

# Chicago D.Min. Cluster (1989)

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## RESEARCH IN MINISTRY--SUBMISSION FORM

ID Code (for office use only):

Title: What Did Noah Do about Trash?  
A Theology of Garbage

Author: John E. Swanson

Name of institution awarding D.Min.: Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago

Date D.Min. was (or will be) awarded: June 7, 1992

Number of pages: 118

Abstract (Please provide an abstract of about 100 words or less following the guidelines on back of this form):

What humans consider waste and how waste is disposed of will determine the course of future use of natural resources and the quality of the natural life-support systems.

The theological grounding for a change in attitude is how the Christian understands the "good" of creation, human responsibility as a species, the sin in technology, the "re-con-cycling" activity of God, and the green covenantal relationship between God, humans, and non-humans.

The behavioral grounding is in understanding the difference between "cycles" and "streams" in the management of waste.

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**ABSTRACT GUIDELINES:**

1. Write in complete sentences, preferably in third person and active voice.
2. Be brief. An abstract longer than 100 words cannot be printed.
3. State your thesis.
4. Describe the method of study or research.
5. State the result of the research or the conclusion reached in the study.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND COOPERATION!**

LUTHERAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CHICAGO

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ABBREVIATED JOURNAL

Submitted to the Faculty  
In candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Ministry

by

John E. Swanson

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

April, 1992

I became involved in the Doctor of Ministry program at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in 1989 because I had reached a point in my life and ministry when disciplined continuing education was a necessity. Also, I was encouraged by the Board of Directors of the Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center, Oregon, Illinois to pursue further study.

I had been working very hard for many years developing curricula and resources for retreats, outdoor education events, and summer camping programs at the Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center. There was little time to reflect and to engage others in serious dialogue about various aspects of my theological development.

The Board of Directors gave me a two month sabbatical in early 1989. I wanted to spend it in some type of learning mode. My first step was to take a trip to the rainforests in Costa Rica. My second step was to enroll in the Doctor of Ministry program.

The first meeting of the Chicago Cluster was March 27-28, 1989. Since that date the discipline, responsiveness, academic input, mind stretching experiences, and accountability have been stimulating and professionally helpful.

On the above mentioned date the cluster was involved in a life/work planning session. At that time I established seven goals for myself for this program:

1. Become competent in developing resources that interface the

study of natural phenomena and the biblical/theological tradition.

2. Establish, if possible, credibility in these disciplines with self and others.
3. Become more knowledgeable/informed in the areas of the studies indicated above.
4. Put myself in an intellectually critical/supportive community for the sake of development and growth.
5. Prepare/write resources for religious education using the data from the above studies.
6. Provide leadership in the same areas to the Church at large in whatever way it can be given.
7. Set a plan for my future with regard to profession and the expression of my ordained ministry which embodies the above.

Cluster meetings have been held throughout the three years.

Presentations were on the Black religious experience, conservative Christianity and the dialogue between Lutherans and Baptists, the Charismatic Movement, AIDS, the book, Congregation by James Hopewell, and the Just War Theory.

The latter two presentations I found to be the most helpful.

Hopewell's book introduces several ways to make an analysis of congregations. In our present day life in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America such ways to make assessments are helpful. There are many new dynamics in the Lutheran Church today. When a person works with congregations, as I do in outdoor ministries, it helps to have tools for understanding how congregations think and act.

I was deeply fascinated by the discussion on the Just War Theory. I have resolved that I will include this teaching in various retreat programs for youth to give them handles in making their own choices regarding military service.

I took four courses at LSTC. I petitioned that all the courses would be theological in nature, rather than practical. This petition was granted.

Bonhoeffer, Confessor was taught by Professor Robert Bertram in the fall of 1990. My paper was "Adaptation and Sacrifice, Necessity of." My thesis was that in the natural world adaptation is necessary for the survival of species, and sacrifice, the giving of oneself for the sake of the other, is the component of the food chain, though these are conflicting behaviors. Without each the natural world would cease to exist. Such behavior is also essential in the Christian community. The Church must come of age, adaptation, and sacrifice is the model and the means for promoting justice.

Professor Phil Hefner's course, Graduate Seminar: Concepts and Methods, forced me to look at my theological methodology. It became quite obvious that my datum was the natural world and my norm was the cross of Christ. Once I had established this I began to make more sense to myself and others when developing ideas.

With Professor Robert Conrad I entered into an independent study at which time I wrote the summer camping program resource, "Ants and Bats and Things Like That - Ecology of the Spirit." The resource included a back ground paper and five session with Bible studies, environmental learning experiences, worship, games, arts and crafts, and

discussion topics.

In the fall of 1991 Professor Richard Busse led a seminar on 19th Century Theologians. I found this to be a very difficult course. However, one of the LSTC professors quipped, "If you understand what these theologians of this era are saying you will know how you are thinking. You are dealing with the same issues they were." My paper for this course was the introduction to the 1992 summer theme, "The Crossing that Changed the World - a Joyous Exchange." In it I develop answers to three questions each of which has a tentative one word answer:

1. What is religion? Piety.
2. What is history? Freedom.
3. What is humanity? God.

Epics of Creation in the winter of 1992 with Professors Hefner and Gilbert gave me a chance to broaden my understanding of the issues of creation in the various scientific disciplines. In outdoor ministries this is always a hot topic of conversation.

The secular course for this program was done at Northern Illinois University, Lorado Taft Campus, Oregon, Illinois in the summer of 1991, "Outdoor Interpretation." In this course my method of interpreting the environment was affirmed. People outside of the religious community could read some of my work, such as my paper, "Birth of the Earth - Natural Wild Free," and make their judgments from a scientist's perspective. Also, I developed the concept and a demonstration piece for "cycles" and "streams," a revised way of describing the disposal of material goods. I am suggesting that we use the term "recycle" only for



those materials that can be reintroduced into the natural cycle. All other items are put into the waste stream. Thus, it is more appropriate to say "restreaming" than "recycling."

I attended one workshop, "Teaching the Care of the Planet Earth" in April, 1991 at Sinsinawa Retreat Center near Galena, Illinois. I was the only outdoor ministries' person in attendance. The rest were college professors who teach science and synodical leaders. From this event I came away somewhat awed by the fact that most, if not all of our environmental problems from the use of natural resources to trash, stem from the phenomenal population growth.

As an alternative to course work I lead retreats for youth and adults. The number of hours invested in eight events was 132 leadership hours and 144 preparation hours. Listed below are the themes and some brief comments:

"Seventh Day Environmentalist" - This grew out of my Horizon Project.

"The Risk of Discipleship" - An attempt to redefine what it means to bear one's own cross.

"Prayer as a Subversive Activity" - Participants engage in a simulation game, and the topic introduces a new way to see prayer - as a conspiratorial dialogue with God to change the world.

"Ikibana/Origami/Haiku" - A study of world missions during the Epiphany season, Japanese culture and difficulties to be a Christian in Japan, and the celebration of Epiphany.

"How to Be in and Not of the World" - A study on parenting using

Bonhoeffer's book, Life Together, and focusing on the family as a type of Christian community.

"Fungi and Us" - Participants study fungi, make a correlation with Church life, and reflect on their role in the life of the Church community.

"Ants and Bats and Things Like That - Ecology of the Spirit" - A study of diversity, mutualism, and inclusivity.

"I Am Responsible" - Participants look at the Confession of Sins as a way of saying one is responsible.

My Horizon Project was a ten day tour of the rainforests in Costa Rica. It was an opportunity to hike and learn. The leader of our group was an entomologist. Thus, we collected many types of insects.

"Seventh Day Environmentalist" was the paper that summarized this experience. The paper precipitated a response in the next cluster meeting by Professor Richard Busse. His point, as well as mine, was that the redemption of God is for the whole cosmos and not just the human community. However, what confuses the issue is that when I look at the natural world I see it through the filter of a historical event, Jesus Christ, the Cross, the Resurrection.

Ministry Projects I and II dealt with diversity in the camp community. The summer campers at LOMC are involved in an integrated community. We need to know how to work with various cultures and the interaction between them.

The two projects developed into a summer camping program resource called "Ants and Bats and Things Like That - Ecology of the Spirit," and a training event for summer staff. The thrust of the programs was to

recognize diversity as a gift of the Spirit, mutualism as a fruit of the Spirit, and inclusivity as the art of retaining, celebrating, and benefiting from diversity.

The Theological Position Paper helped me reach down into my psyche and back into my history, "The Trail of Two Conversions." The theme of the paper is that I have been inspired by my experiences with God and my experiences with the natural world. The two come together in a fascinating way in my present ministry setting.

The Professional Paper, "What Did Noah Do about Trash - a Theology of Garbage," has been developed into a summer camping program resource and was used in 1991.

I feel that the Doctor of Ministry program has been an exciting opportunity to help me focus and to reflect. The only objective for this program that I have not accomplished is the last one - where do I go from here?

I would like to be able to continue this and/or similar programs. I appreciate the academic setting, especially the seminary. My area of interest continues to be theology.

My feeling is that there are many more things to research in the areas of science and religion. My concern is that the Church develop programs that can be used by people of all ages in the parishes and in outdoor ministries centers that recognize present day thinking in both the disciplines of theology and ecology. I would like to be a part of that continuing effort. The only question is: where?

I have been very satisfied with the program. The only criticism I would have of it is that we were very cautious with each other in the

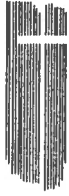
cluster. We were not very critical of each other. Some things were passed over without raising some questions about process or content. There could have been more critical exchanges. We were kind to one another.

