxation paid for with cuts to public spending.”³¹ This creates a domino effect which has greater negative impacts on the poor and continues to support the elite.

Problems with Neoliberalism ideology came to a head with the 2008 financial crisis. Although the story is familiar a decade later, it warrants mentioning a condensed history. In the United States, people were given mortgages on houses that they couldn’t afford and banks were aware of this. As housing prices continued to increase, and people were unable to afford the mortgage payment, they defaulted on their loans. At first, banks were not worried about this because they supposed they could simply resell the house to another family with another mortgage. As increasing numbers of people defaulted on their loans, investment banks were unable to sell the repossessed houses. The United States Federal Reserve tried to stave off the impending bust by providing significant loans to

²⁹ “Declaration of Independence: A Transcription,” *US National Archives*, last modified June 26, 2017, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

³⁰ Monbiot, “Neoliberalism – The Ideology at the Root of All our Problems,” *The Guardian*.

³¹ Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2015), 19.

failing investment banks, however the stock market crashed in 2008, and the United States federal government increased its involvement. In October, Congress approved the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act which authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to “establish the Troubled Asset Relief Program (or “TARP”) to purchase, and to make and fund commitments to purchase, troubled assets from any financial institution.”³² Fund commitments of \$700 billion were approved, and the Treasury was able to purchase securities that would then be removed from bank balance sheets in hopes of increasing faith in bank lending. Some banks, in turn, used this money to pay out bonuses to their CEOs resulting in massive criticism and triggering mass protests. A key feature of the Dodd-Frank legislation passed in 2010 was provisions to increase transparency and limit the amount of risk that banks would assume. The bailout of the banks by the Fed and the Treasury was a classic Keynesian economic strategy to help stimulate the economy – the same economy that had decided that Keynes was no longer relevant decades earlier. The bailout could be viewed as a necessary evil. People did not want to see their investments and savings disappear, but bailing out the banks seemed like rewarding people for poor choices that were morally objectionable. After the dust had settled, it was alleged that the ‘rich’ banks caused the crisis and individuals within the banking sector were continuing to grow in financial security as the middle class, as well as the poor, were struggling to make ends meet.

The Financial Crisis Inquiry Report Commission found, among many of their conclusions, that what occurred in 2007 and 2008 was not what was expected – people didn’t think that it could happen: “this was a fundamental disruption...[people accepted the] self-correcting nature of the markets and the ability of financial institutions to effectively police themselves.”³³ The belief that self-preservation would prevent banks from taking unnecessary risk proved false; suggestions of regulated banks (as Canadian banks are) were opposed on the basis that it would “stifle innovation.”³⁴ In the age of

³² Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, Pub. Law No. 110–343, 122 Stat. 3765 (2008), last accessed July 17, 2017, <https://www.congress.gov/110/plaws/publ343/PLAW-110publ343.pdf>.

³³ Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, “Conclusions of the Financial Crisis Inquiry Report,” *Public Affairs*, xviii, last modified January 27, 2011 http://fcic-static.law.stanford.edu/cdn_media/fcic-reports/fcic_final_report_full.pdf.

³⁴ Ibid.

Neoliberalism this translates to taking advantage of others, particularly the poor, in the name of competition and financial gain. For, in the end, it is believed that people get what they deserve.

The Commission also concluded that the crisis was avoidable and that the warnings were either “ignored or discounted.”³⁵ Although those at the top who had the authority to regulate the banks failed to do so, the Commission also charged the nation to “accept responsibility for what we permit to occur. Collectively but certainly not unanimously, we acquiesced to embrace a system, a set of policies and actions that gave rise to our present predicament.”³⁶ If there ever is an Environmental Crisis Inquiry Report Commission, it is possible that they will be able to copy and paste the same findings as the Financial Crisis Inquiry.

Current Environmental Crises

The planet Earth has the perfect conditions necessary to sustain life. This quality to sustain life has been thought to be so unique that the notion of life on other planets or in other parts of the universe has captured the imaginations of many and has manifested itself in literature and film genres of science fiction. The desire to find other planets that can sustain life is so compelling that the USA alone spends billions of dollars on space related activities.³⁷ The Kepler Mission is one example of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s (NASA) search for other habitable planets. The challenge is to find planets that are in the “habitable zone of their stars where liquid water might exist on the surface of the planet.”³⁸ More recently NASA’s exploration of Mars has re-captured the imaginations of the people on Earth because there appears to be a promise of the *possibility* of life, environments and ecosystems to be created there. According to NASA, the plan is

³⁵ Ibid, xvii.

³⁶ Ibid, xxiii.

³⁷ NASA, *FY 2014 Budget Estimates*, last accessed December 30, 2016, https://www.nasa.gov/pdf/740427main_NASAFY2014SummaryBriefFinal.pdf.

³⁸ NASA, “Mission Overview: Kepler,” ed. Michele Johnson, last updated February 8, 2017, https://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/kepler/overview/index.html.

to put humans on their way to Mars in the 2030s and “We are well on our way to getting there, landing there, and living there.”³⁹

However, here on Earth, it is our *reality* that life exists and processes that have taken billions of years to create and refine are being threatened by anthropogenic activities. Earth has experienced an increased assault on its systems since the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. As technology, industry, economies, and standards of living grew and improved, the gasses and garbage that they emitted as a result have been found by our generation to be the beginning of significant changes in our climate.

To address these significant changes, the United Nations established an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988 to “provide policy makers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.”⁴⁰ The IPCC uses published literature and scientific research from the global community to inform their reports; the reports present information but do not prescribe policies. Because of the intergovernmental nature of the contributing authors and the comprehensive research that is compiled, the IPCC is considered a credible source on climate change. There are some criticisms of the reports such as over/under reporting, but overall it is generally accepted in the scientific community.⁴¹ Some of the current environmental threats identified in the 2014 IPCC report include global warming, rising sea levels, and extreme weather and climate events. Combined, these events also threaten biodiversity.

The scientific research summarized in the 2014 IPCC report found that there is evidence to support that anthropogenic drivers of emissions “are extremely likely to have been the dominant cause of the observed global warming since the mid-20th century.”⁴² Because of the warming of the climate, the ocean temperature has increased, sea ice has

³⁹ NASA, “Journey to Mars Overview”, ed. Jim Wilson, last updated March 27, 2017, <https://www.nasa.gov/content/journey-to-mars-overview>.

⁴⁰ “IPCC Factsheet: What is the IPCC?”, *IPCC*, last updated August 30, 2013, https://www.ipcc.ch/news_and_events/docs/factsheets/FS_what_ipcc.pdf.

⁴¹ 97% or more of actively publishing climate scientists agree with the findings. NASA, “Scientific Consensus: Earth’s Climate is Warming”, ed. Holly Shaftel, last modified December 13, 2016, <http://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus/>.

⁴² IPCC 2014, 4.

melted and sea levels have been rising.⁴³ As changes continue in the atmosphere and hydrosphere, there have been changes noticed in the frequency and strength of extreme weather and climate events. Some of these changes, such as decreases and increases in temperature extremes, increases in levels of ocean water, and increases of extreme precipitation events in many regions are being linked to anthropogenic influences.⁴⁴

Altogether, these issues represent significant risks and crises. These issues and their causes have been known and communicated to the public for over two decades. The first IPCC report in 1990 noted that “emissions resulting from human activities are substantially increasing the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gasses...these increases will enhance the greenhouse gas effect...this will result in a likely increase in global mean temperature of about 1°C above the present value by 2025 and 3°C before the end of the next century. The rise will not be steady...”⁴⁵ This same information was echoed in the 2014 IPCC report stating that “anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have increased since the pre-industrial era...and are *extremely likely* to have been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century.”⁴⁶ If the earth warms above 2°C there are risks that will be felt worldwide in varying intensity including but not limited to: crop failure, flooding, increased disease, water shortages, loss of biodiversity as well as social and economic instability.

The environmental crises that we are experiencing demonstrates the failures of the various Earth summits from 1972 until present day. From as early as 1972, the UN recognized the need to “guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment.”⁴⁷ The Declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment (1972) indicated that people were to recognize that “through ignorance or indifference we can do massive and irreversible harm to the earthly environment on which

⁴³ IPCC 2014, 2.

⁴⁴ IPCC 2014, 7.

⁴⁵ IPCC Working Group I, “Policy Makers Summary,” *IPCC*, eds. J.T. Houghton, G.J. Jenkins and J.J. Ephraums, (1990), xi, last accessed December 30, 2016, http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/far/wg_I/ipcc_far_wg_I_spm.pdf.

⁴⁶ IPCC 2014, 4.

⁴⁷ United Nations, “Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment” (1972), Introduction, last accessed December 30, 2016, <http://www.unep.org/documents.multilingual/default.asp?documentid=97&articleid=1503>.

our life and well-being depends.”⁴⁸ The language used to describe the state of the planet was not meant to be alarmist, but instead to have people ponder a ‘what if’ situation by phrasing the various scenarios as a possibility, not an absolute. The document attempted to have people assume responsibility for their actions but like most UN documents it was a *guide*, not a rulebook with consequences.

The first major international convention to address the concept of climate change, its existence, and causes was in 1992. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) contains objectives and goals that have no measurable limits or ability to be enforced. The objective of the UNFCCC is to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentration...within a time frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner.”⁴⁹ The document goes on to indicate the types of reporting that countries are expected to contribute but does not clearly indicate what will be done with the reports. By naming generic issues and offering limited tangible solutions or procedures to meet the indicated objective, it is easy for countries to avoid criticism for not meeting the objectives. Furthermore, the UNFCCC has a section dedicated to a withdrawal process that allows member Parties to remove their name from the agreement, but there is no consequence for breaking this international promise. In this manner, the UN was once again, a guide, not a rulebook.

Again, in 1997, the UN attempted to show its resolve to limit climate change with the Kyoto Protocol, but like its predecessors it lacked clear direction as well. With this agreement, each party would agree to “by 2005, [make] demonstrable progress in achieving its commitments under this Protocol,”⁵⁰ but included no clear definition of what “demonstrable progress” meant. Just in case reducing emissions proved too difficult, certain Parties could participate in “emission trading” to meet their targets, thus reducing

⁴⁸ Ibid, Proclamation 6.

⁴⁹ United Nations, “United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,” (1992) Article II, last accessed December 30, 2016, http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/background_publications_htmlpdf/application/pdf/conveng.pdf.

⁵⁰ United Nations, “Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,” (1997), Article 3.2, last accessed December 30, 2016, <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.pdf>.

signatures to a farce. Notably the United States of America did not sign the agreement and Canada withdrew its signature in 2011.

The latest attempt to gather the international community in the name of climate change was in 2015 with the signing of the Paris Accord. The Paris Accord is designed to unite the international community, on a voluntary basis, to collectively battle rising global temperatures. Like the others, it leaves it up to the country in question to decide what their actions on climate change will be, but gives no clear direction on measurable targets or how to achieve these targets. It ‘recognizes’ many unique considerations but fails to enforce consequences; however, it does “recognize the need for an effective and progressive response to the urgent threat of climate change on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge.”⁵¹ It goes on to acknowledge that “Parties may be affected not only by climate change, but also by the impacts of the measures taken in response to it,” which can be viewed through two perspectives – you can be impacted by your action or your inaction, so choose accordingly. There is also an underlying implied meaning that impacts are not limited to the environment, but can be extended to social, economic and political spheres as well. Lastly, it acknowledges that humans are a part of the natural world; any effects on nature will have effects on humans. It states that it is important to have international cooperation on the adaptation efforts being prepared and the importance of taking into account the needs of developing countries, especially those that are “particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change.”⁵² It confirms that there is “an intrinsic relationship that climate changes actions, responses, and impacts have with equitable access to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.”⁵³

The recent withdrawal from the Paris Accord by the United States is significant because the USA is the second largest carbon producer on the planet.⁵⁴ However, although the American federal government is no longer supporting the aims of the Paris Accord,

⁵¹ United Nations, “Paris Agreement,” (2015), Preamble, last accessed December 30, 2016, http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Tom Boden et al, Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, Oakridge National Laboratory, last accessed May 5, 2017, <http://cdiac.ornl.gov/trends/emis/top2014.tot>.

several individual States and communities have voiced their intent to remain committed to the objectives set out in the Accord, recognizing that “to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement has devastating repercussions not only for the United States, but for our planet.”⁵⁵

Information about climate change is not new and many attempts have been made to adapt to the effects of changes in our climate systems, yet emissions have continued to increase.⁵⁶ The international community has made little, if any, measurable progress towards the goals agreed to by various climate summits. Scientists have repeatedly explained that meeting these goals are necessary if we want our planet to continue to support life as we currently know it. This is perhaps the bigger crisis – we know what is happening but we are doing very little as an international community to improve our fate. The West has faith in its cultural narratives and our place of economic and social privilege. We have failed to think of ourselves as a species that can become extinct and have become increasingly desensitized to the crises and extreme events around us, that we often see them as commonplace and unavoidable. In short, we are learning to adapt, rather than to mitigate. The 2014 IPCC report warns its readers that “continued emission of greenhouse gasses will cause further warming and long lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems.”⁵⁷ We have dreams of finding life on another planet or in galaxies far, far, away...hopefully we won’t be in a position where we struggle to find life on our own planet. Through our inaction we are accepting that there is an acceptable attrition rate for both human and non-human life on this planet.

