A Tale of Two Francises
(with hints of a third)

CARL FICTORIE
PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY
DORDT COLLEGE
SIOUX CENTER, IOWA
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AUTHORS AND TITLES

COMMON THEMES

A COMMON THEOLOGY OF CREATION

DIFFERENT THEMES

CONCLUSION
Introduction
Who are the authors and what are the books we are considering?
Two Francises

FRANCIS SCHAEFFER
- 1912 – 1984
  Westminster Theological Seminary
  Faith Theological Seminary
- Pastored several congregations in the Bible Presbyterian Church
- Founder of L’Abri Fellowship
- 1960s, publishes:
  - The God Who is There
  - Escape from Reason
  - He is There and He is not Silent
- 1970 – Pollution and the Death of Man
  (republished in 1992)
- A minister in the Reformed tradition working to address the intellectual and spiritual impoverishment of post WWII western society.

POPE FRANCIS
- b. 1936 as Jorge Mario Bergoglio
- 1958 – becomes novitiate in Society of Jesus
- 1969 – ordained as priest
- 2001 – elevated to Cardinal
  - Meditations for the Religious, 1982
  - Reflections of Hope, 1992
  - Corruption and Sin: Some Thoughts on Corruption, 2006
  - True Power Is Service, 2007
- 2013 – elected Pope
  - chooses the name Francis in honor of St. Francis of Assisi
- 2015 – Encyclical Laudato Si’
- A Jesuit priest working to address the social and economic impoverishment of South America.
Pollution and the Death of Man

Pollution
- word counts in text:
  - pollution: 0
  - ecology: 15
  - ecological problem: 12
  - environment: 7
- the word “environmentalism” starts replacing “conservationism” in the ‘60s
  - growing tension between nature as a resource and nature as a moral object
    - (R. F. Nash, *The Rights of Nature*, pp. 8-9)

Death of Man
- links the ecological crisis to the modern pantheistic worldview
- word count: death (5), man (>70)
- A title meant to raise awareness, to catch attention and call for a new vision
Laudato Si’: on Care of Our Common Home

- *Laudato Si’*
  - Latin for “Praise be to you”
  - Opening line of Francis Assisi’s *Canticle of the Creatures*
- *Care for*
  - A moral responsibility for creation
- *Our*
  - He will argue that this means all people and all creatures
- *Common Home*
  - We are obliged to treat creation as a shared space
- *Encyclical: a circulating letter to the bishops*
  - Concerns a point of doctrine, but typically more personal and of lower rank than the Papal Bull
  - A title meant to press for action, to move forward on the ecological problem.
Common Themes

What major ideas are found in both *Pollution and the Death of Man* and *Laudato Si’*?
Critiquing modern techno-pragmatic worldview

FS: “Technologically, modern man does everything he can do; he functions on this single boundary principle. Modern man, seeing himself as autonomous, with no personal-infinite God who has spoken, has no adequate universal to supply an adequate second boundary condition; and man, being fallen, is not only finite, but sinful. Thus man’s pragmatic choices have no reference point beyond human egoism.... Man with his greed has no real reason not to rape nature and treat it as a reverse ‘consumer object’. He sees nature as without value or rights.” pg. 92-93

“These are the two factors that lead to the destruction of our environment: money and time—or to say it another way, greed and haste.” pg. 82

“As Christians we have to learn to say ‘Stop!’ because after all, greed is destructive of nature at this point, and there is a time to take one’s time.” pg. 85

PF: “Technology...is presented as the only way of solving these problems, in fact proves incapable of seeing the mysterious network of relations between things and so sometimes solves one problem only to create others.” p20

“[T]hese problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduced things to rubbish.” p22

“The alliance between the economy and technology ends up sidelining anything unrelated to its immediate interests.” p54

“There is a tendency to believe that every increase in power means “an increase of ‘progress’ itself”,...as if reality, goodness and truth automatically flow from technological and economic power as such.” p105
The need for a Christian moral foundation

FS:
“Lynn White understood the need of a base in the area of ecology....Here I believe he is completely right. Men do what they think. Whatever their worldview is, this is the thing which will spill over into the external world.” pg. 13

“So pantheism is not going to solve our international ecological problem. Lynn White’s position is not going to solve it because it is obvious in practice that man really does have a special role in nature that nothing else has. And, third, a Platonic view of Christianity is not going to solve it....Let us now consider” the question of the genuine Biblical view. pg. 44

PF:
“Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and “take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system”. Accordingly, our human ability to transform reality must proceed in line with God’s original gift of all that is.” quoting John Paul II – p5

“Human ecology also implies another profound reality: the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment.” p115
Relationships are fundamental to creation