On the other hand, the group was supportive, enabling and encouraging. We have become good friends and will continue to be so.

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revised: 1/20/92

LUTHERAN  
OUTDOOR  
MINISTRIES  
CENTER



*When is Eval Due?  
David Paper Payment.*

January 24, 1991

The Rev. Dr. Robert Conrad  
The Rev. Dr. David Lindberg  
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago  
1100 East 55th Street  
Chicago, IL 60615

Re: Mid-Course Evaluation

Dear Bob and Dave,

I am concerned with the type of evaluation my Board of Directors will do with me on March 22. The parish type does not really fit my situation at all. Thus, I am suggesting two alternatives. Maybe they can be combined in some way. Please advise me which is the best way to go.

I established seven objectives for my participation in the Doctor of Ministry program. These, it would seem, are the logical areas of evaluation that the LOMC Board can use in terms of where the D. Min. program touches my responsibilities.

On the other hand, I could use a format based on my tasks as Executive Director. However, there are two problems that I see with this approach. First, they appraise my activities from a remote position. Second, the way to describe a judgement varies from task to task.

I need your advice. What do you suggest I do?

Enclosed is a copy of my tasks, a rather elaborate document. Below are the seven objectives that direct my purpose for being in the D. Min. program.

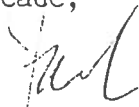
SEVEN OBJECTIVES FOR DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM

1. Become competent in developing resources that interface the study of natural phenomena and the biblical/theological tradition.
2. Establish, if possible, credibility in these disciplines with self and others.

3. Become more knowledgeable/informed in the areas of the studies indicated above.
4. Put myself in an intellectually critical/supportive community for the sake of development and growth.
5. Prepare/write resources for religious education using the data from the above studies.
6. Provide leadership in the same areas to the Church at large in whatever way it can be given.
7. Set a plan for my future with regard to profession and the expression of my ordained ministry which embodies the above.

I need to prepare a document soon for distribution to the Board of Directors. I am planning to submit my theological position paper to them as well. Please advise ASAP.

Peace,



Jack Swanson

enc: Director's Tasks



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## LUTHERAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CHICAGO

September 26, 1991

Rev. John Swanson  
Box 239  
Oregon, Ill. 61061

Dear Jack:

Congratulations! On this date the Extension Education Committee declared you a matriculated candidate for the degree since you have now met the criteria for candidacy. The committee also granted your petition to take a fourth course in Bible/Theology. However, the committee postponed action on the petition for workshop credit until you have filed post-workshop reports (see D. Min. Manual, III, 6-7) for each workshop indicating content, place, number of hours and other information called for on the form. Please file those forms with David Lindberg who will pass them on to me.

Blessings.

  
Robert Conrad

## SEVENTH DAY ENVIRONMENTALISTS

It was 1502 when Christopher Columbus discovered and named a portion of Central America Costa Rica, rich coast. He assumed that the land created by volcanic activity was rich in precious metals. Costa Rica is rich, rich with natural beauty.

In January, 1989, I made a similar discovery upon my visit to Costa Rica. It is a land rich with diversity zoologically, botanically, and culturally. My arrival was not by water, but by air. The land looked rich from the sky, tall rolling green hills, a never ending pattern.

Spaniards, who began to colonize Costa Rica 500 years ago, compose most of the population. There are fewer Native Americans in Costa Rica than in other Central American countries.

As a nation they have committed themselves to preserving one of their natural resources, the rain forest. As is noted later in this paper, however, such a commitment does not mean there is no destruction.

Most of the 2.7 million people live in the central plain. The hub of commerce is San José, a metropolitan area of several small towns.

The country is a land mass of 20,000 square miles, the size of West Virginia.

Costa Rica is the Switzerland of the Western Hemisphere. It is one of the oldest democracies in the Americas. Costa Rica has no army. By constitution the nation may not go to war.

Their president, who will serve one six year term with no eligibility to be re-elected, is Dr. Oscar Arias Sanchez. When he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987 he said in his acceptance speech,

"Weapons do not fire on their own. Those who have lost hope fire them. Those who are controlled by dogmas fire them. We must fight for peace undismayed, and fearlessly accept these challenges from those without hope and from the threat of fanatics. Nobody knows better than the honorable members of this (Nobel Peace Prize) committee, that this prize is a sign to let the world know that you want to foster the Central American peace initiative. With your decision you are enhancing the possibilities of success. You are declaring how well you know the search for peace can never end."

In 1848 a free and compulsory educational system was established. The literacy rate, as a result, is the highest in the world, 93%.

There are three symbols of Costa Rica. The colorful ox cart is the national symbol. It was used for transporting coffee to the market. The second symbol is the bus, the only rational means of travel in Costa Rica. A car has a tough time surviving. The third is the round ball-shaped stone. No one knows from whence these stones come. The hypothesis range from artifacts carved by the natives, although no one has ever found any evidence of instruments that could perform such an art, to natural phenomenon, to extraterrestrial invasion.



The nickname for Costa Rica is "Tiquicia." The people are called "Ticos." The nickname derives from the way the people put diminutives on their words. In other countries the Hispanic suffix for "little" is pronounced "tito," but in Costa Rica it is pronounced "tico."

The attitude toward the United States is varied. The population will side with countries opposed to U.S. policies. However, the country is very dependent upon the money from the U.S. in terms of tourism and exports such as coffee, sugar cane, and flowers.

The anti-U.S. spirit is subtle, but it has historic roots. The Ticos remember when a man named William Walker tried to annex the Central American countries to the U.S. under the direction of President Buchanan in the middle of the nineteenth century. Walker enslaved people, held doubtful elections, and broke promises to his friends. (And we point our fingers at Panama?)

A national hero is Juan Santamaria, a teenager. Though he was killed in the process he set fire to a building that housed Walker. This caused Walker's retreat, but not his demise.

The country is poor. People live sparingly. There is hope that tourism will enhance their lot.

For the most part people are Roman Catholic. However, Jimmy Swaggart is very popular because he pours money into their educational system.

My reason for going to Costa Rica was to explore a natural world which stands in striking contrast to the natural world in which I practice the unique character of my ministry, the Temperate Zone, that part of the earth that is located between the Tropical and the Polar Zones.

In the Temperate Zone seasons are noticeable and daylight and darkness vary in length every day. It is that part of the globe that moderates between two extremes where it can get cold and hot and be excessive because of the length of the daylight and night time periods.

The Tropical or Equatorial Zone is a habitat uniquely different from the Temperate Zone. So I visited Costa Rica and specifically hiked in two of the many rain forests there, the Monteverde Cloud Rain Forest and the rain forest in the Corcovado National Park. These two rain forests are distinct because of altitude. The former is about a mile above sea level; the latter is at sea level, along the ocean.

There are thirty or forty different types of rain forests. Most of them are in the Tropics. They are all characterized by temperature and rain. The temperature is relatively constant throughout the year because the daylight and night time hours are almost equal in length. It is not the strength of the sun that determines the season (fall/winter/spring/summer) but the variation of rain fall (dry/wet). It is the seasonality of rain fall that defines a rain forest.

The rain forests have been called jungles in the past, a word that comes from a Sanskrit word meaning desert. Later the word was used to describe scrubland. Still later it was used for a wild place.

We have visions of the jungle stuffed with underbrush and constantly green. But this is not entirely true. During the dry weather season leaves dry up and fall to the forest floor to help the trees retain their water.

This is contrasted with evergreen trees that are in the citrus family in warm climates, further removed from the Equatorial Zone, which retain their leaves for several years.

A tree loses its leaves because the leaves have fulfilled their purpose. In a Temperate Forest the deciduous (word means "falling down") leaves do their work in a few months. The conifer leaves (or needles) exist an average of seven years.

The rain forests are dark. Sunlight enters the forest floor very sparingly. The trees create a canopy in many instances over 130 feet above the ground. There are moments of sunlight that are created when a tree falls. But soon the canopy covers over the opening.

When observing the canopy there is a specific characteristic of the crowns of the tree. They stand apart. It is called crown shyness.

The fact this canopy exists introduces several phenomena to the rain forest.

First, there is a lack of wind. The shade from the trees allows cooling to occur. However, in order for most plants to be pollinated the plants of the under story depend upon insects, birds, and bats.

Secondly, the trees grow slowly when they are young, waiting for a chance to break through to the sun light when they can grow more rapidly.

Third, one would think there is a plethora of flowers in the rain forest, but the lack of sunlight inhibits this. Flowers are more readily seen on the tops of the trees. Thus, unless you are able to fly they are not observable.

The canopy shelters the forest hiker from many of the more dramatic phenomena in the forest. Thus, scientists have developed methods to study the canopy using mountain and rock climbing methods to ascend the trees and create walk ways between them with ropes and scaffolds. To make observations, scientists will remain in these haunts for weeks on end.

A great variety of birds go unseen because they fly and feast above the canopy. Thus, bird watchers shriek with joy when they can get a glimpse of one of many birds for just a moment. Costa Rica is still a birder's paradise with 850 species.

Fourth, the canopy allows only about one quarter to one half of the rain to reach the forest floor. The portion that is intercepted by the canopy evaporates and returns to the atmosphere. As the water runs down the trunks of the trees the water collects nutrients which then support colonies of algae, lichen, and liverworts.

A portion of the water that reaches the ground is soaked up. The earth is a sponge. One of the rain forests near San José is Braulio Carrillo. This forest serves as the water source for the metropolitan area of San José. In the event the rain forest is "developed" (i.e. trees are cut down and fields and buildings

established) the San José community would find its water source dramatically decreased.

