Recreation and Environmental Restoration: Ecological Readings of St. Maximus the Confessor

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The Christian tradition is rich with resources for addressing environmental degradation and its ethical implications. This paper seeks to demonstrate the utility of St. Maximus the Confessor's writings on creation, redemption, and future hope for contemporary Christian approaches to environmental care. Specifically, Maximus both equalizes humanity with the created order and elevates humanity above the created order, identifies sinful passions as operative in environmental destruction, illustrates a deified future in which a unified creation participates in communion with its Creator, and describes the Christian methods of living towards that future in a way that enables Christians to evaluate and encourage approaches to environmental destruction and care.

This paper seeks to demonstrate the utility of St. Maximus the Confessor's writings on creation, redemption, and future hope for contemporary Christian approaches to environmental care. Specifically, Maximus both equalizes humanity with the created order and elevates humanity above the created order, identifies sinful passions as operative in environmental destruction, illustrates a deified future in which a unified creation participates in communion with its Creator, and describes the Christian methods of living towards that future in a way that enables Christians to evaluate and encourage approaches to environmental destruction and care. This paper does not suggest that Maximus is the only theological source for this topic, nor does it claim that this represents the only reading one can render on Maximus' thought. I find a contemporary reading of Maximus to serve as a helpful ancient source in evaluating current approaches to environmentalism, specifically the ecocity movement.

The paper is divided into four sections. First, I will introduce two ideological responses to environmental degradation and suggest that the ecocity movement represents an innovative and practical response to the needs of sustainability and economic development. Next, the paper will establish Maximus' doctrines of creation, fall, incarnation, and deification as depicting a fractured created order that strives towards unity through the mediation of the church. The third section seeks to demonstrate how a creative application of Maximus' perspective on creation's divisions, its unified future, and the means the Church will employ to bring this about could stimulate Christian support of sustainable cities, while identifying the potential shortcomings and blind spots of its intentions and scope. The final segment will offer examples of how the ecocity movement might expand Maximus' theology and creatively apply its useful categories into practical, contemporary, and Christian efforts for creation care.

Two Ideological Responses to Environmental Disaster:

A plethora of studies attest to the human causes, costs, and urgent dangers associated with environmental harm in the modern era, particularly the pervasive use of fossil fuels and other nonrenewable sources of energy.[1] For example, carbon emissions will reach a record high in 2018, exacerbating the risks of water stress, increased recuperative costs, crop loss, and natural disaster, according to a report released by the Global Carbon Project.[2]

In response to the environmental degradation witnessed in the past century, two primary philosophies of environmental care have emerged. Deep ecology calls for a kind of philosophical revolution that "questions the fundamental premise" of the hierarchical categories society applies to all of nature.[3] Deep ecologists reject the existence of an ontological division between humanity and the rest of nature affirming that "the person is not above or outside nature. The person is creation-ongoing." A deep ecologist seeks "a transformation of values and social organization" and argues that a just human being "'lets

[1] Frank P. Incropera *Climate Change: A Wicked Problem: Complexity and Uncertainty at the Intersection of Science, Economics, Politics and Human Behavior.* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[2] Guan D. Mahindra, et al. Emissions are still rising: ramp up the cuts by Figueres, C., C. Le Quéré, G. P. Peters, G. Whiteman, A. (Nature, vol 564, 2018) 27-30.

[3] Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement," Natural Resources Journal 20, no. 2 (April 1980): 299.

[Back to Table of Contents]

being be,' lets nonhuman nature follow separate evolutionary destinies."[4] The ethic advocated by deep ecologists subordinates economic progress and modern technological efforts, even those aimed at curbing the symptoms of carbon emissions, as "diverting attention from more important issues and thus [are] counterproductive to 'solving' the [real] problems."[5]

In contrast to the foundational cosmological transformations that deep ecology seeks, the reformist movement calls for pragmatic political changes that address the "worst of the air and water pollution and inefficient . . . practices in industrialized nations."[6] While the reformist movement questions many of the assumptions of the historically default paradigm of humanity above nature, it does not advocate for the same kind of philosophical equalization of nature and humanity for which deep ecologists strive. Reformists suggest that deep ecology represents an idealistic and potentially dangerous movement in its philosophical equalization of humanity and the rest of nature, as it could inhibit scientific progress and human flourishing.