FS: Because of the fall: “Man was divided from God, first; and then, ever since the Fall, man is separated from himself....the next division is that man is divided from other men...[a]nd then man is divided from nature, and nature is divided from nature.” pg. 66

If we are in the right relationship, then “The balance of nature will be more nearly what it should be, and there will be a way to utilize nature for man and yet not destroy the resources which man needs.” pg. 95

“On the side of God’s infinity everything else is finite and equally separated from God; but on the side of His personality, God has created man in His own image. Therefore, man’s relationship is upward rather than downward....but he is united to all other creatures as being created.” pg. 49

“Nature begins to look different. I am separated from it, yet related to it.” pg. 53

PF: “They [the creation accounts] suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin.” p66

“...that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others” p70

“Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. For believers, this becomes a question of fidelity to the Creator, since God created the world for everyone.” p93

“Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity.” p240
A Christian Theology of Creation (TOC)

Both offer a theology of creation as a solution to the ecological problem.
FS: “God was there before the beginning of the space-time continuum and God created everything out of nothing. From this, we must understand that creation is not an extension of the essence of God. Created things have an objective existence in themselves. They are really there.”  pg. 45

PF: “A spirituality which forgets God as all-powerful and Creator is not acceptable.”  p75

“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made’ (Ps 33:6). This tells us that the world came about as the result of a decision, not from chaos or chance, and this exalts it all the more.”  p77

“He creates all things, and He alone is Creator. Everything else is created. Only He is infinite, and only he is the Creator, everything else is dependent.”  pg. 48
TOC: Sin is the source of brokenness

FS: “Man was divided from God, first; and then, ever since the Fall, man is separated from himself….the next division is that man is divided from other men…[a]nd then man is divided from nature, and nature is divided from nature.” pg. 66

“…the Fall…not only separated man from God, but also caused other deep separations.” pg. 65

PF: “…due to the same evil: the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives, and hence human freedom is limitless.” p6

Quoting Patriarch Bartholomew “for to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God.” p8

“A misguided anthropocentrism leads to a misguided lifestyle. In the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, I noted that the practical relativism typical of our age is ‘even more dangerous than doctrinal relativism’. When human beings place themselves at the centre, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative.” p122
WE ARE CREATURES

FS: “But it also follows that all things are equally created by God. All things were equally created out of nothing. *All things, including man, are equal in their origin, as far as creation is concerned.*” pg. 47

PF: “It is enough to recognize that our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology.” p155

IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

FS: “…but on the side of [God’s] personality, God has created man in His own image…. Man is separated, as personal, from nature because he is made in the image of God.” pg. 49

“Man was given dominion over creation. This it true. But since the Fall man has exercised this dominion wrongly.” pg. 71

PF: “The Bible teaches that every man and woman is created out of love and made in God’s image and likeness. This shows us the immense dignity of each person…” p65

“*The modification of nature for useful purposes has distinguished the human family from the beginning.*” p102
TOC: Creatures have value

FS: “The value of the things is not in themselves autonomously, but that God made them—and thus they deserve to be treated with respect.” pg. 54

“It is the Biblical view of nature that gives nature a value in itself: not to be used merely as an argument in apologetics, but of value in itself because God made it.” pg. 46

“Thus God treats His creation with integrity: each thing in its own order, each thing the way he made it. If God treat His creation in that way, should we not treat our fellow-creatures with similar integrity?” pg. 57

PF: “It is not enough, however, to think of different species merely as potential “resources” to be exploited, while overlooking the fact that they have value in themselves.” p33

“[T]he Bible has no place for a tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures.” p68

“where other creatures are concerned, ‘we can speak of the priority of being over that of being useful’” p69

“This is not to forget that there is an infinite distance between God and the things of this world, which do not possess his fullness. Otherwise, we would not be doing the creatures themselves any good either, for we would be failing to acknowledge their right and proper place.” p88
TOC: Restoring right relationships

FS: “It [creation] belongs to God, and we are to exercise our dominion over these things not as though entitled to exploit them, but as things borrowed or held in trust.” pg 69

“He has a limiting principle; and in doing less, he has more, for his own humanness is at stake.” pg. 89

“Man has dominion; he has a right by choice, because he is a moral creature, a right by choice to have dominion. But he is also by choice to exercise it rightly.” pg. 74

“The church ought to be a “pilot plant”, where men can see in our congregations and missions a substantial healing of all the divisions, the alienations which man’s rebellion has produced.” pg. 80

“If I love the Lover, I love what the Lover has made.” pg. 93

“This is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails. Nor does it imply a divinization of the earth which would prevent us from working on it and protecting it in its fragility.” p90

“Developing the created world in a prudent way is the best way of caring for it, as this means that we ourselves become the instrument used by God to bring out the potential which he himself inscribed in things” p124