Another characteristic of the rain forest is its epiphytes. These are plants that grow on trees which do not depend upon the tree for food, water, or minerals. The tree is simply a place for them to grow. (They are not parasites, like mistletoe.)

Epiphytes familiar to Temperate Zone dwellers are orchids and bromeliads which appear in many homes in various forms. The most familiar bromeliad is pineapple, though this is not an epiphyte. Epiphytes are phenomenal growths because they can be seen all over the tree trunks and contribute to a great deal of the greenery of the forest.

Epiphytes of the Tropics are similar in many ways to the lichens, mosses, and fungi of the Temperate Zone which also live on trees. However, these Temperate Zone cousins are much smaller and serve to break down dead organisms rather than mutually survive with the host.

One of the unique epiphytes is the Strangler Fig. The seed begins to grow in the debris in the crotch of a tree. It sends its roots down to the ground and the vine then climbs the tree. As the plant begins to intertwine around the host tree it develops a woody structure that appears to strangle it. However, the ultimate cause of the host's demise is that the leaves of the Strangler Fig shade the leaves of the host tree and prevent the sun from giving the tree adequate light.

The phenomena of the Strangler Fig, of which there are many species, is that as it wraps itself around the host it creates a structure that eventually in its own right becomes a tree. The host rots and the Strangler Fig becomes the home of insects, birds, bats, and lizards, an apartment building that would take a human lifetime to study. Someone has said that one can find as many as 405 unique species in one tree.

Some trees have adapted so that epiphytes will not adhere to them. One of these trees is the Naked Indian. The bark peels off from time to time discarding any growth that might be adhering to it in some way.

Epiphytes are often called air plants because they draw their nutrition and water from the dust and moisture in the air.

Some epiphytes, bromeliads, have water in the cup shaped at the base of the plant that serve as protective pools for forest critters. The orange and black poison dart frog takes advantage of this in caring for the young. The tadpoles are born on the forest floor, and then the frog carries each tadpole up a tree to a bromeliad where the tadpole is put into water in the axil. There the young are protected from their predators.

While observing trees and the decomposition of the debris of the forest several things must be noticed.

Decomposition is extremely rapid in the rain forest. Because of this, leaves are very similar because they are shaped to hasten the shedding of water to prevent the early destruction of the leaves by lichens and other types of decomposers. Vains are usually quite deep, and the end of the leaf has a drip tip.

Rotting material is efficient in giving nutrition to all the plant life, and tree roots that grow along the surface of the soil rarely dig into the earth.

Through a series of tree roots and other links created by bacteria and fungal processes the tree is nurtured right on the top of the forest floor.

Roots of many plants are invaded by a specialized fungi, mycorrhizae. These fungi absorb minerals and water more efficiently than uninvaded roots. Mycorrhizae is considered the cornerstone of mineral conservation in the tropical forest. It is more cost effective in the long term than artificial fertilizers.

Due to the roots not taking hold in the soil trees need a structure that will stabilize them. The roots are wide-spread to support the tree. A typical tree actually has flying buttresses to give the tree an underpinning so it can stand erect. Remember how tall some of these trees grow.

So as not to be misleading, many Temperate Zone trees do not have deep roots either. They are supported by root structures below the surface of the soil. Oak trees are a good example of this. However, these trees have their structure in the soil and depend upon the soil for their nutrients.

It is assumed that rain forests have fertile soil. This is not true. There are two factors that contribute to this. First, the nutritional exchange of the debris on the forest floor is so efficient with the plants that soil does not benefit from the fertility that is upon it. Second, the rock, which joins with the water, air, and decomposed vegetation to make up the soil, is very old and acidic.

When the forest is slashed and burned to create agricultural land not only is the nutrition stored in the trees released, the natural fertilizing agent, mycorrhizae, is destroyed.

It may appear that fields for grazing will be very productive, but not for long. The soil rapidly loses what nutrition it has, and then the rains come down and erode the land.

In the Temperate Zone there are stands of trees of the same specie. My world in the Temperate Zone is an oak/hickory hardwood forest. In addition to these hardwoods there are probably a dozen or so species of trees. They pollinate and perpetuate themselves in clusters.

In the rain forest there are hundreds of species of trees. They do not thrive in clusters, but are scattered throughout the forest. In order to pollinate they need to not only depend upon insects, birds, or bats, but organisms must coadapt in order to guarantee survival of the particular tree.

Seed dispersal is as necessary for survival as pollination. To facilitate that in the rain forest, fruits have adapted very colorful appearances and satisfying tastes. If one has ever been in the tropics one discovers a great variety of edible fruits and fruit drinks. Why? The fate of a specie lies in its ability to perpetuate itself on its own and needs a way for the fruit to be attracted so animals will transport it to another desirable location. Given the great variety of trees there are many types of fruit. And they do compete with each other.

One of the unique fruits of the rain forest is the cashew. The fruit, which we call the nut, grows on the end of a stem that swells and looks like and tastes similar to a nectarine.

Insects are of great importance in the rain forest. Army ants are the most common. There are 240 species. Their task is to break down the debris in the forest. Stories are told how these ants will march into a home causing the inhabitants to leave. Once the ants have cleaned out the house, the human residents return.

Unlike army ants, termites are not nomadic. They chew up rain forest litter and build homes in the ground or on trees constructing tunnels from debris. They are among the few creatures able to convert rotting vegetation into living tissue, a crucial link for commuting nutrition from one organism to another.

Of great fascination in the rain forest is the leaf-cutter ant. Each ant chews off a piece of a leaf, the size of a thumb nail and carries it to the underground nest, a distance that might be several hundred yards. These ants produce a special food fungi by chewing the leaf and planting them in a reservoir of desired fungi. The leaf-cutter's larvae feed on the fungi. The adults need the enzyme to digest their main food, a sap from the leaves they have collected.

The relationship between the ant and the fungi is so strong that the fungi no longer produces sexual spores. The fungi depend upon the leaf-cutters for reproduction.

Ants also gather seeds from the flowers. Thus, they participate in the seed dispersal process. A plant of the Temporal Forest that is the result of ants creating a cache of seeds is Blood Root.

The rain forest has received a vast amount of publicity recently for a variety of reasons.

At one time between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn there existed five billion acres of rain forest, 14% of the earth's land surface. Today, humanity has slashed and burned one half of this.

Tropical rain forests are being destroyed more rapidly than any other type of natural habitat. Of the 2.4 billion acres of rain forest still in existence, approximately 14 million acres are being depleted annually. This is 30 acres every minute.

It is anticipated that in Costa Rica 80% of the 1981 rain forest will ultimately be wasted, in spite of their commitment to protect it.

Why are rain forests being cut down and burned at such a rate? People wish to harvest and sell the timber, mine the gold and iron, and create more agricultural land. There are those who also interpret this type of behavior as humanity's desire to conquer the natural world. This is the spirit of the political leaders of Panama, for example.

The chief culprit of forest depletion in Latin America is the desire to create ranches to export beef. What this accomplishes is taking five cents off the price of the hamburger in the United States.

What is sad about this behavior is that this process is bringing to extinction one of the most diverse ecosystems on the face of the earth.

A second reason for the popularity of rain forests is due to the concern for the greenhouse effect. Carbon dioxide and other elements trap heat that once would normally pass through to outer space. The concentration of carbon dioxide causes a rise in the earth's temperature. The notion is that the depletion of forest is contributing to the build up of carbon dioxide. In part, this is true because the rain forests are a reservoir of carbon, stored in the vegetation. The cutting and burning of trees contributes to the build up of carbon dioxide. Another facet of this is the fact that the trees of the rain forest absorb the carbon dioxide created by the decomposing debris in the forest. Under normal circumstances there is equilibrium. The problem of deforestation creates two problems, increasing the carbon dioxide and decreasing the foliage of the trees that inhibits the process of photosynthesis.

There is a need to maintain forests throughout the world. The tropics are not the only location. However, to combat the greenhouse effect life styles may need to change so that the production of carbon dioxide can be decreased world-wide.

The maintenance of rain forest may have more to do with weather patterns, particularly rain fall. There is a meteorological hypothesis that weather patterns and rain fall in North America originate in Central and South America. The depletion of the rain forest can be affecting the rain fall in the U.S. Thus, it could be that our unsatiable desire for beef has impacted our productivity of grain. We might be eating away our rain. And people thought it was acid rain.

Three reasons for maintaining the rain forest are probably more significant than the above, namely, pharmaceuticals, gene bank, and the preservation of the chemical and ecological processes which contribute to the system as a whole but are unknown.

Our knowledge of the flora and fauna of the rain forest is sparse. Few species have been named. There are organisms that no one has ever seen. Some of these may be the raw materials necessary for medicines that can bring healing to diseases and disorders that are causing great pain and suffering today. 70% of the 3,000 plants identified as having the capacity to fight cancer are found in the rain forest.

A notion that one might find disturbing is that the aboriginal folk of the rain forest live rather healthy lives though their longevity is not the same as it is for others who live in the more "technological world." Aborigines, of the rain forest, have developed from the plants of the forest that bring healing to a variety of disorders.

Because the pharmaceutical industry has not discovered the drugs nor do they trust the trial and error methods of the "primitive" people progress in these areas has been retarded.

Fascinating, too, is that aborigines not only have discovered cures, but the process for their research involved themselves as the guinea pigs.

And we call these people uncultured? Isn't that what the word "primitive" means to us? It originally meant "the first, the beginning."

The rain forest is possibly a hope for fighting disease.