Ecocities

In addition to threats to environmental substantiality, A 2011 Harvard Business School study identifies "dramatic increases in urbanization" as a prominent trend that will define the 21st century.[7] Cities, especially in the developing world, function as the path to economic opportunity and an escape from extreme poverty. Urban centers, while geographically concentrated, account for up to 80% of the world's energy consumption and "with the urban population of the developing world projected to reach more than 5 billion people by 2050, ideas about how to combine urbanization and sustainability are of critical and immediate importance."[8]

The ecocity[9] movement signals the global community's greatest efforts to reconcile the aims of environmental sustainability with the economic resources presented by the city. Sustainable cities seek to combine the vast opportunities of a developing world escaping poverty with the necessity to preserve the fragile natural world. While the sustainable city movement is not explicitly tied to either deep ecologists or reformists, its focus on environmental care through human-centered, sustainable economic development suggests closer ideological ties to a practical, reformist attempt to curb environmental harm without uprooting the structures and values that define much of the last century. While the developed world has championed ecocities as a path for the future,[10] this paper will briefly introduce Curitiba, a thriving, sustainable city situated in the southeast corner of Brazil and some of its most interesting and innovative attempts to care for and integrate all of the created world.

Curitiba has distinguished itself as a green city since the middle of the 20th century. Beginning in 1950, the capital of Paraná has experienced consistent and rapid population growth, ballooning to nearly 2 million people today. Amidst this expansion, its accessible public transit system, innovative integration of the natural and urban world, and a creative recycling program that seeks to reduce the embedded inequalities of the city has enabled it to emerge as a symbol of the ecocity movement, particularly in the Majority World. Curitiba has developed and adopted an affordable and pervasive public transit system that reduces reliance on carbon-emitting automobiles and allows for a pedestrian-centered city. Curitiba's Bus Rapid Transit System centers movement within the city around express lanes for massive busses. The busses are affordable, efficient, and have cut local reliance on automobiles for transportation. With a world class public transit system, Curitiba can afford to pedestrianize their city streets, preempting much of the harmful environmental impact of personal vehicle ownership. In addition to their transit system, the Curitiba architects have structured their city to promote a unity and integration between the urban and natural landscape. Vegetation permeates the city, as Curitiba contains 50 square meters of green space per person, including 1.5 million trees and 28 parks. The city's leaders reflect priorities that seek the bodily and economic wellbeing of its inhabitants and that strive to promote an internal unity between the nonhuman and technological, human world.

Finally, Curitiba seeks to encourage all its citizens to engage in environmentally conscious habits in a way that promotes economic opportunity, particularly for those placed at the margins of the city. The local government has instituted an initiative in which citizens can exchange urban pollution for public transit credit, fresh produce, and other necessities. Lower-income communities have

[4] Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement," 303.

[5] Ibid., 312.

[6] Ibid., 299

[7] Annissa Alusi, et al. "Sustainable Cities: Oxymoron or the Shape of the Future?" (Cambridge, MA: Working Paper, 2011), 1.

[8] Ibid., 2.

[9] Also known as "smart city" "green city" or "sustainable city" movement

[10] For example, Freiburg, Germany has developed a vibrant ecocity that serves as a model for the rest of the developed world. Timothy Beatley. *Green Cities of Europe: Global Lessons on Green Urbanism.* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2012).

organized around this Green Exchange Program, and it has promoted better access to the city's central resources for all its citizens, while securing the recycling of nearly three quarters of its dispersed trash. The program humanizes people through employment and opportunities that serve all classes of the city.[11] While Curitiba contains its own unique flaws,[12] it represents a community in a Majority World context that has managed to combine robust economic development with innovative environmental care. Maximus' narration of redemptive history and its origins and destiny might aid the church in framing and pursuing efforts towards environmental restoration, such as the ecocity efforts in communities like Curitiba.

Maximus & Ecology

Because Maximus lacks writing that articulates his consolidated viewpoints on creation and redemptive history, this paper will draw from important treatises and works to demonstrate his coherent perspectives. Maximus' thought involves two juxtaposed lines of thinking as it relates to humanity's relationship to the rest of the created order. First, he suggests a kind of internal unity embedded into the cosmos, elevating and ontologically uniting the whole created order through his description of God's Uncreated intent as the universal *logoi*. Second, he consecrates and elevates the human's role as a mediator and priest over creation and history in a way that could enlighten a Christian environmental ethic today. Contemporary readings of Maximus' theology engage with key arguments of the reformist and deep ecology responses to environmental restoration, as well as the ecocity movement.