Current Political Crises

Social attitudes and behaviours towards issues such as ecological and climate change are directly affected by politics, especially a politics that seems unstable or in some

⁵⁵ Edmund G. Brown Jr., “CA Governor Brown, NY Governor Cuomo and WA Governor Inslee Announce Formation of U.S. Climate Alliance,” last updated June 1, 2017, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/news.php?id=19818>.

⁵⁶ IPCC 2014, 5.

⁵⁷ IPCC 2014, 8.

manner of crisis. With help from globalization, the effects of these political crises are not limited to their country of origin and have an impact internationally. Currently the political crises associated with the persistent violence and armed conflict in the Middle East, the internal politics of the European Union (EU), and the election of an unpredictable President in the United States are examples of potentially destabilizing events.

The persistent violence in the Middle East has been characterized by increasing acts of terror by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da'ish – the acronym used in the Middle East). They are a terrorist group that has been using ethnic cleansing and committing war crimes to achieve their objective to restore an Islamic caliphate. The people who founded ISIL were originally part of Al-Qaeda, the group that claimed responsibility for the 9/11 attacks, but Al-Qaeda viewed some individuals in their group as too extreme, so these individuals (many of whom had roots in Iraq) created their own terror group, ISIL.

In 2003, American president George W. Bush declared war on Iraq with the purpose to help “Iraqis achieve a united, stable, and free country” and stated that this goal would require “sustained commitment.”⁵⁸ The leader of Iraq, Saddam Hussein was successfully deposed and was hanged for crimes against humanity. With a new constitutional government in place, military forces began to withdraw in 2009. However, the withdrawal of American and British military forces after years of foreign intervention in Iraq and the defeat of Saddam Hussein’s government created a destabilized situation that was made worse by the activities of groups like Al-Qaeda and later, ISIL.

Also contributing to the tensions are the fights within the government along religious lines and insurgency continues to be an issue. Petroleum interests have also been a consideration during this time as it is a source of income for the parties involved in the disputes. In Iraq, oil accounts for 94% of government revenue.⁵⁹ As it is the significant

⁵⁸ George W. Bush, “President Bush Addresses the Nation,” *The White House*, last modified March 19, 2003, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030319-17.html>.

⁵⁹ International Monetary Fund, “Economic Diversification in Oil-Exporting Arab Countries,” Paper prepared for Annual Meeting of Arab Ministers of Finance (Manama, Bahrain: 2016), 7, last accessed July 13, 2017, <https://www.imf.org/external/np/pp/eng/2016/042916.pdf>.

source of income for Iraq and there has been little efforts to diversify its source of income, whoever controls the oil has considerable power over the region.

Within the Middle East, ISIL has created a local crisis of displacement as people attempt to move away from ISIL controlled territory. This local crisis of displacement has morphed into an international crisis of resettlement. Following the Arab Spring events of 2011, Syria slid into civil war after President Assad responded to children's graffiti in support of the Arab Spring with excessive force. The children belonged to large, notable families in an area where tribal loyalty runs deep. When one of the boys died of his injuries during detainment, protests were initiated and Assad's response was with bullets and increased violence. This escalated emotions and behaviours of civilians and soon a rebel force was formed to oust Assad's government.⁶⁰

ISIL has been using the opportunity of civil unrest to advance their own cause to create a Sunni Caliphate using a particularly fundamentalist version of Islam and expand territory they currently control.⁶¹ Regionally, support for Assad vs the Rebels is divided along religious sect lines which is intensified by the predominate presence of Shia Islam in Iraq and parts of Syria. Other countries have become involved in the conflict as well. Russia has focused its airstrikes on anti-Assad forces which includes both ISIL and civilian targets and the USA has been focused on dismantling Assad and ISIL. However, ISIL is difficult to stop. Their revenue stream from captured oil sites continues to fund their objectives and bombing areas of oil production have made a few dents in the revenue for ISIL, but has not immediately stopped the fighting. Civilians are caught in the middle and many simply want the fighting to end. For the civilians still present it is hard to tell who is dropping the bombs and this could be enough to welcome ISIL if it meant the end of the fighting. As a matter of survival, concern for ecological and climate changes rank low on the list of concerns for the Syrian people.

⁶⁰ "Syria's Civil War Explained", *Aljazeera*, last modified December 14, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/05/syria-civil-war-explained-160505084119966.html> ; *"Hell on Earth: The Fall of Syria and the Rise of ISIS,"* directed by Sebastian Junger and Nick Quested (National Geographic Documentary Films: 2017), digital DVD.

⁶¹ Graeme Wood, "The 'Caliph' Speaks," *The Atlantic*, last modified November 4, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/11/caliph-baghdadi-mosul-isis-iraq-syria/506567/>.

As violence in Syria has escalated, so have the waves of people migrating to leave the country. The larger refugee crisis includes economic migrants from Africa, Afghans fleeing their failed state of Afghanistan that Western intervention contributed to, and Syrian refugees.⁶² The political crises come in the form of resettlement, as there is a fear among many Westerners about Muslims, especially given recent attacks on Western targets. For many EU countries, as governments triage their country's needs and reassess these needs as new issues emerge, the migration crisis is taking precedence over other issues because of its immediate impact on local citizens.

The proposed solutions by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are to admit the people coming into the different European countries and use existing rules for refugee claims, while at the same time spreading the resettlement equally among EU countries. However because of terror activities linked with Islam, many countries that are accepting refugees have concerns about unwittingly harbouring terrorists, specifically those who consider them members of ISIL, in this process. Resettlement programs have long wait times and do not solve the central reason of why this resettlement process is required in the first place.

The perceived threats to personal safety associated with the refugee and migrant crises have moved some European countries towards other sources of political destabilization. The 2016 Brexit vote, the migrant crisis, and the Euro crisis are all examples of possible destabilizing events that have the potential to be increasingly distracting and alarming. These events, like the destabilizing events in the Middle East, force governments to triage their concerns and inevitably topics such as climate change receive less attention than the perceived imminent threat of immigration.

Although Brexit was more of a contract negotiation with the European Union, both the "leave" and "remain" campaigns for Brexit divided the nation by utilizing the fear of extremism and the unknown. The "leave" campaign used fear of immigration and unrestricted freedom of movement to garner support while the "remain" campaign used the fear of economic catastrophe to gain support. Although there have been attacks in London,

⁶² T.N., "How many migrants to Europe are refugees?" *The Economist*, last modified September 8, 2015, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2015/09/economist-explains-4>.

near the British Parliament and in Manchester, these attacks were not done by new-wave immigrants – they were carried out by people who were born in the United Kingdom. Nearly a year after the vote, Britain is not in danger of the extremism advertised by either of the campaigns, but the anti-immigration sentiment that aided Brexit’s success remains present.⁶³

In the United Kingdom, concerns about immigration are paramount. These concerns are echoed elsewhere in the EU as well. The increased difficulties in differentiating between economic migrants and refugees seeking asylum has put many countries such as Greece and Italy under increased pressure both politically, socially, and economically. As one of the preferred arrival spots for those making the Mediterranean crossing, Italy and Greece are at the front lines of the migrant crisis. While they have experienced their own economic and social crises (Eurozone) and have appealed to the EU for additional support, little has been offered. EU states appear to be more interested in stopping the migration from the point of origin rather than aiding those who have made the journey, fearing that supporting those that have made the trip will only encourage more travelers. Neighboring Balkan states (many who receive subsidies from Germany) have been asked to help share the burden of refugee settlement but so far these requests have been met with hostility and fear. The influx of migrants has created a fear of the unknown – language, culture, religion, and intent. Xenophobia is on the rise and the fear of ‘the other’ is validated with each attack on Western soil. Limited border access and increased fencing along borders indicate that several Balkan states want limited involvement in settling refugees.⁶⁴

The Euro Crisis also has the potential to be destabilizing. This crisis can be described as a predominantly economic crisis that exposed the flaws in the economics of the Eurozone. The top five countries most adversely affected were, and still are, Ireland and Spain, where cheap money resulted in high private debt, and Greece, Italy, and Portugal where cheap money resulted in high public debt. These five countries account for

⁶³ Adam Hamdy, “Why the World Should Not Fear Brexit,” *Huffington Post*, last modified June 27, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/adam-hamdy/brexit-eu-referendum_b_10694386.html.

⁶⁴ Judith Sutherland, “Fear and Loathing of Refugees in Europe,” *Human Rights Watch*, last modified February 8, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/08/fear-and-loathing-refugees-europe>.

1/3 of the economic output of the region and have revealed a situation of “haves” and “have-nots.” The migrant crisis makes this situation worse because the have-not countries are being asked to share the burden, but they do not have the capacity to do so economically or socially.⁶⁵

Another potentially destabilizing event is the 2016 American presidential election. The 2016 presidential election has been one of the most debated and discussed political crises of the 21st century. Historically, social attitudes and behaviours towards certain issues have been directly affected by politics, usually through legislation. Presidents of America in the past have been influential in creating and legalizing social change to improve the lives of its citizens. With the election of Donald Trump there is fear that there could be a regression in positive changes in social attitudes and behaviours. These fears are not without cause. Trump has advocated bringing lawsuits against newspapers that challenge him, imprisoning his opponents, and using nuclear weapons. He praises racial profiling, torturing people, and he has declared war on an entire world religion – Islam.⁶⁶ These are not qualities that most of the Western world see as valuable in a leader. His rhetoric has been one of passion, and often criticism of reason.

Government policies have the potential to affect people’s thinking about ecological issues. The Pew Research Center reports that “public attitudes about climate change and energy policy are strongly intertwined with political party affiliation and ideology.”⁶⁷ Therefore, where the party lines are so will the rest of America follow. Trump’s promises to renew coal mine activity and change environmental regulations have raised alarms for many climate activists, noting the atmospheric pollution and environmental deterioration that would result as a consequence of these resumed efforts. Further concerns have been raised with the appointment of Scott Pruitt, a climate change skeptic, to oversee the Environmental Protection Agency (or just its demise – in February 2017 a bill was put

⁶⁵ Bodo Herzog, “The EMU Is No One-Way-Street” in *The Eurozone Crisis and the Future of Europe The Political Economy of Further Integration and Governance*, eds. Daianu, Daniel, et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 194, doi: 978-1-137-35675-8.

⁶⁶ Andrew Sullivan, “America and the Abyss,” *New York Magazine*, last modified November 3, 2016, <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/11/andrew-sullivan-trump-america-and-the-abyss.html>.

⁶⁷ Pew Research Center, “The public’s political views are strongly linked to attitudes on environmental issues,” *Science Daily*, last modified July 1, 2015, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/07/150701114752.htm.

forward to terminate the EPA), the threats of budget cuts to environmental programs, and the removal of links to the National Parks Service from the White House website. However, like many other places in the world, concern about American immigration policies, not environmental issues, have been at the forefront of discussions worldwide. This further indicates that we triage our concerns by assigned degrees of urgency to each emerging issue and decide the order that they will be addressed. As we triage, the environmental crisis is pushed further down the ever growing list of concerns our humanity faces; threats to anthropogenic beings trumps threats to nature.