The rain forest also serves as a gene bank. So far life has evolved in an orderly way. Speciation has kept pace with extinction, though evolution is more rapid in the tropics.

The rain forest is a most efficient environment, and its future is critical for the future of the world because it serves to preserve the essential chemical components of life.

Not only does our ignorance of the rain forest prevent us from knowing about various drugs and cures there are also many natural phenomena that are absolutely unheard of. There are many unique events going on in very small segments of the forest. If the rain forest is destroyed these activities will never be observed. Also, we do not know what role these phenomena play in the total system.

There is a specie in the Monteverde Cloud Rain Forest called the golden toad. It exists in an area probably no larger than a football field. It has become the symbol of the Monteverde Forest.

What we fail to realize is that though these islands of activity may seem isolated we really do not know what they contribute to the whole of the ecosystem.

So why bother saving the rain forest? Pharmacueticals. Genetic reserve. The rain forests' contribution to the welfare of the world though the qualities are unknown.

I did not go to Costa Rica to deal with the ethical implications of the treatment of the rain forest. It was intended to be an immersion experience where I would be bombarded by the "natural" world and discover there how God works in that world. I wanted to make observations from an environmental/scientific point of view.

One of my concerns is that many Christians have a clockmaker view of God when dealing with the non-human world. The attitude is that God made this world, and it now runs on its own. Scientists identify the processes as best they can. It is my opinion that the scientists are not only describing phenomena they are telling us from their observation point what God is doing.

I realize that scientists interpret their data from a certain point of view. There is fraud in the gathering of information. Some folks decide upon the outcome before they do the research. Thus, one must take into account that when a scientist's data is reported it is presented from a point of view. There is also a great deal of speculation. Nonetheless, we must live with these distortions and recognize the pitfalls of this and try our best to ascertain the meaning of what they describe.

Be a person, a creationist, or an evolutionist or something else most people believe that the non-human world is the stage upon which God and humankind interact with one another. One of my many biases is that human history and natural history are one in the same arena for God to encounter all that is created.

One of my experiences in Costa Rica was an encounter with a Jewish lady on a quiet lane in Monteverde. She had just ascended a slightly inclined gravel road. She stopped to greet me and observed, "When I look at this place I can see why people had so many gods." She had been celebrating the mystery, the complexity, and the power of the Monteverde Cloud Rain Forest. She was pondering that pantheists and animists believe the way they did because there had to be some type of power or powers beyond their experience.

I reminded the lady of her Jewish heritage which I share with her as a Christian. One of the words for God in the Old Testament is "Elohim," a name that exists in the plural to encompass all the powers of the pantheon of gods that were common to the culture of the day in which the texts were written. This God is the most high God, the God of all creation, the God of all gods.

The First Commandment also says, "You shall have no other gods before me."

What is there to be recognized here?

We have laid claim to a monotheism that excludes the existence of other gods. What is frustrating is that it is the folk who profess monotheism who might be among the worst perpetrators of disrespect for the non-human world in contrast to those who practice some type of polytheism. The non-human world exists for the human world and has no tie with God.

We take the attitude that only God is divine. The quality of all things is less than divine. In fact, the tendency is to resort to the dualism of material and spiritual. The material is divorced from God and denied of spiritual qualities.

I am not supporting divine attributes of the non-human world. But I do believe that all of creation lives in a relationship with God and that God is as involved in natural history as in human history. It is important to sense the spirituality of the whole world. All creation is an expression of God. Note Psalm 104.

The issue of evolution always lifts its head when discussing creation. It is extremely difficult to deny evolution as an observable fact. The word used in its place today is adaptation. This distinguishes the process from the hypothesis.

Scientists talk about how a specie changes to enable its ability to survive and procreate. The role of each organism of the specie is to enable the future of the specie. Through the process of adaptation the organism responds to the reality of the environment and develops characteristics that encourages its survival and productivity. This occurs through the continuous birth of the specie.

An interesting aside is that Darwin himself was a creationist like most of the other scientists of his day. When he realized what he was observing in the Galapagos Islands he knew if he followed the lead of his observations he would go against the grain of the scientific thinking of his day. Darwin was not concerned with the reaction of the religious community. He feared the response of his peers in the scientific community. Thus, he kept his findings and the interpretation of his findings secret for fifteen years.



The issue of evolution is "where does it originate" and "to where does it lead?" The beginning is not necessarily a singular point. Scientific observation shows many gaps. Do we know nothing because links have not been found, or do they not at all exist?

The drive to locate the missing link is not a concern of the scientific community. It grows out of the religious community. For the religious community there must be a singular starting point. Spontaneity is not easily understood.

What of the future from an evolutionary perspective? Teilhard de Chardin anticipates all things evolving to an Omega Point. However, this too may be a religious expectation. Scientific observations note that evolution is not a grand scheme. Though it cannot be said that evolution is haphazard or capricious the process of adaptation demonstrates there is no grand scheme. For example, coevolution benefits some organisms and is a detriment and expense to others.

All of life is not in the process of becoming friends. I realize that the scientific discipline of paleontology may cause a person to draw conclusions differently than one draws from the zoological or botanical world.

In the study of the environment and discussing ecological issues with some folks some interesting theological questions emerge.

First, there seems to be the notion that the human being is the sole actor on the stage created by the non-human world. This actor is both villain and potential messiah. Villainous behavior is seen as inherent in human decision making and action by environmentalists. That the human can take a responsible stance is almost deemed unlikely unless there is a major revolution.

Second, if a person is ecologically concerned and is a Christian, the role of Christ in human history is often confined to time and space 2,000 years ago. When considering the ecological problems of the day God's restoring work is left out of or ignored in the dynamics of an environment that is been broken and healed. What humanity is breaking assunder in the natural world is not reconcilable by Christ.

Do Christians believe that the Christ-event impacts both the human and natural history? Or is Jesus Christ the Redeemer only of the human world?

When we talk about the natural world the tendency is to think God, the Creator and not God, the Redeemer/Reconciler. Also, though we know differently, if we listen to ourselves references are made to how the creation reveals the nature of the Creator to us.

It is my bias that using the natural world as a revelation of God is the inappropriate starting point. God makes Himself known in His redemptive act, Jesus Christ. Thus, when we talk about God's activity in the natural world we should begin with the Theology of the Cross.

It may be necessary to ascertain what we mean by the death and resurrection of Jesus. What type of atonement theory one holds may have some bearing. Is there sin? Has sin been overcome? Or has sin solely been paid for?

A position that looks at the natural world based on a Christus Victor theory of atonement challenges the thinking of many environmentalists since it suggests

that sin is not in the driver's seat and hope prevails.

One can ask if such a view is this-worldly or other-worldly. It would appear that some of the existing trends described as ecological crises are irreversible. Nothing short of a miracle can bring a solution. Or would it be better identified as a revolution?

For example: One way to address the greenhouse effect is to minimize the production of carbon dioxide. This would restrain the burning of fossil fuel. How would this impact transportation?

That the human world must take greater responsibility for the environment is obvious. But to think that God is not interacting with all of this world is a denial of our Christian faith. Where will God take us?

How does one demonstrate God's involvement in the now? Is it this-worldly or other-worldly? Who knows? However, isn't this what hope is? Hope is confidence in a God who makes things new but with no indication of what the ultimate result will be? Hope cannot be demonstrated. It begins with trust in the person of God. What God accomplishes is within His plan and scope.

Does this mean there is no human responsibility? By no means! The human is in a cooperative relationship with God.

Another musing is the tension between the behavior in the natural world that demonstrates coevolution and predator/prey.

Coevolution is the adaptation of two or more organisms to mutually benefit each other. A popular example of coevolution is the relationship between a Cecropia tree and an ant of the genus Azteca. This plant produces glycogen, an animal starch. The Azteca ants hollow out nests in the trunk and branches of this tree. The tree produces a nectar, called Mullerian bodies, that feeds the ants. This is a protein that exists in a capsule where the leaves join the bark.

Much energy is expended by the tree to perform this task, thus taking away from its capabilities to reproduce. The advantage for the tree is that the ants protect the trees from their enemies.

Another illustration of coevolution involves the passion flower and the passion flower butterfly, Heliconiase ethilla. The butterfly feeds on the nectar of the passion flower and fertilizes it.

While coevolution tends to create a very limited system predator/prey behavior is characteristic of a greater food chain. It may be the choice of words, predator/prey, that is misleading. These words refer to an organism's maneuvers to seek food and develop routines to preserve themselves from predators. To treat this as evil, as diabolical, as consumerism is a mistake. Without this type of behavior there would be no food chain.

A substitute way of talking about this phenomenon is "sacrifice." This is the organisms' giving of one's self for the sake of the whole system. At the heart of the whole process is the welfare and survival of a whole system. If a link in the chain or a block in the pyramid is deleted the system falters. Thus, sacrifice is essential.

Sacrifice is not based on taking something away, but making a contribution to a system. It is intentional on the part of the organism.

Coevolution and sacrifice exist within the same ecosystem and speak of God's sustaining power.

When we look at our understanding of how God ultimately involves Himself in the world we point at the cross, the sacrifice of Christ. This has some interesting implications in our understanding. Is the cross best perceived from the perspective of natural history rather than human history?

To listen to environmentalists one would conclude that the natural world is best off without human intervention and involvement. When humans enter the system something goes haywire.

On the other hand from a biblical perspective humanity is a part of the ecosystem.