Equalizing Creation

Responding to the Origenism that perceived the physical creation as a product of cosmic rebellion, Maximus' works outline an interconnected created order in which humanity *and* the nonhuman creation contain the meaning, reason, and divine intentions of God the Creator. Maximus describes all of creation as a cosmic representation of the eternal divine rationality and as a result, "the material creation itself is an intended good creation of God."[13] For Maximus, God creates the world through the *Logos*, or through the word, principle, or reason. The *Logos* connotes meaning and divine intention baked into the created order through the individual *logoi* that emanate from the eternal *Logos*. Every created entity contains the *logoi*, and they represent the becoming of God's thoughts, or the actualization of his intentions in creation. According to Maximus, everything that exists "was created in an appropriate way according to its *logos* at the proper time according to the wisdom of the maker . . . all created things are defined, in their essence and in their way of developing, by their own *logoi*."[14] Each of the *logoi* within creation expresses the meaning of the created order.

The *logoi* paradoxically belong to the created order, but "in another sense they are uncreated, because, they are, as it were, God's thoughts, or intentions." [15] Maximus affirms that the *logoi* represent God's eternal, divine "predeterminations" and "products of the divine will."[16] The *logoi* that each creature possesses represents the will of God for this creature, and Maximus articulates an immanent and active God within God's creation, operating to accomplish the *logoi*, or the purposes of God for creation. The creation holds within it the intent and will of God, and thus God wills nature in a way that lends all of creation divine and cosmic significance. Not only do the *logoi* represent a transcendent intent for all of creation that the Creator immanently and dynamically reveals, "it is also a way of finding a place for human understanding of that will as expressed in creation."[17] In this way, Maximus elevates the status of the nonhuman created world and affirms it as containing divine intent and action.

While Maximus never explicitly describes the nature of environmental care and what consistency with a love for the *logoi* might represent, this paper seeks to put Maximus in dialogue with contemporary ecologists, philosophers, and practitioners to suggest that Maximus' view of the divine rationality as embedded within the cosmos requires a reverence toward the created world as expressed in efforts to preserve its vitality and benefits. Deep ecologists, while many of them are atheists who consider Christianity a

[11] Food Policy Series, "The Green Exchange Program, Curitiba: Urban Food Policy Snapshot" (New York, NY: Hunter College Food Policy Center, 2016). Jonas Rabinovitch. "Curitiba: Towards Sustainable Urban Development" in *Environment & Urbanization* 4 (1992): 62–73.

[12] Giacomini Martínez Joyde, Ingrid Boas, Jennifer Lenhart, and Arthur P.J Mol. "Revealing Curitiba's Flawed Sustainability." *Habitat International* 53 (2016): 350–359.

[13] Jesse Dominick "Man in Creation: The Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor" (Orthodox Christianity) http://orthochristian.com/96486.html. See also *Ambiguum 42* and *Ambiguum 7*.

[14] St. Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 57.

[15] Andrew Louth, "Man and Cosmos in St. Maximus the Confessor," in *Towards an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, ed. John Chryssavgis and Bruce V. Foltz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 63.

[16] St. Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 61.

[17] Andrew Louth, "Man and Cosmos in St. Maximus the Confessor," 66.

poison against the purposes of environmental justice,[18] might embrace Maximus' portrayal of creation as support for their view of an equality and interdependence between humanity and the rest of the created world. Deep ecologists might agree with Maximus, who according to Andrew Louth's reading, affirms that through the *logoi*, "within the created order nothing is nearer or father away from God by virtue of the constitution of its being,"[19] and as a result, humanity's political structures, practices, and values should reflect this kind of equality. Maximus suggests a kind of universal, mutual dependence for all existing things in the universe, as humanity needs the nonhuman creation to fully observe the will and divine intent of God. The *logoi*'s embeddedness into all of nature demands a kind of human care, dependency, and identification with the nonhuman creation. The reality of God's dynamic intent and purposes within all of creation renounces environmentally exploitative practices as an unfaithful and irreverent posture towards divine will.

While Maximus' description of the *logoi* requires a sort of equalized view of the totality of the created world, his writings also consecrate humanity's role above the status of nonhuman creation. Exploring and applying Maximus' descriptions of humanity as priests and mediators of the cosmos for redemptive history might illuminate approaches to environmental care that demonstrate humanity's central role in the cosmos, and as a result, may align closer with the reformist perspective on environmental care.