The nationalistic and protectionist politics Trump employs, combined with his climate change skepticism that is seeping its way into governmental regulations can have an impact on the social attitudes and behaviours of Americans and others who are concerned about the threats associated with the ecological crisis. The anti-environmental policies that the American government appears to be determined to push through and its platform of anti-immigration could create a situation where an explanation will need to be given to the American people why they themselves could become internally displaced people as environmental refugees.

While the USA appears to be divesting itself of any interest in climate change mitigation, China is positioning itself to be a leader in addressing environmental issues and encouraging the development of eco-friendly technologies. China is an economic giant that has experienced great environmental costs as well.⁶⁸ Energy production and energy efficiency are the main focus as China tackles climate change. They have created a National Plan to Address Climate Change and have passed legislation on the Prevention and Control of Atmospheric Pollution with the purpose of “protecting and improving the environment, preventing and controlling atmospheric pollution, safeguarding public health, advancing ecological civilization and promoting the sustainable development of economy and society (Article 1).”⁶⁹ In its current 5 year plan, China clearly states that the

⁶⁸ Isabel Hilton, “China emerges as global climate leader in wake of Trump’s triumph,” *The Guardian*, last modified November 22, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/nov/22/donald-trump-success-helps-china-emerge-as-global-climate-leader>.

⁶⁹ “China: Law on the Prevention and Control of Atmospheric Pollution,” London School of Economics and Political Science, last accessed December 17, 2016

country is committed to being a world leader in environmental policy. The leadership and politics of China is helping to shape the social behaviours of over 1 billion people.

Conclusion

The crises listed here are only a few of those created by neoliberal policies, most of which have occurred within the last decade. Brexit, the elections of far right leaders, concerns over immigration and fear about terrorism have signaled a retreat from globalization. Countries around the world, particularly the G20 countries, are becoming increasingly protectionist and nationalistic in their government policies.⁷⁰ While a full withdrawal from the global market is unlikely, it is clear that global attitudes and behaviours are being shaped by national and international politics.

However there is hope. The ideas of division and selfish behaviour that neoliberalism promotes “run counter to much of what comprises human nature.”⁷¹ As a species, humans have demonstrated a desire to help others, share greatly, and seek equality – even from a young age.⁷² Although the social conditioning of neoliberalism would have us believe otherwise, we have an inherent desire to “take care” of others. What these crises (social/economic, environmental, and political) have in common is that the people who are making decisions for the general public create a façade of long-term planning that has the common good at its core. When considered in the greater context, the decision makers of our world have shared values with a minority of the population, but have fantastic Public

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/GranthamInstitute/law/law-on-the-prevention-and-control-of-atmospheric-pollution/>.

⁷⁰ WTO Secretariat, “WTO Report: ‘G20 Trade Restrictions Reach Highest Monthly Levels Since the Crisis,’” *World Trade Organization*, last modified June 21, 2016,

https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news16_e/trdev_21jun16_e.htm.

⁷¹ George Monbiot, “Neoliberalism: The Deep Story That Lies Beneath Donald Trump’s Triumph,” *The Guardian*, last modified November 14, 2016,

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/14/neoliberalsim-donald-trump-george-monbiot>.

⁷² Maia Szalavitz, “Is Human Nature Fundamentally Selfish or Altruistic?” *TIME*, last modified October 8, 2012, <http://healthland.time.com/2012/10/08/is-human-nature-fundamentally-selfish-or-altruistic/>.

Relations people who are able to spin their individualistic values as majority community values.

The attempted responses to these various crises have resulted in various levels of failure. Failure to ensure social capital, failure to ensure the long-term natural wealth of nature, and failure to ensure the welfare of the public are the primary concern of politicians (vs economics). Thus far, responses to these crises, by using neoliberalist policies, have not resulted in the promised solution of increased global equality. However, one institution that can serve as a better response to these crises might be found in religion.

Chapter 3.

The Role of Religion in Society

“Rivers, ponds, lakes and streams – they all have different names, but they all contain water. Just as religions do – they all contain truths.”

- Mohammad Ali⁷³

A definition is helpful to understand the purpose of a religion in a society. However, there is great difficulty in reaching a consensus on the definition of “religion”. This difficulty is, in part, due to religion being a “mix of other things that collectively make up culture, and religion can be different in different places or times.”⁷⁴ Depending on what lens is being used in research (anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, etc.), yet another set of definitions is possible. For the purposes of this paper, religion will be defined as a standard set of instructions that guide a set of beliefs that impact moral conduct and social norms that may include a concept of a deity.

Although this paper focuses on ways in which modern Christianity, which does include a belief in a deity, has been used as a way to campaign for changes in public policy, belief in a deity is not required for a belief system to be categorized as a religion. Religions that do not identify a deity, but are still considered religions by some include Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Therefore theism, while present in many religions, is not necessarily a defining component.

Religion commonly has two basic roles - function, or performance. The former includes aspects of standardized devotion, worship, and salvation while the latter uses religion as a way to solve societal problems such as economic poverty, political oppression

⁷³ Loni Ali, “What Thomas Merton and Mohammed Ali Had in Common,” *New York Times*, last modified January 17, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/17/opinion/what-thomas-merton-and-muhammad-ali-had-in-common.html>.

⁷⁴ Robert Crawford, *What is Religion?* (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), 8.

and environmental degradation. Religion has been a way to identify perceived evils on earth, usually through societal issues and has been a motivating factor (for better or worse) to mobilize people to action – often by identifying “the other” as an evil to take action against. However, with globalization, identifying “the other” has become increasingly complex.⁷⁵

Many people, when they hear the word ‘religion’, think of the ‘institution’ of religion – something that is prescriptive and oppressive, and ultimately supports and perpetuates that particular religion’s beliefs. Religious institutions are not the only institutions people are familiar with. Rabbi David Wolpe has argued that institutions “are also the only mechanism human beings know to perpetuate ideologies and actions. If books were enough, why have universities? If guns were enough, why have a military? If self-governance enough, let’s get rid of Washington.”⁷⁶ Although people may not agree with the *idea* of particular institutions, whatever form they take, an institution’s ability at ‘getting the message out’ is often effective and efficient. In the case of historical and contemporary narratives, Religion has been a powerful motivator; it has been a mobilizer in many campaigns.

Wolpe also argues that “religion is dissatisfied with the world.” An examination of aid organizations such as United Way, Salvation Army, YMCA/YWCA, Oxfam, Samaritan’s Purse are contemporary examples of how religion can be used as a motivating factor to create positive change in the world and to fill a gap in social services that should be available to society. These organizations and others around the world echo his sentiments – “...Religions create aid organizations...the largest US-based international relief and development organization... [is] World Vision, a Seattle-based Christian group.” In the end, what is being suggested is that if society wants to see tangible social change, finding it through religion is a viable option. Ultimately, to create the kind of tangible social change that is lasting requires a change in humanity’s values and cultural narrative. Daniel Dennet, a philosopher and cognitive scientist believes “the key to our domination

⁷⁵ Crawford, *What is Religion*, 86.

⁷⁶ Rabbi David Wolpe, “Viewpoint: The Limitations of Being ‘Spiritual but Not Religious’,” *TIME*, last modified March 21, 2013, <http://ideas.time.com/2013/03/21/viewpoint-the-problem-with-being-spiritual-but-not-religious/>.

of the planet is culture. And the key to culture is religion.”⁷⁷ Religion has a unique opportunity to positively change the culture and the narrative of the planet.

Globalization has also had an effect on the demographics of religion. There is some disagreement about whether changes in religious demographics indicate a decline or a transformation of beliefs. The former would indicate a trend towards secularization, a theory that “aims to explain...the displacement of religion from the center of human life.”⁷⁸ The theory of secularization views the perceived decline of the social significance and the power of religion as features that indicate increasing growth in secularization. Fueling the decline is modernization, driven further by technology which has not only increased our ability to master the physical world, but has also changed the way people think and respond to it.⁷⁹ Secularization theory argues that as societies become increasingly modern, diversity within the society contributes to a rise in secularism through new languages, religions, and social ideas brought by new migrants.⁸⁰ Usually this is coupled with a rise in individualist behaviour and there is a focus on ‘what is best for me’ as beliefs about the power of supernatural forces lose their significance and influence.⁸¹

However, there are some places in the world where strong religious beliefs remain present. These strong religious beliefs are present, even when considerable social disruption to their lives occurs. For example, “In Spain, Portugal and Greece the legacies of civil wars and dictatorial regimes kept the dominant church in a powerful position.”⁸² These examples demonstrate that during major social transitions, if social identity is threatened, “religion can help negotiate such changes or help to assert a new claim to a sense of worth” and acts as a way to guarantee a group identity.⁸³ Destabilizing events such as socio-economical, environmental, and political events are examples of disruption that can affect people in such a way that they retain or, in some cases, renew their faith.

⁷⁷ Daniel Dennet, “Let’s teach religion - all religion – in schools,” *TED Talks*, last accessed April 18, 2017, https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_dennett_s_response_to_rick_warren/transcript?language=en

⁷⁸ Steve Bruce, *Secularization*, (UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), iBook edition, chap. 1.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Bruce, *Secularization*, chap. 2.

⁸¹ Bruce, *Secularization*, chap. 5.

⁸² Bruce, *Secularization*, chap. 1.

⁸³ Bruce, *Secularization*, chap. 2.

When considering the top 10 countries that report feeling religious (97% of the population or higher), it is also worth noting that 70% of these top 10 are also in the 20 lowest ranked countries on the Human Development Index*, which is a composite measure of life expectancy, education, and per capita income indicators.⁸⁴ Countries that report a high feeling of religiosity are considerably oppressive. As such, they are more likely to adhere to a “worldview that is either otherworldly or is millenarian; the answer to life’s frustrations is sought in a transformed future or in a different realm of existence.”⁸⁵ In this way, religion serves as a source of security, and comfort in times of disruption.

The lowest ten countries that reported lower feelings of religiosity were also in the top ten countries on the Human Development Index. This can be attributed in part to the high standard of living and education experienced by most people in the countries listed. The adherence to or observation of the faith that people adopt is often related to their socio-economic standing, and can also have an effect on their inclination to engage in activism on issues of social inequality.⁸⁶ If people do not perceive personal affronts to their political, social or economic status, they do not tend to rely on religion for security or comfort.

For people often grouped by the label ‘millennials’, “social responsibility is the new religion” and opportunities to engage with charitable organizations most often reside in religious affiliated organizations.⁸⁷ In 2011, 70% of young adults considered themselves to be social activists – a number that doubled since 2010. As crises continue to appear and destabilize their environments, young people are increasingly seeking ways to give back to the world and can often use religious organization as a conduit for their activism.⁸⁸

* Human Development Index numbers are taken from the 2016 HDR report, which uses 2015 data in its analysis

⁸⁴ Oliver Smith, “Mapped: The world’s most (and least) religious countries,” *The Telegraph*, last modified April 16, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/maps-and-graphics/most-religious-countries-in-the-world/>.

⁸⁵ Keith A. Roberts, David Yamane, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 5th ed. (Washington: SAGE Publications, 2012), 311.

⁸⁶ Roberts, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 303.

⁸⁷ Antonia Blumberg, “Yes, Religion Can Still Be A Force For Good in the World. Here Are 100 Examples How,” *Huffington Post*, last modified June 20, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/17/100-religious-groups-doing-good_n_5460739.html.

⁸⁸ Andrew Swinhand, “Corporate Social Responsibility is Millennial’s New Religion,” *CRAIN’S: Chicago Business*, last modified March 25, 2014,

Religion is a source of social and political influence. If used effectively, it can be used to advocate for alternative perspectives on ways to approach traditional issues of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. Examples of this include Tommy Douglas' fight for public health care in Canada, John Muir's work to establish a system of National Parks in the United States, and Desmond Tutu's struggle to end apartheid in South Africa. All three of these individuals empowered people with shared values and acted on these shared values to address social, environmental and political crises of their day.

<http://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20140325/OPINION/140329895/corporate-social-responsibility-is-millennials-new-religion>.

Chapter 4.