“Put simply, it is a matter of redefining our notion of progress.” p194

“We need to take up an ancient lesson.... It is the conviction that ‘less is more’.” p222

“So what they all need is an “ecological conversion”, whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them.” p217
Common Themes

A critique of the modern technological/mechanistic worldview

The need for a Christian moral foundation

Creation is about relationships

A Christian theology of creation

◦ God as creator
◦ Sin as the source of brokenness between the relationships in creation
◦ The special place and nature of humanity
◦ The value of creatures and nature as creations
◦ Restoring right relationships as the means of remediating ecological problems
Different Themes

Are these points of contention or merely different points of view?
Schaeffer: on White and Means

Critiques of:

Lynn White: “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”
- Blames Christianity for the problem of ecology
- “Dominion” leads to destruction of nature

“Lynn White understood the need of a base in the area of ecology.” pg. 13

“Both our present science and our present technology...are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our problem of ecology can be expected from them alone” pg. 13

“[St. Francis] tried to substitute the idea of the equality of all creatures, including men, for the idea of man’s limitless rule of creation.” pg. 13

- Argues that ecology is a problem of ethics
- Proposes pantheism as an ethical framework

Means says that “ecology is a problem of ethics, but that man’s only concept of ethics has been ‘man to man’.” pg. 16

“The pantheist views nature at normal. In this view, there is no place for abnormality in nature.” pg. 33

“Pantheism leaves us with the Marquis de Sade’s dictum, ‘What is, is right’ in morals, and man becomes no more than the grass.” pg. 35

“[Means] wanted a moral base on which to deal with the ecological problem, but soon all he had is the word moral. And what he was left with was the pragmatic and technological.” pg. 19
Pope Francis: consumerism and ecology

INDIVIDUALISTIC CONSUMERISM

“Men and women of our postmodern world run the risk of rampant individualism, and many problems of society are connected with today’s self-centred culture of instant gratification.” p162

“It is an attempt to legitimize the present model of distribution, where a minority believes that it has the right to consume in a way which can never be universalized, since the planet could not even contain the waste products of such consumption.” p50

 “[The] paradigm [of compulsive consumerism] leads people to believe that they are free as long as they have the supposed freedom to consume. But those really free are the minority who wield economic and financial power.” p203

INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

“Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” p49

“It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.” p139
“...Christianity does not automatically have an answer; it has to be the right kind of Christianity. Any Christianity that rests upon a dichotomy—some sort of Platonic concept—does not have an answer to nature; and we must say that much orthodoxy, much evangelical Christianity, is rooted in a Platonic concept.” pg. 41

“The Christianity of the Reformation does give a unified answer, and this answer has meaning...about nature. God has spoken; and because of this, there is a unity.” pg. 39

“The Reformation believed what the Bible says: that God has revealed truth about Himself and the cosmos, and that therefore there is a unity.” pg. 39

“This is the kind of Christianity that has an answer, including an answer about nature and man’s relationship to it.” pg. 40
Pope Francis: on ecumenicism

“I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.” p14

“Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan.” p122

“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life.” p23

“Outside the Catholic Church, other Churches and Christian communities – and other religions as well – have expressed deep concern and offered valuable reflections on issues which all of us find disturbing.” p7

“A global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries.” p164

“There are certain environmental issues where it is not easy to achieve a broad consensus. Here I would state once more that the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But I am concerned to encourage an honest and open debate so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good.” p188
Conclusion
There are more similarities than differences

Both agree:
- that the ecological problem is real
- that it is a result of human action
  - action grounded in incorrect views of the world
  - pantheism and/or techno-mechanism and/or consumerism
  - there is need for a correct ethic to come to a solution
- that Christianity offers a helpful perspective
  - a theology of creation that focuses on
    - the value of all creatures
    - right relationships between God, humanity, and creation
    - the unique place of humans as stewards of creation
    - the need for a conversion that changes our perspective

They differ on:
- the focus of the ecological problem
  - Schaeffer is more philosophical and driven by ideas
  - Pope Francis is more theological and action oriented
- the scope of the ecological problem
  - Schaeffer sees pollution as the primary feature
  - Pope Francis sees connections from that to poverty via integral ecology
- the relationship between the Biblical view and other views
  - Schaeffer presents his position as the only right one
  - Pope Francis calls for dialogue and mutual solutions

Christians should be able to speak to environmental concerns with a unified voice.
Thank you!

Are there any questions?
Pollution and the Death of Man

- Includes a chapter by Udo Middleman, but no reference to this chapter was used in this presentation
- Page references in the presentation are from this edition


Laudato Si’

- Published in 2015
- References are to the numbered paragraphs, not page numbers

- Except where credited otherwise, photographs were taken by C. Fictorie