What needs to happen is that rather than holding to an utilitarian view of life we should recognize the arena in which we live as the sphere of activity of God and all of life and death. It is a rich arena in which peace can be the style and the end of life together. It is a wholistic view of life in which all things are respected as being of value in and of themselves and to the whole system. Lack of human knowledge of an organism's place does not mean its lack of value.

Is this not what God was about when He rested on the seventh day? Could He have not been valuing His creation? Is it not interesting that we could learn somewhat the same thing from our "primitive" brothers and sisters in the rain forest?

John E. Swanson  
May, 1989

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## MINISTRY PROJECT I

### Report

John E. Swanson

Chicago Doctor of Ministry Cluster

September 24, 1990

### Ministry Setting Annalysis

The Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center is a facility (located in Oregon, Illinois) and a program (exportable to many outdoor ministry facilities around the state of Illinois and eastern Missouri.) It is owned by four Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (the three in Illinois and Missouri/Kansas).

Thousands of people, young to old, poor to rich, urban, suburban, and rural are served throughout the year in camping, retreat, and outdoor education events.

The LOMC Mission Statement says it best: LOMC is to be the Church in outdoor settings nurturing the Christian faith and providing experiences connecting the Word of God with the world of God.

Through Bible studies, worship, play, environmental studies, group life, and games participants can engage in programs for extended periods of time from one day to two weeks.

The setting for ministry has several components:

The out-of-doors

A recreational motif

Many age groups

Multicultural

Intentional community

The out-of-doors is the learning arena for religious education. The environment is taken seriously as a part of the process. It is an unique

setting for the Church because most of the programs of the Church are delivered inside buildings.

It is unfortunate that so often the Church does outdoor ministries either by doing outside what could be done more effectively indoors, ignoring the learning opportunities of the outside setting, or by staying inside to "learn" and go outside to "play."

The leadership constituency of the Church needs to be converted to recognize the natural world as a resource in its own right to learn about God.

One of my favorite dialogues is when people walk on the LOMC site and ask for the location of the chapel. My response is, "Take off your shoes. You are on holy ground." The response is usually a thoughtful look and then, "Yes, that's right." Buildings and water make up a camp for many, not land.

Church camping occurs in a recreational motif and is perceived as a leisure time activity. It is what can be done with disposable time and money. "Did you have fun?" is the question adults ask children. I would wish they would ask, "What did you learn?"

By being a recreational environment there is the assumption that land is not as sacred as the right of people to play. I call it "wreck-creation." A responsible way to play can be learned, and the Church can be the educator.

Unfortunately, when play is a part of a church activity it is often done with indifference toward developing the skills of a person, managing the safety of the participants, caring for the equipment, and stewarding the land. Canoeing is a great example. Many a canoe has been rammed into the side of a river bank in the name of "children need to have fun."

Recreation can be practiced as re-creation, and outdoor ministries can teach that, too.

It is assumed by some that camping is a summer program for children. This is not so. It is a year around program for people of all ages. This is becoming more noticeable as the population gets older.

The outdoor ministry facility is a superb setting for multicultural experiences. The Church is composed of many races of people, and we need to help the constituents learn about each other. What better way is there than living together in an intentional community for an extended period of time?

Life together can be startling because the community does not only talk about forgiveness, it practices it.

At one time church camping was equated with tent meetings and the sawdust trail evangelism. People were to be converted to the faith, have a significant religious experience, and make a decision for Jesus Christ.

It is my conviction that outdoor ministries is intended to help individuals learn about the application of the faith to daily life and to the world.

#### Analysis of Ministry Needs

Each year a Resource for the summer camping program and the year around retreats is written. It focuses on a theme and gives materials for worship, Bible studies, related environmental activities, games, and arts and crafts.

This resource is designed to prepare and guide summer staff personnel (called small group leaders at LOMC), confirmation camping pastors, and pastors and lay people involved in programs throughout the year.

Each year the resource emphasizes one of the articles of the

Apostles' Creed. For the program year of 1990-91 the Third Article is the subject matter.

The users of the Resource depend upon it to give them directions and suggestions which combine experiences in the human and non-human world and the Biblical tradition.

One issue addressed during this year is inclusivity.

Inclusivity is a goal/guideline/hope of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

If the Church is going to be inclusive it requires practice. What other setting is more conducive to this than one where people of many backgrounds and colors can live, work, study, play, and worship together in intentional community as they live in small groups with capable college-age leaders?

Small group camping is the style of organization of the LOMC summer program. The groups are composed of six to ten youth with usually no more than two youth from any one given neighborhood or congregation. The members of the small group do all of their activities together with one staff person as leader.

People living together from a multitude of ethnic backgrounds creates many possibilities for growth. It also introduces problems: identity, behavior, cooperation, prejudice, expectations, former experiences, etc.

The need for LOMC to deal with inclusiveness has been identified by the summer staff and the LOMC Board of Directors as a result of an increase in the number of black campers during the past years. This gives cause for all leaders and participants in this situation to understand the diversity of people, learn how to bring people together from diverse

cultures, develop the skill to affirm personal identity and at the same time enhance the life of the community, live within the awesome spectrum of fearlessness in confrontation and intimidation, and recognize hopefulness and hopelessness in the present realities.

The analysis took the shape of a questionnaire that asked respondents to rank items from two perspectives: how one needs to be equipped to lead and what leaders want participants to learn when involved in multicultural experiences.

The questionnaire took this form:

To equip me	What I want
to lead I need	group members to learn
_____ Understanding diversity of cultures _____	_____
_____ Living in community with persons of diverse cultures _____	_____
_____ Knowing one's own cultural/ethnic identity _____	_____
_____ Developing the personal capability to cope with persons _____	_____
_____ of/from other cultures _____	_____
_____ Dealing with shaped attitudes of persons toward persons _____	_____
_____ of other cultures _____	_____
_____ Identifying and overcoming intimidation _____	_____
_____ Managing intercultural conflict _____	_____

#### Project Objectives

1. Prepare a paper that serves as background information for the 1990 LOMC Resource that addresses the issue of inclusivity within the study of the work of the Holy Spirit and utilizes concepts from the discipline of ecological studies for additional insights and reflection.
2. Share paper with various audiences for discussion and added insights.
3. Use in the orientation of the 1990 LOMC Summer staff.



## Preparing and Implementing of the Project

In November and December of 1989 I distributed the above questionnaire to former summer camp staff members, pastors involved in Confirmation camping, and members of the LOMC Board of Directors.

I received the following response. The numbers indicate the average of the respondents ranking of each of the items in relationship to the other issues:

	To equip me	
	to lead I need	
Understanding diversity of cultures. . . . .	5	
Living in community with persons of diverse cultures . . . . .	6	
Knowing one's own cultural/ethnic identity. . . . .	7	
Developing the personal capability to cope with persons		
of/from other cultures. . . . .	2	
Dealing with shaped attitudes of persons toward persons		
of other cultures. . . . .	1	
Identifying and overcoming intimidation . . . . .	4	
Managing intercultural conflict. . . . .	2	

As I studied the responses I prepared a background paper in January and February. The outline of the content can be seen in the enclosed chart of daily learning intentions.

In April and May I shared my observations and the intentions of the resource with a variety of people. There was agreement on the basic assumptions. Involved in the discussion were pastors of congregations serving black communities, pastors using the LOMC program, lay people in the black community, campers' parents, and summer staff. The most knowledgeable people were obviously people who worked in the LOMC setting

with the youth from various minority communities.

This report is submitted with a copy of the background paper, "Ants and Bats and Things Like That" - Ecology of the Spirit. This paper was used in May and June for staff training.

The usefulness of the background paper was rated on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). The number indicates the average.

Understanding diversity of cultures . . . . .	6
Living in community with persons of diverse cultures. . . . .	6
Knowing one's own cultural/ethnic identity . . . . .	5
Developing the personal capability to cope with persons of/from other cultures . . . . .	6
Dealing with shaped attitudes of persons toward persons of other cultures . . . . .	5
Identifying and overcoming intimidation . . . . .	5
Managing intercultural conflict . . . . .	6

In the final analysis the purpose of Project I was to write a background paper that would organize in an intelligible form and integrate the three areas of learning for the summer program, multicultural, environmental, and theological. This paper would then serve as a basis for the Resource and the staff training event which is Project II.

## MINISTRY PROJECT II

### Report

John E. Swanson

Chicago Doctor of Ministry Cluster

September 24, 1990

Ministry Setting Analysis (See Ministry Project I)

Analysis of Ministry Needs (See Ministry Project I)

### Project Objectives

1. Prepare a Resource that will give leaders materials for worship and devotional experiences, Bible studies, environmental activities, games, and arts and crafts.
2. Include in the Resource learning activities that address the issue of inclusivity within the study of the work of the Holy Spirit and utilizes concepts from the discipline of ecological studies for additional insights and reflection.
3. Conduct orientation events for the leadership of the summer program.

### Preparing and Implementing of the Project

From January to April a Resource was written under the title "Ants and Bats and Things Like That" - Ecology of the Spirit. The responses to the questionnaire was used.

What I want

group members to learn

Understanding diversity of cultures. . . . . 1  
Living in community with persons of diverse cultures . . . . . 2  
Knowing one's own cultural/ethnic identity. . . . . 5  
Developing the personal capability to cope with person

of/from other cultures . . . . .	2
Dealing with shaped attitudes of persons toward persons	
of other cultures. . . . .	4
Identifying and overcoming intimidation. . . . .	6
Managing intercultural conflict. . . . .	7

A copy of the Resource is included. The muticultural activities are found under "Group Life Activities" in each section.

In April and May I prepared a staff training event. A copy of that is also included.