Tommy Douglas – Fighting for Public Health Care

*A country's greatness can be measured
by what it does for its unfortunates – Tommy Douglas*⁸⁹

Social justice advocates, such as Tommy Douglas, have sought solutions to combat poverty, racism and inequality. Social justice seeks to find equitable economic, political and social ways of distributing wealth, opportunities, and privileges in a society. By doing so, an “underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence” is realized.⁹⁰ By mobilizing people around shared social values, Tommy Douglas was able to implement the beginning of the modern Canadian medical system, which is based on the premise of affordable, quality care regardless of a person’s socio-economic status. Widely known in Canada as the Father of Medicare, a Canadian symbol itself, Tommy Douglas used his background and skills as a Baptist minister to advance his beliefs that if people worked together, they could create better society. His ideas for social change were influenced by the Social Gospel and his personal experiences during the Great Depression. Together, these things led him to pursue a career that applied “Christian principles to politics and government.”⁹¹

The Social Gospel movement was more of a social movement than a theological movement that grew out of a response to “the challenge of modern industrial society” in the 19th century.⁹² While working in urban settings with the poor, Protestant ministers realized that their seminary training had little practical application. Ministers needed to adapt to work within the reality of the current social context they found themselves in

⁸⁹ Vincent Lam, *Tommy Douglas* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2011), Kobo edition, chap.11.

⁹⁰ “World Day of Justice,” *United Nations*, last accessed April 12, 2017,
www.un.org/en/events/socialjusticeday.

⁹¹ T.C. Douglas, *The Making of a Socialist*, 82.

⁹² T. Howland Sanks, “Liberation Theory and the Social Gospel: Variations on a Theme,” *Theological Studies* 41, no.4 (1980): 673.

before theology would have any impact. Rather than aim for ideal conditions, working in the current social context meant that environmental factors needed to be considered. It was soon realized that the misery that people were experiencing “was not caused merely by their individual weakness and sinfulness, but by the system itself.” After this revelation, the ministers began to investigate “social structures and institutions that gave rise to these conditions [of misery].”⁹³ Through these investigations and the realization that theology needed to include a social context, the theology of the Social Gospel developed to include a “reinterpretation of the major doctrines of Christianity in less individualistic and more social terms, strongly integrating social ethics.”⁹⁴ The social reforms that Douglas would eventually advocate for “[drew] its impetus from the social gospel.”⁹⁵

These reforms that Douglas sought were not only inspired by his visits with people affected by the Great Depression, but also from his personal experiences in his youth. As a child, Tommy Douglas was put in a doctor’s care several times for complications involving an old injury that affected his legs. He was in and out of care for weeks at time, and on one occasion, a visiting specialist doctor offered to treat Douglas for free if he could use Douglas as a teaching subject. Douglas’ parents agreed and his leg was eventually fixed. Douglas reflected that everyone should have access to this kind of specialized care.⁹⁶

As an adult, Douglas saw the effects of the Great Depression on individuals and families. As a Church minister, he and his congregation would do what they could to offer relief, but Douglas became “increasingly aware that his charitable endeavours were addressing the symptoms of the problem and not the underlying issues.”⁹⁷ He toured around the USA as well, completing additional schooling in Sociology. He came to the conclusion that “the suffering of the people during the Depression was man made, and that the capitalist system responsible for the dire predicament was unable to fix the problem.”⁹⁸ Douglas began to attend city council meetings and suggested changes to help those less

⁹³ Sanks, “Liberation Theory,” 674.

⁹⁴ Sanks, “Liberation Theory,” 679.

⁹⁵ Lam, *Tommy Douglas*, chap.2.

⁹⁶ Douglas, *Making of a Socialist*, 7.

⁹⁷ Lam, *Tommy Douglas*, chap. 3.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

fortunate. For Douglas “it was plain that God wanted faithful people to advocate for those in need, to confront suffering and injustice in concrete ways, and to convince people that they must assist with each other’s struggles.”⁹⁹ These beliefs eventually would lead Tommy Douglas into the arena of politics, where he would assist the people of an entire province, and country, with their struggles. When speaking of Douglas’ switch from preacher to politician, Allan Blakeney, an NDP premier from Saskatchewan, commented “When he got into politics, he didn’t change his message, he changed his pulpit.”¹⁰⁰

The political party that Douglas ran with also believed in assisting others. In 1933 the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) developed the Regina Manifesto, a document detailing the purpose of this new, socialist political party in Canada. The purpose of the CCF was “the supplying of human needs and not the making of profits.”¹⁰¹ They aimed to replace the capitalist system characterized by “glaring inequalities of wealth and opportunity...” Among the plans that the CCF had was to consider social needs through the establishment of a National Labour Code that secured wages through income legislation, insurance for accidents and unemployment and the guaranteed freedom of association. In its time, these items were seen as suspicious, especially given their socialist background. Yet in modern Canadian society, these are staples of our social security that have become guaranteed through legislation. The Manifesto also made reference to plans to have “publically organized health, hospital and medical services.” The members of the CCF argued that “with the advance of medical science the maintenance of a healthy population has become a function for which every civilized community should undertake responsibility...a properly organized system of public health services including medical and dental care, which would stress prevention rather than the cure of illness...” Given Douglas’ personal experience with health care and identifying capitalism as the cause of much of the suffering he witnessed, the CCF was a good fit for his convictions.

In interviews that asked Douglas to comment on the future of the CCF, and the world in general, Douglas was consistent in his message that to solve poverty, basic needs

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “Regina Manifesto S-G2-1933.6 CCF Pamphlets 1933,” *Saskatchewan Archives*, last accessed April 19, 2017, http://saskarchives.com/sites/default/files/ccf_g-2-1933-6-regina-manifesto.pdf.

needed to be met first before other issues could be considered. He believed that “the religion of tomorrow will be less concerned with dogmas of theology, and more concerned with the social welfare of humanity.”¹⁰² When asked what the Church’s response in all this should be he stated, alluding to his Baptist training, that “when one sees the church spending its energies on the assertion of antiquated dogmas, but dumb as an oyster to the poverty and misery all around, we can’t help recognize the need for a new interpretation of Christianity.”¹⁰³ His belief in the social gospel provided a link between his faith and his desire to see social change happen through public policies.

Through it all, Douglas was firm in his stance that he was doing God’s work by engaging in politics. When asked about his decision to leave the pulpit for public life, Douglas responded “...years ago I dedicated myself to serve the Kingdom of God, and if I didn’t believe I was still doing that I would not be standing here today.”¹⁰⁴ Douglas may have sounded at times like a preacher in his advocating for the people of Saskatchewan and Canada as a whole, but he did so in such a way that did not compromise his values and faith in the importance of his work.¹⁰⁵

By empowering others through mobilizing a province that shared his values, he influenced a country to provide a more equitable distribution of wealth, opportunity, and privileges which are now entrenched in Canadian society. He was able to demonstrate that socialism could be aligned with the religious beliefs of his constituents, and in doing so, Saskatchewan saw great success. By removing socio-economic barriers, people were (and are) able to focus on other issues, such as their environment.

¹⁰² Douglas, *Making of a Socialist*, 60.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Douglas, *Making of a Socialist*, 100.

¹⁰⁵ Lam, *Tommy Douglas*, chap. 11.

Chapter 5.

John Muir – Establishing National Parks

“No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections and convictions.”

– Aldo Leopold¹⁰⁶

John Muir is a celebrated advocate for ecological conservation who was able to channel people's concern for nature into a mobilized effort to preserve the forests of the USA. His activism for the preservation of forests resulted in the creation of Yosemite Valley and Sequoia National Parks, among many others. He was also the founder of the Sierra Club, a large conservation organization, and he popularized the idea that “society had a responsibility to wisely use and restore the natural resources of the nation.”¹⁰⁷ Although Muir was a religious, mystical man he was able to adapt his spiritual case for ecological intervention, as well as his case for conservation, by using language the public could connect with. He persuaded the public, and the government, that nature was worth saving by encouraging society to engage in responsible management of the wilderness, and noting to the government the economic value of wilderness preservation.

John Muir was raised a Christian in a strict religious setting where he routinely recited parts of the Bible and committed most of the Old and New Testament to memory. Although he had a strict upbringing, his Christian values influenced his ideas about the environment as he would later comment that he preferred to find evidence of his faith in nature and found “intense delight from reading the power and goodness of God from the

¹⁰⁶ Aldo Leopold, *Sand Country Almanac* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 209-210.

¹⁰⁷ Eber, “Wealth and Beauty,” 108.

things which are made” than from the Bible.¹⁰⁸ Evidence of his spiritual mysticism is found in his journals and personal writings where he makes clear connections between his faith and nature that were further demonstrated by his Evangelical style of activism.

These connections between his faith and nature were prominently featured in his writings about the Sierra Nevada by using narratives that employed frequent religious allusions to describe his experiences. When speaking of the “deep peace” the woods provide at sunset, Muir remarked that “everything [was] glowing with Heaven’s unquenchable enthusiasm.”¹⁰⁹ Waterfalls were not simply pleasing to the eye and ear, but any person that approached “the mighty walls of the temple and hear the psalms of the falls, they will forget themselves and become devout.”¹¹⁰ He found the wilderness to be an oasis from the busy-ness and drama of life: “These blessed mountains are so compactly filled with God’s beauty, no petty personal woe or experience has room to be.”¹¹¹ He alluded to Eden and the presence of God being stronger in an ‘uncivilized’ nature than a ‘civilized’ building built by man: “No wonder the hills and groves were God’s first temples, and the more they are cut down and hewn into cathedrals and churches, the farther off and dimmer seems the Lord himself.”¹¹² He saw the grandeur of nature and God as its creator so superior that any “display of power ... make man’s greatest shows ridiculous.”¹¹³ Through his deep, and frequent references to spiritual connections, his enthusiasm for nature was clearly expressed.

For a time, Muir was involved in herding and cattle ranches and was able to experience first-hand the impact that the animals and humans had on the environment. Muir fought against increasing logging, over grazing, and forest fires. Some lands were in theory, protected, but there were few provisions made about how the land would be managed or monitored to ensure sustainable use. He wanted to preserve nature but was competing with greedy, short sighted business people. Muir believed “Any fool can

¹⁰⁸ John Muir, *Letters to a Friend: Written to Mrs. Ezra S. Carr, 1866-1879* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), last modified 1997, http://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/letters_to_a_friend/default.aspx.

¹⁰⁹ John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 103.

¹¹⁰ Muir, *First Summer*, 104.

¹¹¹ Muir, *First Summer*, 105.

¹¹² Muir, *First Summer*, 146.

¹¹³ Muir, *First Summer*, 127.

destroy trees... God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand straining, leveling tempests and floods; but he cannot save them from fools,--only Uncle Sam can do that.”¹¹⁴ Muir had a well-regarded respect for nature and saw God in every biotic and abiotic entity present in nature; therefore, by worshipping nature, Muir was worshipping God. Muir also recognized that to have any hope of saving his beloved Nature, he would not be able to do this alone. He needed to mobilize people who shared the same values, thus he turned to tourism in an attempt to “baptize [them] in the beauty of God’s mountains,” in hopes of gaining allies in his desire to preserve nature and petition the government to save the environment.¹¹⁵

As his travel writing and letters were published, the spiritual quality of his naturalist philosophy inspired others to action as they were accessible to mainstream audiences and appealed to Victorian values of the time. His Christian worldview was somewhat secularized; he had a belief in evolutionary process, and he had a faith in objective science that allowed his writing to display objective perspectives as well. Muir’s writings came at a time when the public was becoming increasingly nostalgic as they reminisced about the past. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, families that had traditionally been farmers were finding themselves out of work and forced to move into urban settings that were located closer to factories. People were able to connect their own spirituality and personal experiences with the loss of nature on a micro scale to Muir’s mysticism and commentary on the need for natural preservation on a macro scale. In addition, the introduction of railways as a mode of transportation encouraged the novelty of a ‘vacation’ and people were able to view the wild as something not to be tamed and subdued (as would be necessary when clearing land for a farm), but something to be revisited and cared for, lest all the land turn into paved paradises. The American West became a haven for tourists and Muir reasoned that if government would not protect the forests, then tourism might.¹¹⁶

Muir adapted his message over the years to better suit his audience, but in his desire to save God’s wilderness, there were still religious underpinnings that motivated this.

¹¹⁴ John Muir, “Chapter X: The American Forests,” *Our National Parks*, last accessed March 13, 2017, http://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/our_national_parks/chapter_10.aspx.

¹¹⁵ Thurman Wilkins, *John Muir: Apostle of Nature* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1995), 113.

¹¹⁶ Philippon, “Domesticity, Tourism, and the National Parks,” 161.

Muir's writings reflected an air of friendship and spiritual connection with Nature that other people wanted to participate in. In *Our National Parks* he personified nature in such a way that his descriptions of the wilderness came alive on the page. Animals and nature would sing, tremble, leap, dance, sigh, and in his stories about interactions with wildlife, he used dialogue to share hypothetical, yet reasonable inferences of the unspoken conversations between man and animal. By anthropomorphizing nature Muir created a space for connection that allowed empathy. Looking out on the landscapes, Muir reveled in the views: "Benevolent, solemn, fateful, pervaded with divine light, every landscape glows like a countenance hallowed in eternal repose..."¹¹⁷ His spiritual narrative could often be hyperbolized as well, but in doing so he was doing what so many of us know too well about nature walks. Words cannot express what you see, hear, and feel. But Muir tried. He described parks as a "paradise that makes even the loss of Eden seem insignificant."¹¹⁸ For a community that was in the throes of the Industrial Revolution and reminiscent of times past, this was a captivating observation. Muir continued his narrative of the grandness of Nature in choosing to acknowledge that even adverse natural events were divine: "Storms of every sort, torrents, earthquakes, cataclysms, convulsions of nature, etc., however mysterious and lawless at first sight they may seem, are only harmonious notes in the song of creation, varied expressions of God's love."¹¹⁹

In 1901 he wrote *Our National Forests* which was both a recollection of his travels and a call to action. It criticized the USA for its lack of forest management, citing several "civilized nation[s]" that were actively protecting their natural wealth. Instead, Muir complained that, "our government has done nothing effective with its forests, though the best in the world, but is like a rich and foolish spendthrift who has inherited a magnificent estate in perfect order, and then has left his fields and meadows, forests and parks, to be sold and plundered and wasted at will, depending on their inexhaustible abundance."¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ John Muir, "Chapter III: The Yosemite National Park," *Our National Parks*, last accessed March 13, 2017, http://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/our_national_parks/chapter_3.aspx.

¹¹⁸ John Muir, "Chapter IV: The Forests of the Yosemite Park," *Our National Parks*, last accessed March 13, 2017, http://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/our_national_parks/chapter_4.aspx.

¹¹⁹ John Muir, "Chapter VIII: The Fountains and Streams of the Yosemite National Park," *Our National Parks*, last accessed March 13, 2017, http://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/our_national_parks/chapter_8.aspx.

¹²⁰ Muir, *Our National Parks*, chap. X.

This reckless behaviour was not necessarily explicitly encouraged but “laws in existence provide neither for the protection of the timber from destruction nor for its use where it is most needed.”¹²¹ *Our National Forests* caught the eye of President Theodore Roosevelt who subsequently requested a private tour with Muir in 1903.

As Muir was growing up, and during his young adult life in the 1850s, there were no policies in America on forest conservation. Instead, there was a noticeable focus on settlement and business opportunities. However, with the election of President Theodore Roosevelt in 1901, forests in America were given some legislated protection under the government, albeit for economic reasons. Shortly after taking office, Roosevelt announced that he was “determined to come to grips with the nation’s deeply entrenched philosophy of laissez-faire, as least so far as it encouraged entrepreneurs to waste the nation’s natural resources.”¹²² On May 13, 1908, Roosevelt delivered a speech to state governors at the Conference of Natural Resources where he made it clear that environmental stewardship was necessary for a strong America.

“The occasion for the meeting lies in the fact that the natural resources of our country are in danger of exhaustion if we permit the old wasteful methods of exploiting them longer to continue...Disregarding for the moment the question of moral purpose, it is safe to say that the prosperity of our people depends directly on the energy and intelligence with which our natural resources are used...We have become great in a material sense because of the lavish use of our resources, and we have just reason to be proud of our growth. But the time has come to inquire seriously what will happen when our forests are gone, when the coal, the iron, the oil, and the gas are exhausted, when the soils shall have been still further impoverished and washed into the streams, polluting the rivers, denuding the fields, and obstructing navigation. These questions do not relate only to the next century or to the next generation. One distinguishing characteristic of really civilized men is foresight; we have to, as a nation, exercise foresight for this nation in the future; and if we do not exercise that foresight, dark will be the future! We should exercise foresight now, as the ordinarily prudent man exercises foresight in conserving and wisely using the property which contains the assurance of well-being for himself and his children. We want to see a man own his farm rather than rent it, because we want to see it an object to him to transfer it in better order to his children. We want to see

¹²¹ Muir, *Our National Parks*, chap. X.

¹²² Thurman Wilkins, *John Muir: Apostle of Nature* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 214.

him exercise forethought for the next generation. We need to exercise it in some fashion ourselves as a nation for the next generation.”¹²³

Muir said as much himself in *God's First Temples* (1876) warning that without legislation protecting the forests, they would disappear. Written 34 years before Roosevelt's address to state governors, Muir recognized and communicated the importance of forest preservation, especially given “their relations to climate, soil, and streams.”¹²⁴ Even farmers, whom Muir saw as being part of the problem were seeing a new perspective: “The slow-going, unthrifty farmers, also, are beginning to realize that when the timber is stripped from the mountains the irrigating streams dry up in summer, and are destructive in winter; that soil, scenery, and everything slips off with the trees: so of course they are coming into the ranks of tree-friends.”¹²⁵ He described the devastating effects of runoff untampered by timber stands, and their necessity in maintaining fresh water supplies. He conceded that change did occur naturally, however “changes of this kind are...exceedingly slow in their movements, and, as far as the lives of individuals are concerned, such changes have no appreciable effect.”¹²⁶ Muir was quick to add that the changes occurring were not natural – it was a problem influenced by human activity. He observed that “waste and pure destruction are already taking place at a terrible rate, and unless protective measures be speedily invented and enforced, in a few years [the Sequoia trees] will present only a few hacked and scarred remnants.”¹²⁷

By popularizing the idea that society had a responsibility to care for the environment, John Muir inspired government leaders to enact legislation that protected the environment and changed how the environment was, and is, seen – both from a tourist and economic perspective. He convinced the general public, and the American government, that the wilderness had value, and needed to be protected for future generations. Using the

¹²³ Theodore Roosevelt, “Conservation as a National Duty (13 May 1908),” *Voices of Democracy*, last accessed July 12, 2017, <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/theodore-roosevelt-conservation-as-a-national-duty-speech-text/>.

¹²⁴ John Muir, “God's First Temples: How Shall We Preserve Our Forests?” in *Essential Muir*, ed. Fred D. White (California: Heyday Books, 2006), 113.

¹²⁵ Muir, *Our National Parks*, chap. X.

¹²⁶ Muir, “God's First Temples,” 115.

¹²⁷ Muir, “God's First Temples,” 115.

‘mystical’ quality of his environmental thinking, Muir actively worked to change public policies that resulted in the creation of a National Park system by mobilizing people with shared values.

In his writings and activism, Muir continuously “[invoked] God and Christ as players” in his quest to secure protection of the wilderness by putting the “fate of trees into a religious context.”¹²⁸ Just as Muir used religion as a response to save what he cherished in the face of a crisis in his time, so too did Desmond Tutu put the fate of the people in South Africa into a religious context in hopes of mobilizing people around shared values that transcended race.

¹²⁸ Mossberg, “If Trees are Us,” 183.

Chapter 6.

Desmond Tutu – Ending Apartheid in South Africa

*“Why should you need Marxist theology or whatever?
The Bible is dynamite...Nothing could be more radical.”*
– Desmond Tutu¹²⁹

Desmond Tutu was born in South Africa in 1931. He grew up under apartheid policies as a child and learned ways of coping with the blatant racial inequality he witnessed around him. Originally wanting to become a doctor after a personal experience with tuberculosis, he was accepted to medical school but his family could not afford the fees. Instead he became a teacher but later resigned his position teaching high school after the passage of the Bantu Education Act which enforced apartheid policies in educational facilities. He then chose to pursue studies in theology and in 1961 he was ordained as an Anglican priest. He was deeply impacted by an experience with Trevor Huddleston, a white priest who tipped his hat to Tutu’s mother, in a sign of respect. Reflecting on the moment, Tutu realized that “he need not accept discrimination and that religion could be a powerful tool for advocating racial equality.”¹³⁰ In the following years, Tutu would study, teach, and preach both locally and abroad. He became a prominent spiritual leader after his appointment as the first black dean of Johannesburg in 1975 and advocated for the rights of black South Africans by encouraging international responses to issues of apartheid. His efforts were recognized in 1984 when he won the Nobel Peace Prize and his message was further advanced when he used his acceptance speech to bring attention to apartheid and the effects of such policies on South Africans. His prominence became even greater still after he was chosen as the Archbishop of Cape Town – the first black

¹²⁹ Desmond Tutu, *God Has A Dream: A Vision of Hope for our Time*, (London: Rider Publishing, 2004), 63.

¹³⁰ “Biography: Desmond Tutu,” *Biography.com*, last modified November 10, 2016, <http://www.biography.com/people/desmond-tutu-9512516>.

person in South Africa to hold this position. Tutu advocated for an end to apartheid by wedding his faith to his call for social change as a way to influence government policy.

Desmond Tutu's realization that religion could be a powerful tool in advocating for racial equality was a thread that ran through much of his advocacy for social justice. Apartheid became an official government policy after the National Party won the election in 1948 and began to legalize policies of racial segregation in political, economic, and social spheres. Multiracial churches had condemned the policies over the years, however there was a disconnect in translating those words into actions.¹³¹ Others, such as Anglican Bishop Leslie Stradling, publically stated that although he was opposed to apartheid "I accept it only in the sense that it is inevitable for me to do so. It is the law of the country and I have to accept it, even if I do not support it."¹³² In an editorial in a South African newspaper, the editor viewed Stradling's attitude as "exactly the state of mind which this [South African] Government has been trying to produce in the public for years...Bishop Stradling may well feel repelled by the thought of being asked to take sides in a political contest, but the truth is that South African politics today pose a major moral issue and people are entitled to look to their religious leaders for guidance."¹³³ As policies of apartheid were enforced, increasing numbers of black resistance leaders were jailed or fled and lived in exile. Those left to lead the fight against apartheid were members of the clergy.

Tutu was able to channel feelings of injustice into a creative ministry for the victims of violence.¹³⁴ In 1968, a World Council of Churches (WCC) publication addressed the People of South Africa with a declaration. The declaration went beyond stating that apartheid was a misunderstanding. Instead, it "declared that by elevating race to the most important human attribute, apartheid denied the central statements of the Christian gospel."¹³⁵ When Prime Minister Vorster read the declaration he responded by threatening the clergy: "There are clergy in South Africa who are toying with the sort of thing that Martin Luther King did in America – I want to tell them: Cut it out! Cut it out! The cloth

¹³¹ John Allen, *Rabble-Rouser For Peace: The Authorized Biography of Desmond Tutu*, (London: Random House, 2006), 69.

¹³² Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 97.

¹³³ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 97-98.

¹³⁴ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 111.

¹³⁵ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 118.

you wear will not protect you if you do it in South Africa.”¹³⁶ It was becoming increasingly evident that those in power did not have the same shared values as the clergy.

Tutu remained optimistic, but realistic. He recognized that the training that ministers received in seminary was inadequate for the realities that many people faced. He asked:

“How do you speak about a God who loves you, a redeemer, a savior, when you live like an animal?...Is the training given in the often sheltered ivory towers at all geared to speak relevantly to this and similar situations?...it is a whole philosophy and lifestyle in theological education that must be revolutionized so that it is fundamentally more problem-orientated and people-centered, rather than curriculum and syllabus orientated...The third world must develop its own style geared to its own needs and maybe we could still teach each other a thing or two.”¹³⁷

Tutu recognized that theological training was idealized and needed to be adapted for use outside of seminary institutions to address not just the symptoms, but the causes of growing discontent.

Tutu developed his unique theology in the 1970s as a result of several influences: his experience with police brutality at Fort Hare, his exposure to black consciousness philosophy, his observations of successes and failures of different African nations as they sought independence, his debates with different African theologians, and his contact with Latin America’s director, Aharon Sapsezian, who introduced him to liberation theology.¹³⁸ As he came into contact with different theologies, “Tutu came to reject as a fallacy the view that any theology, western, or other, could be universally applicable. He argued that theology had to be “contextual” – it had to take into account the context in which believers lived.”¹³⁹ Instead of approaching the social problems of South Africa that were inextricably linked with government policy, but often treated as separate issues, with a purely dogmatic theological response, Tutu engaged in a more holistic approach that included the social environment of the people.