The materials in the Resource were organized on the basis of the way the issues were rated by the respondents and what was felt to be the most important activities that would help participants learn.

The methods for preparing the Resource and designing the staff training event were based on a group process/experiential learning model rather than a confrontational model. When professionals prepare a summer camping staff the methodology used for training is the methodology the leader wants used with the campers. The staff makes use of the activities the way in which they experienced them.

When one works with adults a confrontational model has its place. However, in this setting it is not appropriate.

The staff rated the value of staff training on a scale from 1 (low) to 10 (high) and the effectiveness of this training in the summer program.

	Staff Training	Summer Program
Understanding diversity of cultures . . . . .	7	7
Living in community with persons of diverse cultures. . . . .	7	8
Knowing one one's cultural/ethnic identity . . . . .	7	7
Developing the personal capability to cope with person		

of/from other cultures. . .	7	8
Dealing with shaped attitudes of persons toward persons		
of other cultures . .	7	7
Identifying and overcoming intimidation . . . . .	6	7
Managing intercultural conflict . . . . .	7	8

One anecdote from this summer dramatized the impact of the multicultural experience.

There were four white girls and two black girls in a small group. The black girls were from the Cabrini Green area in Chicago. All the girls in the group lived together in the same room. When they arrived there for the first time each girl took a bed. However, later that evening the white girls talked about trading beds. This they did.

The next day there was some conflict between the black girls and the white girls. In the process of the conversation the black girls were asked what they thought contributed to the situation. They said that the white girls were leaving them out. The white girls acted surprised. The black girls gave the example of the trading of beds. The white girls never considered that the black girls would want to be involved in the trade. The white girls did not even realize the black girls had been left out until this conversation occurred.

The following day the group leader reported that both the black and white girls made efforts to include all the girls in the least of the decisions.

As members of the staff reported their reactions to the summer two things became apparent regarding the multicultural facet of the program. First, the staff members recognized their own racist responses and were able to deal with them on a daily basis as they worked with the campers.

This often involved reflecting on their own behavior and amending it. Second, when there was a group with a multicultural composition the racial diversity and the need to be inclusive was a major part of the discussion. These discussions would impact the behavior of the entire group.

What other measures can be used to evaluate the success of this summer's efforts. Will the campers return next summer? Will the parents be apprehensive? Is the multicultural environment an environment in which people want to make an investment? We wait to see.

What has begun this summer as an intentional facet of the learning process will continue. This is a commitment made by the church.

LUTHERAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CHICAGO

ADAPTATION AND SACRIFICE, NECESSITY OF  
A REFLECTION ON DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, CONFESSOR

TERM PAPER FOR  
BONHOEFFER, CONFESSOR  
PROFESSOR ROBERT BERTRAM

BY  
JOHN E. SWANSON

MOUNT MORRIS, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 1990

In the natural world adaptation and the food chain are two necessary components. Adaptation assures the future of a species. The food chain assures the future of the habitat. When adaptation ceases to occur a species becomes extinct. When a link in the food chain is removed the ecosystem is disrupted.

When Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the Christian church and what it means to be a Christian person there are parallels to the natural world scenario. In ecological terms the church must adapt to maintain its unique role in the world. Likewise, the individual Christian is called to make one's own sacrifice for the sake of others. In fact, in both instances such behavior is necessary. This is confessorhood.

Eberhard Bethge celebrates Bonhoeffer as one who helped people "grow to maturity."<sup>1</sup> Is this another way to interpret confessorhood?

In the natural world adaptation and the food chain are processes whereby species and individual organisms become mature, living out their lives to make a complete contribution to the ecosystem.

In a sense all Christians are called to be confessors, to profess their faith in word and deed, but few are chosen to have the esteemed title "confessor" bestowed on them. All Christians are to be obedient to Christ, the cross, and the word of God and thereby fulfill the necessary place of the faithful in their own historical reality. But there have been, are, and will be circumstances in history where the name "confessor" is for a select few. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is one of these few.

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<sup>1</sup> Eberhard Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1970), 781.



The plan for this paper is to explore the meaning of confessorhood in relationship with Bonhoeffer by interfacing two disciplines, ecological studies and theology. The two specific ecological concepts are adaptation and the food chain. It is hoped that from this interplaying of themes some insights can be derived for both disciplines.

It would be appropriate to outline some of Bonhoeffer's approach to the natural world in his theology.

In Ethics Bonhoeffer points out that the word "natural" has fallen into disrepute and is treated as the antithesis of the word of God. The fact is that Jesus Christ has affirmed the natural world by entering it.<sup>2</sup> The cross of Christ is God's gracious "yes" to the world. In a letter to pastors in 1939 Bonhoeffer wrote:

"He has placed this cross upon the earth. Under the cross he returns us to the earth, and its work and toil, but in so doing he binds us anew to the earth and to the people who live, act, fight, and suffer upon it."<sup>3</sup>

Bonhoeffer makes a distinction between the creation and the natural. The natural comes after the Fall and is oriented toward the coming of Christ. Over against the natural is the unnatural which "closes the door to the coming of Christ."<sup>4</sup> The natural world is God's arena where redeeming work takes place.

Bonhoeffer perceives nature as God's effort to preserve life.

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<sup>2</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics, ed. by Eberhard Bethge, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), 101-103.

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "To the Brethren of Finkenwalde and Pastors of the Confessing Church: Circular Letters in the Church struggle and the War Years," eds. Geoffrey B. Kelly and F. Burton Nelson, A Testament to Freedom, The Essential Writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (New York: HarperCollin Publisher, 1990), 470.

<sup>4</sup> Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 102.

What he says is similar to an ecologist's understanding of adaptation. Nature's function is to safeguard creation so that restoration can take place. "Destruction of the natural is the destruction of life."<sup>5</sup>

When Bonhoeffer discusses the four divine mandates, labor, marriage, government, and the church, he approaches them as "orders of preservation" rather than "orders of creation."<sup>6</sup>

The divine mandates are means by which "the love of God for the world and for men . . . is revealed in Jesus Christ."<sup>7</sup> These are not earthly powers.

The natural world is an end in itself and not a means to an end. Bonhoeffer arrives at this from his doctrines of justification and Christology. All of creation is encountered by Jesus Christ.<sup>8</sup>

To set the stage for the discussion that follows two basic ecological concepts need to be summarized, adaptation and the food chain. The former is a process whereby species avoid being caught and consumed. The latter is the process whereby a system is dependent upon entities being caught and consumed.

There are four reasons organisms adapt: to survive, to procreate, to fit into the ecosystem, and to retain diversity. Each species has a niche (a profession) in the environment. If the species fails to fulfill this profession it becomes extinct.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 103-105.

<sup>6</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage, 621-622.

<sup>7</sup> Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 255.

<sup>8</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage, 623.

Adaptation is an evolutionary process whereby a species undergoes physical and behavioral changes as it interacts with its environment. In this way its destiny is shaped. The species also develop means to populate and thereby assure their future.

The process of adaptation is slow and transpires through the reproductive process and the transmission of genes. It is in this context that evolutionists will deliberate over natural selection and survival of the fittest (i.e. the entities capacity to reproduce).

Adaptation is not assimilation. The former, which has been called "selfish," is passed from one generation to another. The latter is not. Assimilation is a process each individual entity must experience.<sup>9</sup>

Adaptation contributes to the distinctiveness of a species in an ecosystem, its diversity. Diversity is one of our planets most nonrenewable resources, says ecologist Paul Ehrlich.<sup>10</sup> Also, it is diversity that strongly contributes to the stability of the environment.

Adaptation is the behavior of the species. Individual entities fit into the process. But the process is for the good of both the species and the environment in which the species exist.

The second ecological concept is the food chain. It is the way entities serve one another in the ecosystem, one being dependent upon the other.

The food chain process is usually called predator/prey, one species consuming another. This terminology is commercial, competitive, and

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<sup>9</sup> Paul R. Ehrlich, The Machinery of Nature (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 21-22.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 213.

consumer oriented. However, it implies something that is erroneous, i.e. the species in the food chain are at the mercy of their consumer.

The fact is that the organisms higher on the food chain do not control the organisms below them. It is, in fact, the other way around. It is the prey that determines the destiny of the predator. It is the one who dies, loses the struggle, finds oneself as the sacrifice for the other, the servant, that gives life to the other.

In Scripture these ideas are characteristics of Jesus and the Christian life recorded in Matthew 16:21-26 and Romans 12:1-2.

Another metaphor for describing the food chain is "sacrifice." It gives dignity to the prey in its humility. The prey is not taken, it gives. The giving up of one self is within the natural order. It is the way the system works.

Richard Cartwright Austin writes about the thinking of John Muir, a pioneer in the environmental movement, who speaks to this subject of sacrifice.

Muir saw that part of the religious problem was integrating death into life. Life in this world is food chains, each drawing life from consuming other lives. We may improve our own religious understanding if, as we eat, we reflect on how the deaths of some contribute to the lives of others. Though abuse can make it so, this need not be a hostile process. Beneath its tensions an ecology nurtures life for all. Jesus' death, morally distinctive in its religious impact, participates in this life-giving ecology.<sup>11</sup>

The theology of the cross is inherent in this metaphor. The consumer-oriented predator/prey metaphor is theology of glory.

Both these ecological concepts, adaptation and "sacrifice" are necessary for the ecosystem. In the former the species collectively are

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Cartwright Austin, Baptized into Wilderness, a Christian Perspective on John Muir (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 57.

involved. In the latter the individual entity is involved. As a species the collective organism makes itself unique and distinct to best serve the ecosystem. As an individual entity the species contribute to the well-being of others (sacrifice).