¹³⁶ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 118.

¹³⁷ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 129-130.

¹³⁸ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 135.

¹³⁹ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 135.

As tension began to build in the 1970s, Tutu began to make his appeals for non-violent solutions directly to the leadership of South Africa. On one such occasion he felt prompted by God to write a letter to Vorster, the Prime Minister of South Africa, in which he made some proposals, which were dismissed by Vorster. People were upset at the dismissals, realizing that Vorster was not enlightened to the deteriorating condition of South Africa. The violence, masked as security, continued to rise and Tutu was able to de-escalate several situations. However, he also acknowledged that there would be a breaking point: “Tell them that peace and order which are found at the end of a gun barrel will be brittle, superficial and temporary: that such a peace and order will need more guns to maintain. Tell them that there can be no lasting security there. Tell them that unless radical changes are effected in the ordering of society, then South Africa cannot survive. Nobody will win. Tell them, please, before we run out of time.”¹⁴⁰

As South Africa spiraled into its own form of hell, Tutu condemned western leaders for becoming increasingly pacifist. However, even without the aid of international intervention, he maintained that black South Africa’s cause would prevail. He believed that “the powers of injustice, of oppression, of exploitation, have done their worst and they have lost. They have lost because they are immoral and wrong and our God, the God of the Exodus, the liberator God, is a God of justice and liberation and goodness. Our cause, the cause of justice and liberation, must triumph because it is moral and just and right.”¹⁴¹ Tutu’s faith was consistently referenced in his speeches as he continued to argue a spiritual case against apartheid.

As an influential member of the clergy in a high station, he had many followers and his objections to apartheid were beginning to be heard in a way that was prompting action. But as Tutu’s prominence and influence increased, so did criticisms of him. Most criticisms were targeted at his personal faith and arguments that he was encouraging people to move away from focusing on their personal relationship with God. Those closest to Tutu, and who were indirectly implicated in these assaults on Tutu’s character, vehemently

¹⁴⁰ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 159.

¹⁴¹ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 164.

disagreed with his critics.¹⁴² Attempts to discredit Tutu were seen as attempts to discredit his leadership. Some even went as far to say that Tutu was behaving in an unchristian matter. Tutu responded that this was to be expected because of a lack of shared values: “when the church speaks up on behalf of the weak and poor, the powerful and rich don’t like it.”¹⁴³ South African government personnel also joined in the character assault, warning the South African Council of Churches (SACC) to withdraw from participating in ‘irresponsible activities’.¹⁴⁴ Louis LeGrange, the police minister, warned that “leftist spiritual leaders...were conditioning blacks to believe that the existing order was unchristian and immoral, that their human rights were being denied, that they were being oppressed and exploited, and their human dignity was being infringed on.”¹⁴⁵ The Church rejected the accusations. However, in 1979, as spiritual challenges against apartheid from the churches grew, the security police created a larger “church desk” to keep tabs on the church’s activities.¹⁴⁶

As situations in South Africa continued to become unstable and increasing numbers of both white and black populations were resorting to violence, Tutu and the local churches weighed in on the legitimacy of the liberation movement’s armed struggle. Tutu maintained that he was opposed to violence as a means of creating change, but he understood the desperation of people’s actions: “as attempts to bring the conditions of blacks to the notice of authorities have seemed to fall on deaf ears, there have been those who have said, ‘We are not violent people but we have...tried everything that is nonviolent and have failed.’ So some of them out of desperation, out of deep frustration, have resorted to saying that the only way this can happen is by violent means.”¹⁴⁷ While he did not condone this, he told a judge, “I can understand when...people feel they have exhausted all nonviolent avenues.”¹⁴⁸ The SACC should, he said, “encourage Christians to consider

¹⁴² Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 169-170.

¹⁴³ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 376.

¹⁴⁴ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 179.

¹⁴⁵ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 179.

¹⁴⁶ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 181.

¹⁴⁷ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 172.

¹⁴⁸ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 172.

that circumstances can arise in which the rise to resist evil laws becomes apparent and that a theology of resistance is both a valid and vital concept in such consideration.”¹⁴⁹

Tutu did not completely reject the use of force in all circumstances. However, by using selective religious language, Tutu appealed to a broader sense of morality and was able to express his conviction that all parties involved needed to seek other alternatives to solving the problems at hand with non-violent methods. His efforts were recognized in 1984 when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. His acceptance speech brought apartheid to the forefront of discussion on inequality. He explained the costs of apartheid, the horrors of forced resettlement and the continuous undermining of black family life “not accidentally but by deliberate government policy.”¹⁵⁰ He explained that what was happening in South Africa was a “microcosm of the world” and that examples along a spectrum could be found all over the globe. The common denominator between them all was that “when there is injustice, invariably peace becomes a casualty.”¹⁵¹

Asking the South African government politely was not yielding the desired results, so Tutu eventually turned his attention, and the attention of the world to consider economic sanctions and disinvestment with South Africa as a way to force change using non-violent means. Although Tutu still remained an advocate for non-violent solutions, he was becoming pessimistic about change occurring due to intrinsic motivations within South Africa:

“I have no hope of real change from this government unless they are forced. We face a catastrophe in this land and only the action of the international community by applying pressure can save us. Our children are dying. Our land is bleeding. I call the international community to apply punitive sanctions against this government to help us establish a new South Africa – non-racial, democratic, participatory, and just.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 173-174.

¹⁵⁰ Desmond Tutu, “Apartheid’s ‘Final Solution’,” in *Rainbow People of God*, ed. John Allen (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 87.

¹⁵¹ Desmond Tutu, “Apartheid’s ‘Final Solution’,” 93.

¹⁵² Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 231-232.

Tutu remained insistent that non-violent strategies, including international political and economic pressure were valid means of achieving justice. He asked his opponents for alternative solutions that would be effective, but this request was met with silence.

Silence was also an option that many western countries chose when asked to apply economic pressures to South Africa. However, eventually Desmond Tutu's international profile and spirituality lent itself to situations where governments changed their policies on apartheid due to direct influence from Tutu. In Canada, Brian Mulroney met with Tutu in December 1984 and afterwards decided to pursue invoking "political and economic sanctions and take the lead in the Commonwealth and at the UN on this issue despite the total opposition of Thatcher and Reagan."¹⁵³ The following May in 1985, French PM Fabius changed his stance on sanctions after a walk with Tutu that did not involve discussions about the topic. The United States was slower to change their policies and under the Reagan administration it appeared that Reagan had no clue about South African politics, pretended not to, or simply did not have the same shared values as Tutu.¹⁵⁴

Tutu had many opportunities to speak in the United States and he became increasingly frustrated with the lack of support from America. One on such occasion while speaking to members of Congress, Tutu used the opportunity to call out America's choice to support South Africa's government:

"Mr. Chairman we are talking about a moral issue. You are either for or against apartheid, and not by rhetoric. You are either in favor of evil or you are in favor of good. You are either on the side of the oppressed or on the side of the oppressor. You cannot be neutral...Apartheid is an evil as immoral and unchristian in my view as Nazism, and in my view, the Reagan administration's support and collaboration with it is equally immoral, evil and total unchristian, without remainder."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 245.

¹⁵⁴ Reagan is quoted as saying that the apartheid problem is solved in South Africa just as America did with civil rights; Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 255.

¹⁵⁵ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 248.

Tutu would continue his moral appeals, however little changed in economic and foreign policy under Reagan after Tutu's meetings with him.

As the situation in South Africa continued to worsen and mobilization from major world leaders was limited, Tutu chastised Reagan, Thatcher (Britain) and Kohl (Germany) as they continued to avert their gaze from South Africa's. To Tutu, their continued support of South Africa, even if it was inadvertent, was the same as supporting racist policies. His anger eventually boiled over as he told an American journalist "I am quite angry. I think the West, for my part, can go to hell."¹⁵⁶ He eventually refused to meet with any foreign administrator below Foreign Secretary.

Tutu continued to advocate for non-violence and appealed to his listeners by means of faith. While some were to criticize his teaching, he maintained that his position for liberation was Biblically sound: "The Bible and the Church predate Marxism and the African National Congress (ANC) by several centuries...Our marching orders come from Christ himself and not from any human being."¹⁵⁷ He continued to make it clear that it was a church's duty to oppose injustice. He crammed his arguments "with biblical references drawn from books ranging from Genesis to Revelation."¹⁵⁸ He continued to appeal to people's values and belief systems using religion.

In a letter to President Botha, Tutu laid out the Biblical references that created an argument against apartheid. He was using religion as a response to the social and political inequality many South Africans experienced. He argued that people are valuable because they are made by God (religion), not because of "biological attributes" (apartheid).¹⁵⁹ He argued that people are meant for "fellowship and togetherness" (Bible), not separation (apartheid). He maintained that as a religious leader it was his duty to God to speak out against unjust rulers or laws, and that this had Biblical precedent. It was not unchristian to speak out: "When laws are unjust then Christian tradition teaches that [we] do not oblige

¹⁵⁶ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 261.

¹⁵⁷ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 292.

¹⁵⁸ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 292.

¹⁵⁹ Tutu, "Your Policies Are Unbiblical, Unchristian, Immoral and Evil'," in *Rainbow People of God*, ed. John Allen (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 147.

obedience,” for obedience was to be to God first, then man.¹⁶⁰ Tutu understood the flawed logic of using Romans 13¹⁶¹ as a reference to legitimize apartheid practices, but Tutu dismantled this as well. Tutu had no problems submitting to a just ruler, but submitting to a government that “subverts your good” required opposition.¹⁶² Tutu saw the aim of the church to be bringing about social justice: “Justice must be done to the poor and the oppressed, and if the present system does not serve this purpose, the public conscience must be roused to demand another.”¹⁶³ The Church was determined to see the end of this social crisis of apartheid that was being upheld by political means.

However, Tutu was fighting against a government that was also using the Bible, specifically Romans 13, to legitimize its government policies – even apartheid. Unable to change the government’s mind about the legality of apartheid, Tutu attempted to appeal to Volk’s values that would be attached to his knowledge of white history in South Africa:

“I told Mr.Volk [police minister], “You know you have lost,” I said it nice and quietly, I didn’t shout like I am now. I said: “You know you have lost, you know it from your own history. You believed you were being oppressed by the British, you fought against the British and in the end you became free. The lesson you must learn from your own history is that when people decide to be free, nothing, just nothing, absolutely nothing can stop them.”¹⁶⁴

Tutu’s encouragement to those fighting against apartheid was steeped in religious allusions that they could connect with. Just as God had delivered the people of Israel out of Egypt, so too the oppressed of South Africa would be heard.

Change occurred after the resignation of President Botha. F.W. de Klerk took over the office of President in 1989 and supported the transition of South Africa into a true democracy void of apartheid policies. deKlerk credits this shift in policy to his “realization

¹⁶⁰ Tutu, “Your Policies,” 151.

¹⁶¹ Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. Romans 13:1-2 (New American Standard Bible)

¹⁶² Tutu, “Your Policies,” 152.

¹⁶³ Tutu, “Your Policies,” 151.

¹⁶⁴ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 302.

that we were involved in a downward spiral of increasing violence and we could not hang on indefinitely. We were involved in an armed struggle where there would be no winners...”¹⁶⁵ He lifted bans on political associations such as the ANC, and released Nelson Mandela, as well as other political activists from prison. His efforts were validated after a white-only referendum confirmed that there was a desire to continue negotiations to end apartheid. Tutu’s vision was being realized and the persecutions had ended, all without endorsing violence.

After Mandela was elected in 1994, Mandela acknowledged that both Tutu and Huddleston had made crucial contributions in uniting the black community and reassuring whites as well throughout the transition period.¹⁶⁶ After the election was completed, the new government had the monumental task of building a new South Africa. As part of this transition, a Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) was established. The TRC provided amnesty under strict guidelines for those who sought it, and also provided a platform for others to tell their stories of life under apartheid. It was a healing process for the country. Tutu commented that “without the TRC there would undoubtedly have been roughly speaking two major histories...a black history which would have been approximately the truth, because the victims know what happened to them, and...a white history which would have been based on fabricated denials...The TRC has put an end to those denials.”¹⁶⁷ This transition recognized a shared past and made plans for a future with shared values. Through his faith, Tutu was able to maintain a hope for justice and non-violent action that eventually saw the end of apartheid.

Desmond Tutu’s advocacy for democracy, human rights, and tolerance demonstrated his power and ability to use religion as means to confront social and political crises of his time. Al Gore commented that “The leverage of [Tutu’s] moral authority to persuade people of the rightness of a particular course of action is a very tangible power...Throughout history some of the most important changes of all have come because

¹⁶⁵ Ivan Fallon, “FW de Klerk: The Day I Ended Apartheid,” *The Independent*, last modified February 2, 2010, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/fw-de-klerk-the-day-i-ended-apartheid-1886128.html>.

¹⁶⁶ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 316.

¹⁶⁷ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 370.

of the exercise of moral leadership on the part of individuals who may not have any formal political power at all.”¹⁶⁸ Tutu’s assertions of justice are not only for Christians. He also has outlined how all the major faiths – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam have “compelled their adherents to strive for justice and peace.”¹⁶⁹ So too has Pope Francis employed his moral leadership to empower others of various religious backgrounds to respond to our environmental crisis.

¹⁶⁸ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 394.

¹⁶⁹ Allen, *Rabble-Rouser*, 396.

Chapter 7.

Pope Francis – The Spiritual Case for Holistic Intervention

“Given the complexity of the ecological crisis and its multiple causes, we need to realize that the solution will not emerge from just one way of interpreting and transforming reality.”

~ Pope Francis, Laudato Si¹⁷⁰

In his introduction to *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis makes it clear that this writing is not written specifically for Catholic audiences, but rather he wants to “address every person living on this planet.”¹⁷¹ His objective is to create a conversation with people about our common home and demonstrate the connection between the environment and the poor. The climate is a common good meant for everyone and in its current state it is a “global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods...”¹⁷² The global challenge is to protect our common home and “bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development for we know that things can change.”¹⁷³ The consideration of the whole of humanity, or at least a majority of it, is required to adequately solve the crises before us. Pope Francis sees fragmented knowledge as helpful for simple applications, but too often “it leads to a loss of appreciation for the whole, which then becomes irrelevant.”¹⁷⁴ It is therefore necessary to “find adequate ways of solving the more complex problems of today’s world, particularly those regarding the environment and the poor; these problems cannot be dealt with from a single perspective or from a single set of interests.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁰ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §63.

¹⁷¹ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §3.

¹⁷² Francis, *Laudato Si*, §25.

¹⁷³ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §13.

¹⁷⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §110.

¹⁷⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §110.

Laudato Si, the Pope's second encyclical, calls for dialogue to seek solutions to social, political, and environmental issues. Solutions to these issues "demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded and at the same time protecting nature."¹⁷⁶ While the Pope acknowledges that change can be difficult, it is possible if political will is present. He lobbies for holistic instead of fragmented change in public policies that will create lasting, social, political and environmental change.

In the Pope's first encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (Gospel of Joy), he lays out the framework for what he believes to be a way to build peace and create solutions to the multidimensional crises in our world. To build a lasting society that enjoys peace, justice, and community, Pope Francis suggests that the application of four distinct pillars can result in a "genuine path to peace within each nation and in the entire world."¹⁷⁷ The four pillars are: (1) time is greater than space (2) unity prevails over conflict (3) realities are more important than ideas and (4) the whole is greater than the part. He argues that peace is not the mere absence of violence, but rather it is an ongoing process that is multifaceted. To address the complexities of our current crises, peace is an important component. If we do not have peace, then the default position is a state of conflict that triages issues pertinent to the local government, often resulting in attention for the environment and the poor to be considered as an afterthought.

The first pillar, time is greater than space, suggests that we need to be fixated less on achieving immediate results and to be content with working gradually, and giving priority to initiating processes that provide integrated solutions. Modern politics often concerns itself with creating a legacy which can impede meaningful and lasting changes. Desires for immediate results can create failed initiatives especially if support structures are not in place or designed for continuity. Pope Francis suggest that society needs to "give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical

¹⁷⁶ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §139.

¹⁷⁷ The Holy Father Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Vatican: Vatican Publishing House, 2013), §221, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.pdf.

events.”¹⁷⁸ We need to be at peace with the possibility that our place is to initiate, begin meaningful change, and mentor others to continue the work even though we may not see the end results.

The second pillar, unity prevails over conflict, proposes that we need to face conflict whether it be against self, man, society, or nature and resolve it. Conflict that is ignored or concealed only traps people further into it. As a result “we lose our perspective, our horizons shrink and reality itself begins to fall apart.”¹⁷⁹ By dealing with conflict head on, Pope Francis sees the opportunity to “build communion amid disagreement.”¹⁸⁰ By choosing this path instead of ignoring the problems, resolutions to conflicts “[preserve] what is valid and useful on both sides.”¹⁸¹ This is especially pertinent given the conflicts that arise from the complexities associated with current social, political, and environmental crises. Integrating what is useful for both parties ensures a greater change of policy adherence.

The third pillar, reality is more important than ideas, suggests that ideas must be translated into action if they are to have any effect. Reality is the here and now; the situation that we must work within. Ideas are considerations that are not binding. Too often, politicians pay lip service to change but fail to enact the change for a variety of reasons. Pope Francis warns that “it is dangerous to dwell in the realm of words alone, of images and rhetoric.”¹⁸² It is easy to think about and plan potential solutions to various issues but the value comes in ‘doing’. We avoid doing these things because it is difficult. What the Pope recognizes as a motivating factor to call people to action are “realities illuminated by reason.”¹⁸³ By acknowledging the reality of the situation, and using reason to find this reality, or truth, it limits the idealist and universal ideals that have no basis in reality and therefore are ineffective, and refocuses attention to solutions and strategies that will realistically have a higher chance of success.

¹⁷⁸ Francis, *Evangelli Gaudium*, §223.

¹⁷⁹ Francis, *Evangelli Gaudium*, §226.

¹⁸⁰ Francis, *Evangelli Gaudium*, §228.

¹⁸¹ Francis, *Evangelli Gaudium*, §228.

¹⁸² Francis, *Evangelli Gaudium*, §232.

¹⁸³ Francis, *Evangelli Gaudium*, §232.

The fourth pillar, the whole being more important than the parts, refers to the growing tension between globalization and localization. Pope Francis believes that we need to consider both settings in tandem and realize that working on a local scale with a larger perspective does not mean that people lose their identity, but instead grow individually and as a community when they broaden their horizons and pursue a common good of shared values that consider both the global and local environment.¹⁸⁴

These themes are echoed and referenced in *Laudato Si*, providing a framework for the spiritual case for holistic intervention in our current crises. Pope Francis begins *Laudato Si* with a primer on what is happening to the planet – our common home, reviews the human roots of the current ecological crisis, advocates for an integral ecology, proposes several lines of approach and action to combat the current ecological crisis, and makes a closing argument stressing the importance of education to create lasting change.

What is happening to our common home?

Pope Francis sees the degradation of the environment and the prevalence of poverty as being intimately connected. If the causes of human and social degradation are not addressed together, then combating environmental and human degradation as independent issues will be fruitless, for “the human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together...”¹⁸⁵ In order to attend to the environmental crisis, Pope Francis argues that ecological approaches to problems will “*always* become a social approach.”¹⁸⁶ By combining conversations about the environment with conversations about social justice, both “*the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*” are heard.¹⁸⁷ Pope Francis rejects the “myth of progress” that tells society it is not necessary to change ethics or morals in the face of challenges because of the belief that new technologies will solve problems for us. Instead, Pope Francis sees value in holistic conversations that are needed to combat the complexities inherent in the global crises: “our common home is falling into serious disrepair...we can see signs that things are now at a breaking point, due to the rapid pace

¹⁸⁴ Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, §234; §235.

¹⁸⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §48.

¹⁸⁶ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §49.

¹⁸⁷ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §49.

of change and degradation; these are evident in large-scale natural disasters as well as social and even financial crises, for the world's problems cannot be analyzed or explained in isolation.”¹⁸⁸ In order to respond to, and solve any of our current crises, we must consider social and environmental issues holistically and not as separate problems with separate or independent solutions.

To solve the complex problems of environmental and social degradation holistically, an appreciation for time is necessary; solutions to complex problems require time. There is a disconnect between the goals of economic and political activities and social capital, as the goals are typically “not necessarily geared to the common good or to integral and sustainable human development.”¹⁸⁹ Efforts to maximize and accelerate human activities that create capital gains ultimately result in the loss of social gains, usually exploiting vulnerable people and the environment in which they live and rely on. These goals are short sighted and as such do not show concern for the environment. Pope Francis states that “caring for ecosystems demands far-sightedness, since no one looking for quick and easy profit is truly interested in their preservation.”¹⁹⁰ Environmental impact assessments need to consider the social impact as well. Those affected in areas being assessed need to be consulted, as their goals are considerably more long-term since they are considering the future of multiple generations. By seeking long term goals, punctuated by measurable and achievable short term goals designed to be an indicator of success, there is a greater chance of improvement to environments and therefore social capital.

Conversations about climate change are often defensive and contentiously debated as attempts are made to keep global climate change a theory and not a fact. Pope Francis sees the need for conversation that “includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing and its human roots, concern and affect us all.”¹⁹¹ Our conversations need to be with a tone of shared community, because if this is not the tone that is taken, “our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters unable to set limits...”

¹⁸⁸ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §61.

¹⁸⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §18.

¹⁹⁰ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §36.

¹⁹¹ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §14.

which inevitably results in further environmental and social decay.¹⁹² As a culture, we are still developing language to speak about the crises and as such we are often unable, or unwilling, to confront the crisis head on. Those in positions of leadership need to seek new paths that lead towards meeting current needs while simultaneously considering the needs of future generations.¹⁹³

Pope Francis calls to attention the weak responses of the international community and cites the influence of technology and finance on the political arena as part of the reason for this weak response. Different groups, including those with economic interests “easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that...plans will not be affected.”¹⁹⁴ Attempts to change within society are often viewed as a nuisance by politicians, economists, and large corporations who dismiss the attempts citing that the views and changes presented are unrealistic. When questions are raised to companies and governments about profits and environmental damage, inquirers are accused of standing in the way of human development and progress. Pope Francis calls on governments to pay closer attention so that they may foresee some of the conflicts that may arise and take steps to address the potential conflict. With reduced incidents of conflict there is a greater possibility for lasting peace. By refusing to acknowledge our self-destructive vices associated with our current throw-away culture, production methods, and consumption habits, we feed the lie that change is not necessary by delaying or refusing to implement important decisions and pretending that our planet is not in a state of crisis. We need to consider the principle that “time is greater than space” so that decision makers are permitted to work towards solutions that are lasting instead of being preoccupied with immediate results. There is value in taking action towards environmental protection even if the results are not immediate.

Just as it is important for ideas to be generated, it is more important that these ideas be put into action and enforced. Lamenting the efforts already attempted at improved environmental regulations, Pope Francis finds that the efforts “to seek concrete solutions

¹⁹² Francis, *Laudato Si*, §11.

¹⁹³ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §53.

¹⁹⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §54.

to the environmental crisis have proved ineffective...” usually because of a lack of enforceable consequences.¹⁹⁵ There has been historical concern about the environment by previous popes. Pope Paul VI stated that scientific solutions were a possibility but “unless they are accompanied by authentic social and moral progress, [they] will definitively turn against man.”¹⁹⁶ Pope Francis gives humanity a call to action, asking them to “discover what each of us can do” about the environmental crisis and “recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production, and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it.”¹⁹⁷

The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis

To better understand the proposed solutions it is necessary to understand the roots and causes of the crisis. Pope Francis sees inequality as a root cause. This inequality comes in many forms such as educational, economical, technological, and environmental. Pope Francis states that “knowledge... [has] given us tremendous power. More precisely, those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, have been given an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world.”¹⁹⁸ There are even those, he states, who are content to have the problems of global hunger and poverty solved by market gains. These solutions are made by people who do not have the unique experience of the poor. By choosing not to intervene and create a more equitable global community we are effectively weakening our social bonds which are necessary to build community, and in turn, are necessary to build a trusted consensus for solutions to various crises and thereby, peace.