How do these ecological concepts fit into Bonhoeffer's understanding of the church and the Christian life under the title of "confessor?"

Basic in Bonhoeffer's understanding of the church is, "Let the Church be the Church!" It is necessary that the church not conform to the world. (Conformation in Ethics has to do with conforming to Christ.) The church must adapt to live responsibly in the world.

The church is grounded in Jesus Christ. She is shaped by the word of God, not by its members.<sup>12</sup> The church is Jesus Christ.

Bethge writes:

"(Bonhoeffer's) main anxiety was for the word and the true Church, as a watchman speaking to the need of the times, and he was as little concerned with confessional dogmatism as with a conservative insistence upon the position of the Church. The price of dogmatism was too high and what remained of the Church was not worth defending. But he was prepared to stake his reputation in order to preserve or build up anew the place where the voice of the voiceless might make itself heard."<sup>13</sup>

The church has no boundaries. There is no verdict regarding the saved and the lost. The church is the gathered who have faith and are together by virtue of the Word and Sacrament. These are the people living by the promises.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kelly and Nelson, introduction to A Testament to Freedom, 31.

<sup>13</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage, 435.

<sup>14</sup> Bonhoeffer, "Letters to Erwin Sutz," A Testament to Freedom, 435.

To be "in Christ" is to be "in the Church."<sup>15</sup> Regin Prenter points out that the reverse is not true.<sup>16</sup>

Christ is present in the church in His Word. The Holy Spirit is the "objective spirit of the church." This religious community is the collective person of Christ.<sup>17</sup>

The church exists as the confessing church in several ways. First, she realizes her sin and guilt. Bonhoeffer says,

The Confessing Church is the church which lives not by its purity, but in its impurity - the church of sinners, the church of repentance and grace, the church which can live only through Christ, through grace, and through faith.<sup>18</sup>

In "Thy Kingdom Come" Bonhoeffer describes the church as the gathering of the baptized, "the communion of sinners."<sup>19</sup>

Second, the church confesses Christ as Lord. In a sermon in 1933 Bonhoeffer identifies the church with Peter who both confesses and denies the Lordship of Christ. Peter and the church share weakness, denial, failure, unfaithfulness, faintheartedness, and timidity.<sup>20</sup>

In the same sermon Bonhoeffer says:

It is a great comfort which Christ gives to his church; you confess, preach, bear witness to me, and I alone will build where it pleases

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<sup>15</sup> Bonhoeffer, "The Communion of Saints," A Testament to Freedom, 60.

<sup>16</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage, 60.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>18</sup> Bonhoeffer, "The Confessing Church and the Ecumenical Movement," A Testament to Freedom, 154.

<sup>19</sup> Bonhoeffer, "Thy Kingdom Come: the Prayer of the Church for the Kingdom of God on Earth," A Testament to Freedom, 92.

<sup>20</sup> Bonhoeffer, "Peter and the Church Struggle," A Testament to Freedom, 227.

me . . . Let the church remain the church! But church confess, confess, confess! Christ alone is your Lord, from his grace alone can you live as you are. Christ builds."<sup>21</sup>

Bonhoeffer sees the Confessing Church as "the eternal church because Christ protects her."<sup>22</sup>

Third, the confession of the church is not merely the verbalization that Christ is Lord. It is also deed. "The deed alone is our confession of faith before the world."<sup>23</sup> This deed is the church addressing the "concrete situation."

In 1932 Bonhoeffer states that this church has the capacity to adapt. God chooses the locus. It is not determined by the people of the state. It is not found among the privileged. God's choice includes a community that exists within the midst of culture.<sup>24</sup>

The proper place of the church is within the "daily reality of the world."<sup>25</sup>

Adaptation is inherent in the life of the church. She needs to set up systems to regenerate. She must fit into the whole with her peculiar profession, environmentalists would say "niche."

Bonhoeffer's position would be that it is the word of God that shapes the church to be what she is to be in the realistic world. The problem is there are those who choose not to confess this and take

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 228.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Bonhoeffer, "Thy Kingdom Come," A Testament to Freedom, 91.

<sup>24</sup> Bonhoeffer, "The Nature of the Church," A Testament to Freedom, 89.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 90.

seriously the necessity to be a part of the whole ecosystem.

Bonhoeffer depicts the idea of necessity in the church in terms of speaking, salt, and the extraordinary.

According to Bethge, Bonhoeffer "felt that the Church could only justify her existence in so far as she spoke out upon the questions of tyranny and on behalf of its victims."<sup>26</sup> It is in this context that the church speaks for the Jews, the oppressed. "Open your mouth for the deaf," was the rallying cry.<sup>27</sup> Bethge also points out that Kelly and Nelson in A Testament to Freedom have developed their book under the theme of Bonhoeffer's advocacy for freedom of the oppressed by the Hitler regime and freedom within the church to obey the call of Jesus Christ.<sup>28</sup>

To be a disciple means to be the salt of the earth. "Everything else can be revived by salt, however bad it has gone - only salt which loses its savor has no hope of recovery."<sup>29</sup> Salt is the agent of restoration. Disciples are the renewers and reformers in the world.

Bonhoeffer spends a great deal of time in The Cost of Discipleship elaborating the "extraordinary." This characteristic of discipleship makes the Christian distinctive from others. The Christian is not naturally like others and sees life in a different light.

What does it mean to be extraordinary? Bonhoeffer says:

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<sup>26</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage, 340.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>28</sup> Bethge, forward to A Testament to Freedom, XII.

<sup>29</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), 100.



It is the life described in the beatitudes, the life of the followers of Jesus, the light which illuminates, the city set on the hill, the way of self-renunciation, of absolute purity, truthfulness and meekness. It is unreserved love for our enemies, for the unloving and the unloved, love for our religious, political and personal adversaries. In every case it is the love which was fulfilled in the cross of Christ. What is the (extraordinary)? It is the love of Jesus Christ Himself, who went patiently and obediently to the cross - it is in fact the cross itself. The cross is the differential of the Christian religion, the power which enables the Christian to transcend the world and to win the victory. The passio in the love of the Crucified is the supreme expression of the "extraordinary: quality of the Christian life."<sup>30</sup>

The extraordinary is not what the followers of Jesus are, but what they do.<sup>31</sup>

All the ingredients of the ecological concept of adaptation are in Bonhoeffer's concept of the church. His concern is that the church survive and continue in her unique role. She is shaped by the word of God to be the servant of history. Her nature is to be distinctive, and it is necessary for her to function in the "order of preservation" as the fourth mandate for the "eternal salvation of the whole world."<sup>32</sup>

In the historical sequence of things the Confessing Church was given birth at the Barmen Synod in 1934. It stood in contrast to the German Evangelical Church. At this synod and the subsequent Dahlem Synod the Confession Church sought to order herself.

Through various and sundry means the Confessing Church sought to make her unique contribution to the German and world community.

In his attempt to make his point about the way the Confessing Church is diverse Bonhoeffer made the controversial statement, "Whoever

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>32</sup> Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 76.

knowingly cuts himself off from the confessing Church in Germany cuts himself off from salvation."<sup>33</sup>

Living confession does not mean the putting of one dogmatic thesis up against another, but it means a confession in which it is really a matter of life or death.<sup>34</sup>

The ecumenical movement is a habitat in the whole ecosystem of which the Confessing Church is a part. In solidarity with the remainder of Christendom the Confessing Church sees her sin and guilt for the brokenness of Christianity. It is also the ecumenical movement which helps the Confessing Church identify concrete situations in which the church can act.

As far as Bonhoeffer is concerned the Confessing Church "must be governed by the Confession and the Confession alone."<sup>35</sup> The confession is authoritatively expounded in the Barmen and Dahlem Declarations.

A gap developed between Bonhoeffer and the Confessing Church when the Confessing Synod in 1938 decided in favor of the oath of allegiance to the Fuhrer which would result in the Aryans being marked.<sup>36</sup>

Rather than adapting, the Confessing Church assimilated itself. This discouraged Bonhoeffer because, as pointed out earlier regarding the relationship of assimilation to adaptation, this was not something he wished to have occur within and have passed on in the church.

The ecological concept of adaptation is also apparent in Bonhoeffer-

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<sup>33</sup> Bonhoeffer, "The Question of the Boundaries of the Church and Church Union," A Testament to Freedom, 177.

<sup>34</sup> Bonhoeffer, "The Confessing Church and the Ecumenical Movement," A Testament to Freedom, 151.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>36</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage, 507.

fer's formation of non-religious Christianity in a "world come of age." The roots for this can be seen in a letter to his parents in 1929 where he said, "I believe that there is really some justification for the foolish saying that religion is the opium of the people."<sup>37</sup>

In a letter on the day of Baptism of Dietrich Wilhelm Rudigen Bethge in 1944 Bonhoeffer anticipates a new day in the church.

By the time you have grown up, the church's form will have changed greatly. . . . It is not for us to prophesy the day . . . when men will once more be called so to utter the word of God that the world will be changed and renewed by it. It will be a new language, perhaps quite non-religious, but liberating and redeeming - as was Jesus' language; it will shock people and yet overcome them by its power, it will be the language of a new righteousness and truth proclaiming God's peace with people and the coming of his Kingdom.<sup>38</sup>

It is interesting to note a quote by Adam von Trott where the word "adapt" is used in reference to raising the question whether a childlike Christian faith can develop to carry the weight and problems of today. To develop means to relate the faith to mature responsibility of humanity's involvement in the world. He says the word "adapt" is what Bonhoeffer means by "interpretation."<sup>39</sup>

By what does Bonhoeffer mean "non-religious interpretation?" It is more an ethical category rather than hermeneutical. It is a "call to penitence directed at the Church and its present form - for the sake of . . . the kerygma, the language."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>38</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953; New York: First Macmillan Paperback Edition, 1972), 300.