The choice to remain uninvolved is a choice of privilege. Pope Francis contends that we lack development in “human responsibility, values, and conscience...It is possible that we do not grasp the gravity of the challenges now before us.”¹⁹⁹ There is an urgency to make a decision about the kind of society we want to build. We can choose to have a

¹⁹⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §14.

¹⁹⁶ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §4.

¹⁹⁷ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §23.

¹⁹⁸ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §104.

¹⁹⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §105.

society where maximizing profits at the expense of the environment and people is sufficient, or we can choose to invest in people to plan for long term gains and create a better society.

In the crises that are before us, the Pope sees a variety of symptoms such as “environmental degradation, anxiety, a loss of the purpose of life and of community living” that point to what is truly wrong.²⁰⁰ There is an assault of humanity by the “technocratic paradigm” that requires a “bold cultural revolution...to slow down and look at reality in a different way.”²⁰¹ A cultural revolution is necessary because if a culture is corrupt, so too will the political efforts of that culture be. In a corrupt culture, laws are seen as “arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided.”²⁰²

Lines of Approach and Action

Essential to solving our complex crisis is a shared global consensus. Pope Francis states that this “is essential for confronting the deeper problems [of environmental and social issues], which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries.”²⁰³ A shared consensus is helpful in finding common ground to support the common good. If this cannot be achieved it is often the case that conflicts remain and “the last thing either party is concerned about is caring for the environment and protecting those who are vulnerable.”²⁰⁴ But as Pope Francis believes, we cannot solve these crises independently; they must be considered holistically.

By adopting a holistic mindset that considers the whole instead of its parts, it is possible that humanity can become “more conscious of the negative effects of certain lifestyles and modes of production and consumption which affect us all; more importantly, it motivates us to ensure that solutions are proposed from a global perspective, and not simply to defend the interests of a few countries.”²⁰⁵ Unfortunately, international treaties

²⁰⁰ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §110.

²⁰¹ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §111; §114.

²⁰² Francis, *Laudato Si*, §123.

²⁰³ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §154.

²⁰⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §198.

²⁰⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §154.

and negotiations are making limited progress because of a desire to consider the local government's needs first, followed by the broader needs of the global community. Because there is no 'one size fits' all solution, the Pope recognizes that change has to first come from the local culture instead of having external expectations imposed on it.²⁰⁶ An important consideration is that regardless of the type of action the local community takes, it is nevertheless making a positive contribution that supports global initiatives as well. It is beneficial to have a world that is interdependent as it "obliges us to think of *one world with a common plan*." ²⁰⁷ By having a common plan and committing to it, we are taking ideas and conversations and putting them into reality. It is also important that there be continuity with policies that are agreed to because "climate change and environmental protection cannot be altered with every change in government."²⁰⁸ A lack of continuity can result in regression.

Pope Francis' argument that everything is connected is further developed in his chapter dedicated to integral ecology which considers human needs at various levels and can be considered closely with environmental and economic frameworks. This integral ecology considers the social and environmental crises as one complex crisis instead of two separate ones. Pope Francis encourages "improvement in the quality of human life, and this entails considering the setting in which people live their lives."²⁰⁹ Pope Francis is insistent that "when we speak of the 'environment', what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it."²¹⁰ When seeking solutions to environmental and social issues, it is necessary to consider both of them simultaneously: "Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are a part of nature, involved in it, and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, of its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality."²¹¹ There is a lack of general awareness and an understanding of just how dependent we are on our

²⁰⁶ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §144.

²⁰⁷ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §154.

²⁰⁸ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §181.

²⁰⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §146.

²¹⁰ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §139.

²¹¹ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §139.

ecosystems, but once this is realized – that there is an “interrelation between ecosystems and between the various spheres of social interaction...” change is possible.²¹²

Ultimately our solution, our response, to the current social, political and environmental crises need to be a new narrative. Pope Francis articulates that “If we want to bring about deep change, we need to realize that certain mindsets really do influence our behaviour. Our efforts will be ineffectual unless we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society, and our relationship with nature.”²¹³ If we choose to accept the cultural, spiritual, and educational challenge before us, we will need to accept that the process for renewal will be long, and if we want the changes to be long lasting then society must be ready to accept them and respond to calls to action; this requires education and a change in lifestyle. We have a common origin and somewhere along the way our future became fragmented and self-centered. If we want to have any hope of having a future story to tell we must embrace the “conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it.”²¹⁴

²¹² Francis, *Laudato Si*, §139.

²¹³ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §215.

²¹⁴ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §229.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

Issues of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation illustrate that the world is in a multi-faceted state of crises. As attempts to mitigate these crises have been considered, their failure has demonstrated that the webs of neoliberalist economic theories are considerably entrenched and ineffective in solving these crises. An alternative to the fragmented neoliberalist approaches to solutions is to consider the holistic approach advocated by Pope Francis as laid out in *Laudato Si*. By engaging in holistic approaches to multi-dimension issues that include both the environment and people, there is a greater chance of success in finding “the mean” for equality in society. The Pope offers some guidance that appeals to humanity’s shared sense of values without being overtly religious or dogmatic in his appeal. By doing so, his message is able to have a wider reach than some messages regarding our current crises. Although it is not prescriptive, it provides a starting point. His faith and religion have shaped his response to social, environmental, and political crises just as it did for Tommy Douglas, John Muir, and Desmond Tutu. However, in each of these situations, including the Pope’s, the strength in the messages is not that it is a “Christian values” message, but rather that the values presented are not unique to Christianity and therefore transcend religions.

In writing *Laudato Si*, the Pope has offered a spiritual perspective as part of the discussion about the environment and its corresponding social and economic issues. As the head of the Catholic Church, the Pope has an authority and gravitas that other leaders and advocates do not have – he has the larger megaphone to have his opinion heard. Although the Pope is the head of a large religious organization, he does not impose his religious beliefs on readers of the encyclical. Instead he “invites others to listen to a religious point of view” that finds shared values with people who have other beliefs by pursuing the ‘common good’.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ James Martin, “Top Ten Takeaways from ‘Laudato Si’,” *America: the Jesuit Review*, last modified June 18, 2015, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2015/06/18/top-ten-takeaways-laudato-si>.

Part of the appeal of a Papal Encyclical being written by the Pope is its perceived authority. Solutions to the world's problems, largely rooted in inequality, have not been successful. Our social crises show us that most of the world is poor, yet power remains with the rich minority who are far removed from the realities of most of the planet. Our environmental crises show us that despite IPCC reports and over 90% of climate scientists agreeing that global climate change is affecting our globe in adverse ways, government action is limited or ineffective. Our political crises show us that poor governance leads to destabilizing events that further propagate inequality and corruption. This further advances social inequality and the cycle continues.

Effective action comes in the form of holistic interventions. To address each crisis singularly is ineffective. There are clear links between poverty, politics and the environment; our course of action, whatever it may be, needs to consider the connections between these. What has essentially been created is an unequal assumption of risk. Developing countries which contain the bulk of the important biosphere reserves, fuel the development of richer countries. In doing so, the developing countries are putting themselves at risk for the present and the future by absorbing the majority of the “ecological debt...[as they are] less capable of adopting new models for reducing environmental impact because they lack the wherewithal to develop the necessary processes and to cover their costs.”²¹⁶

Beyond the global economics, the poor must also contend with changes to their local environment:

Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades. Many of the poor live in areas particularly affected by phenomena related to warming, and their means of subsistence are largely dependent on natural reserves and ecosystemic services such as agriculture, fishing and forestry. They have no other financial activities or resources which can enable them to adapt to climate change or to face natural disasters, and their access to social services and protection is very limited. For example, changes in climate, to which animals and plants cannot adapt, lead them to migrate; this in turn affects the livelihood of the

²¹⁶ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §52.

poor, who are then forced to leave their homes, with great uncertainty for their future and that of their children.²¹⁷

The poor and the environment are at risk, and the indifference of those in power contributes to these problems. They choose to “[mask] the problems or [conceal] their symptoms” in half-hearted attempts to limit some negative effects, while failing to seek long term solutions.²¹⁸ As the general public often looks to their leadership for direction, the indifference of a few often results in the acceptance of these crises with a “cheerful recklessness” as there is no desire to change lifestyles for the common good.²¹⁹

The Pope’s call for a “broad cultural revolution” speaks to the need of a cultural conversion of the people. Our cultural narrative needs to change and one place to start is with consumerism. The Pope critiques the “unthinking reliance on market forces in which every technological, scientific or industrial advancement is embraced before considering how it will affect the environment and ‘without concern for its potential impact on human beings.’”²²⁰ Although Pope Francis is not against technology, he does not view every increase as beneficial. By stemming our consumerism, we are closer to achieving a ‘mean’ on the spectrum of equality by allowing other places to experience growth and redefining our notion of progress.

Redefining our notion of progress is necessary because everything on our planet is connected – the environment, politics, economics, and social structures. Issues with each of these spheres have traditionally been approached in a fragmented way that has not seen wealth (natural, economic, social) distributed equally. Pope Francis sees the pursuit of money and the results of marginalized people and a marginalized environment, as being connected. But instead of condemning capitalism, Pope Francis “provides an intelligent critique of the limits of the market, especially where it fails to provide for the poor.”²²¹ The market creates a space for selfishness and indifference that does not consider the common good of the planet and thereby makes environmental problems worse. We need to redefine

²¹⁷ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §25.

²¹⁸ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §26.

²¹⁹ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §59.

²²⁰ Martin, “Top Ten Takeaways.”

²²¹ Martin, “Top Ten Takeaways.”

our notion of progress because we cannot care for nature, or the vulnerable “if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion, and concern for our fellow human beings.”²²² In doing so “we can finally leave behind the modern myth of unlimited material progress” that is destroying our planet.²²³

Final Thoughts

Approaching religion as a standard set of instructions that guide a set of beliefs that impact moral conduct and social norms allows for multiple faiths, including, but not limited to Christianity, to engage in issues of social justice. Religious belief can increase a person’s ability to have self control, and thereby limit harm to group interests by instead engaging in social behaviour that is valuable.²²⁴ This is paramount to a theme developed by the activities of Douglas, Muir, Tutu and Pope Francis – how we think affects how we act. The convictions offered by religion can be a powerful motivator to mobilize people into action to seek solutions to our current crises.

How we think and act are reflections of our values. A person’s context influences these values, which are often shaped by social and political influence, which are in turn often shaped by religion. By focusing on the shared values people of multiple faiths share, they can be empowered to act on these shared values that will begin a process whereby meaningful solutions current social, political and environment crises are met with lasting impact.

How we think and act is a product of our context. Tommy Douglas’s experience as a Baptist minister and experiences with healthcare as a child empowered him to fight for public health care in Canada. Muir’s experience of a Calvinist upbringing and proximity to nature empowered him to work to establish a system of National Parks in the United States. Desmond Tutu’s experience of living under apartheid and his experience

²²² Francis, *Laudato Si*, §91.

²²³ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §78.

²²⁴ Kevin Rounding et al., “Religion Replenishes Self Control,” *Psychological Science* 23, no6 (2012): 636.

meeting respectful white ministers empowered him to take on the monumental task of seeing the end of apartheid in South Africa. Undoubtedly, the Pope's experience in South America as a religious leader has empowered him to take on the environment and issues of poverty as his cause. In each example, context influenced how these individuals thought, and thereby how they acted.

How we think and act can be affected by engaging others in conversation. Conversations are necessary to identify areas of improvement and move towards intervention. Tommy Douglas mobilized people around shared values by using his political platform to engage in conversation, and people began working together to create a better society by applying Christian ethics to social problems. John Muir wrote pamphlets and columns in widely accessible mediums to encourage conversations about environmental conservation. It was so successful President Roosevelt requested an audience with Muir and government policy around the environment began to change. Desmond Tutu engaged in international conversation to highlight the apartheid situations people were unfamiliar with the forefront, and used language to promote a context of shared values, so that the situation became better understood, and acted upon. The Pope also encourages conversation by recognizing the need for "forthright and honest debate" which can identify common ground in shared values.²²⁵

The shared values which can unite people to mobilize to find sustainable, holistic solutions to our current crises are not limited to any one religion. Although religions have different ways of practicing their faith, common values can be identified. It is through these shared values that seeking the common good of the planet can be achieved.

²²⁵ Francis, *Laudato Si*, §16.

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