<sup>39</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage, 783.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Non-religious interpretation means to identify with the world. One makes ethical decisions, is the Servant for others, pays with one's own life, relates to the outcasts, and liberates others "to find their own responsible answers to life through (their) own powerlessness."<sup>41</sup>

In the midst of loosing oneself in and to the world Bonhoeffer submits the notion of the "arcane discipline," which is the church's identity. Found in the "secrets," the "mystery," through prayer, preaching, worship, the eucharist, the individual, and the church is the presence of Christ. The discipline is more than a retreat. "In the arcane Christ takes everyone who really encounters him by the shoulders and turns him round to face his fellow-men and the world."<sup>42</sup>

The non-religious interpretation and the "arcane discipline" balance each other.

This is a classic description of ecological adaptation. Both dynamics are going on - relating to the world and assuring the distinctiveness of the self. When this balance fails adaptation fails, and the species is left wanting.

The church must adapt to be the church and be true to her confession.

Confessorhood is also an individual act. As an independent entity the Christian is called to discipleship. Confessorship/discipleship begins at the cross with sacrifice and suffering.

When a person is baptized one is incorporated into Christ and more

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 781.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 787.

specifically into Christ's cross of suffering and death.<sup>43</sup>

Suffering is an individual act.

It is infinitely easier to suffer in obedience to a human command than in the freedom of one's own responsibility. It is infinitely easier to suffer with others than to suffer alone. It is infinitely easier to suffer publicly and honorably than apart and ignominiously. It is infinitely easier to suffer through staking one's life than to suffer spiritually. Christ suffered as a free man alone, apart and in ignominy, in body and spirit; and since then many Christians have suffered with him.<sup>44</sup>

Secondly, being a confessor means owning up to guilt. On the one hand one must acknowledge one's own self-righteousness.

Not only do the followers of Jesus renounce their rights, they renounce their own righteousness too. . . When all their sins have been forgiven, and they have received newness of life, they still must long for the renewal of the earth and for the perfect righteousness of God. They are still involved in the world's curse, and affected by its sin.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand when guilt is identified in others we share in that same guilt. When we call down God's wrath on the enemy the vengeance hits the "caller" harder "since we are guilty ourselves and deserve God's wrath."<sup>46</sup> Christ accuses the world. We do not! "When Christ takes action against sin, are not we ourselves in the midst of the accused as well?"<sup>47</sup>

The experience of guilt is due to one's encounter with the "form of Christ." Then Bonhoeffer adds, "In the recognition of guilt begins

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<sup>43</sup> Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, 176.

<sup>44</sup> Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, 14.

<sup>45</sup> Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, 94.

<sup>46</sup> Bonhoeffer, "Vengeance and Deliverance," A Testament to Freedom, 293.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 294.

the process by which man is conformed with Christ."<sup>48</sup>

For the confessor guilt is closely allied to responsibility. In order to act responsibly one does and must become guilty. Jesus did. Bonhoeffer calls this "responsible deputyship." To escape guilt is to detach oneself from the reality of human existence. " . . . real innocence shows itself . . . in a man's entering into the fellowship of guilt for the sake of other men."<sup>49</sup>

In a letter at Christmas, 1942, Bonhoeffer says,

The ultimate question for a responsible man to ask is not how he is to extricate himself heroically from the affair, but how the coming generation is to live. It is only from this question, with its responsibility towards history, that fruitful solutions can come, even if for the time being they are very humiliating.<sup>50</sup>

Third, for the confessor the scene of action is both concrete and ambiguous.

Answering the question, what type of cross must one carry?

Bonhoeffer responds by saying that this is what one discovers as one follows and shares in life with Christ.<sup>51</sup>

Bonhoeffer quotes Luther in The Cost of Discipleship:

"Discipleship is not limited to what you can comprehend - it must transcend all comprehension. Plunge into the deep waters beyond your own comprehension, and I will help you to comprehend even as I do. Bewilderment is the true comprehension. Not to know where you are going is the true knowledge."<sup>52</sup>

The external indicator of the concrete situation is found in the

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<sup>48</sup> Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 46.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>50</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage, 702.

<sup>51</sup> Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, 74.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 76.

neighbor's claim upon the Christian. "Neighborliness is not a quality in the people, it is simply their claim on ourselves."<sup>53</sup>

Now the subject of necessity issues forth. Bonhoeffer would say it is divine, natural, extraordinary, and inherent in cross-bearing.

Reflecting on Jesus' life Bonhoeffer writes:

Suffering and rejection sum up the whole cross of Jesus. To die on the cross means to die despised and rejected of men. Suffering and rejection are laid upon Jesus as a divine necessity, and every attempt to prevent it is the work of the devil, especially when it comes from the disciples; for it is in fact an attempt to prevent Christ from being Christ.<sup>54</sup>

The submission to the cross by His disciples has a must in it for suffering by them, too.

Bonhoeffer distinguishes between necessity and accident. Cross bearing is not a tragedy. Suffering is the "first of an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ."<sup>55</sup>

Dying to sin is also necessary.

To be formed in the likeness of the Crucified - this means being a man sentenced by God. In his daily existence man carries with him God's sentence of death, the necessity of dying before God for the sake of sin.<sup>56</sup>

In a back door fashion Bonhoeffer mentions the necessity of obedience:

Only the devil has an answer for our moral difficulties, and he says: 'Keep on posing problems, and you will escape the necessity of obedience.'<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 70-71.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>56</sup> Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 19.

<sup>57</sup> Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, 65.

Finally, the role of disciple is the role of the confessor. "When Christ calls a man He bids him come and die."<sup>58</sup> George Cicestor, Bishop of Chichester says in the Forward to The Cost of Discipleship that "the essence of discipleship is contained in these words."<sup>59</sup> This is confessorhood!

Bonhoeffer is noted for his participation in the conspiracy to assassinate Hitler and his death at the hands of the Nazis.

In a sermon in 1932 Bonhoeffer preached, not realizing how prophetic an utterance this would be, according to Bethge:<sup>60</sup>

We should not be surprised if times come for our church, too, when the blood of martyrs will be called for. But this blood, if we really have the courage and the fidelity to shed it, will not be so innocent and clear as that of the first who testified. On our blood a great guilt would lie: that of the useless servant.<sup>61</sup>

It would seem that Bonhoeffer's choice to enter the conspiracy would be a far cry different from his attitude regarding requiting evil expressed in The Cost of Discipleship. Commenting on Matthew 5:38-42 he says, "The only way to overcome evil is to let it run its course so that it does not find the resistance it is looking for."<sup>62</sup>

However, Bethge believes that Bonhoeffer left open the risking of one's life for political freedom.<sup>63</sup> Commenting on "Blessed are they

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>60</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage, 700.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>62</sup> Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, 121-122.

<sup>63</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage 580-581.



that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," Bonhoeffer writes:

This does not refer to the righteousness of God, but to suffering in a just cause. Suffering for their own just judgments and actions. . . . The world will be offended by them, and so the disciples will be persecuted for righteousness' sake. . . . It is important that Jesus gives His blessing not merely to suffering incurred directly for the confessing of His name, but to suffering in any just cause.<sup>64</sup>

To be an individual confessor is analogous to being an entity in the ecological food chain. In order for the system to survive someone must give up oneself for the other. However, the process, though it has its humiliating side, is one in which the prey contributes to the destiny of the predator.

Bonhoeffer emphasizes living within community, but there is a strain of individualism as well. He says in The Cost of Discipleship, "Through the call of Jesus men become individuals."<sup>65</sup> In the same writing he says they do end up in fellowship.<sup>66</sup>

As a confessor Bonhoeffer chooses individually to enter into the conspiracy to assassinate Hitler. This is his own doing. For him it was necessary.

In both arenas, the environmental and confessorhood, three things stand out:

First, adaptation as an ecological concept and sacrifice as a biblical concept are natural to the processes of life in both the human and non-human spheres.

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<sup>64</sup> Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, 97.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 84.

Second, adaptation and sacrifice are necessary. Does this mean there is no choice? The answer is yes and no. In the Christian community for both the individual and the church if one answers no, one fails to realize the claim of Christ and the world on oneself and does not live one's life to the fullest as a natural being or a Christian person. If one answers yes, one has responded in trust to God and love to neighbor and is fully aware of what it means to be a confessor. In the natural world the answer is yes!

Third, the idea of necessity has a time dimension to it. There is the appropriate, unscheduled time, the kairos when adaptation and sacrifice occur. The circumstances of history have something to do with the conferring of the title "confessor" upon the individual and the church.

Fourth, maturity in the natural world is the individual entity and the species living themselves out fully within the ecosystem. For the Christian, and the Christian community one is mature in Christ, the church and the community of the world as one is obedient to the cross and to living for others. Maturity and confessorship go hand in hand.

Bethge summarizes this well when he says:

Thus, Bonhoeffer is able to speak of 'orthodoxy' as the 'attempt to rescue the Church as an institution for salvation', and of 'false religious obligations and inhibitions', but can also urge us to accept responsibility for others and make possible the mature cooperation and partnership of the world. 'The Church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving.' Incidentally, is not the reason for Bonhoeffer's personal influence his mysterious capacity to help men on the way to maturity?<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Bethge, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Man of Vision, Man of Courage, 781.

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