Elevates Humanity: Mediator

Whereas readings of the *logoi* in Maximus' thought reflect a kind of equality of creation that exists between the various elements of the created world, the *tropos* of humanity indicates its ability to approach God and fulfill God's will, or the *logoi*, and as a result, this attribute confers on God's image-bearers the unique roles of priests and mediators of all creation.

Maximus the Confessor suggests that as image-bearers, humanity's *tropos*, or its "mode of existence,"[20] which refers to the rational, moral decisions that shape its being, distinguish its status and role from the rest of creation. Louth describes the *tropos* as the "way we are, which is the result of the life we have lived . . . ultimately, it is the level of the depth or the shallowness of our love."[21] The *tropos* functions as a way to fulfill the *logoi*, or the will of God for creation, by unifying the cosmos, reconciling the various divisions of nature toward communion with God. In *Ambiguum 41*, Maximus outlines five divisions of nature including the division between uncreated and created, intellectual and sensible, heaven and earth, paradise and the inhabited world, and male and female. God tasks human beings to unite the cosmos and its divisions through its mode of existence (*tropos*), applying its ascetic and unifying love. Maximus identifies the unifying role as the original purpose for humanity's creation, explaining that,

> "Humanity clearly has the power of naturally uniting at the mean point of each division since it is related to the extremities of each division in its own part . . .. For this reason, the human person was introduced last among beings, as a kind of natural bond mediating between the universal extremes through their proper parts and leading into unity in itself those things that are naturally set apart from one another by a great interval."[22]

Humanity's ability to love and exercise the *tropos*, in addition to the duality of its nature, possessing both a body and soul, allow it to serve as a priest of the whole created order. Humanity fulfills the role as mediator when it guides "the whole created order into union with the uncreated life of the Godhead—to deification," or to perfect communion with and participation in the life of the Triune God.[23] Torstein Tollefsen reads Maximus as indicating that "[humanity] is created just for this purpose: to actualize the created potential of [its] being to achieve a fully realized community between all creatures and their Creator."[24] Reformists might embrace Maximus' hierarchical depiction of creation as demonstrating humanity's authority over the rest of the created order, and its attendant need to care for its diversity in a way that allows human flourishing.

The Fall frustrates these original priestly and mediatorial purposes for humanity, as it distorts humanity's affections and its understanding of the created order. Maximus describes the Fall as humanity "[moving] in ignorance," "[abusing] the natural power of uniting what is divided," and "[separating] what is united."[25] The Fall thwarts the unifying purposes of the mediators of creation, and a contemporary reading of Maximus identifies the distorted reason of humanity as the driving cause in the environmental destruction observed over the past century. The distorted loves and ignorance of humanity divide the

[18] Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," in *Science, New Series*, (Vol. 155, No. 3767 1967), 1203-1207.

[19] Louth, "Man and Cosmos in St. Maximus the Confessor," 66.

[20] Ibid., 66.

[21] Ibid., 66.

[22] St. Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 70.

[23] Louth, "Man and Cosmos in St. Maximus the Confessor," 67.

[24] Torstein Tollefsen. *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 102 – 103.

[25] St. Maximus the Confessor, *Difficulty 41*, trans. Andrew Louth (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 158.

created order and lead to human misappropriation of the divine purposes for creation, or the *logoi*.

Maximus describes the recapitulating work of Jesus Christ through the incarnation as the final hope through which humanity can return to and fulfil its original purposes. Speaking of Christ, Maximus claims that "he has . . . united the fragments of the universal nature of all, manifesting the universal *logoi* that have come forth for the particulars . . . and thus he fulfils the great purpose of God the Father."[26] In Christ's resurrection and ascension, he "clearly [unites] heaven and earth" showing that creation is, "by the most universal *logos* of its being, one."[27] Christ's work demonstrates "the convergence of the whole creation with the One according to its most original and universal *logos*."[28] Christ enables the church to participate in this work of recreation, or deification, or divinization,[29] and "by a way of life proper and fitting to Saints, the human person unites paradise and the inhabited world to make one earth . . . gathered together."[30] Maximus' "way of life proper and fitting" envisions members of the church exercising their *tropos*, undertaking lives of asceticism and contemplation toward the eschatological fulfillment of this united and recreated cosmos. Maximus' embodied future requires ascetic practices that involve a sort of renunciation of embodied passions. The church, through Jesus Christ, can recover its original role as priest and mediator, and understand and unite the whole created order, according to their *logoi*.

Maximus describes an anthropocentric future as, Louth aids again indicating that "one way in which Maximus understands the coherence of the universe . . . [is] a sort of coinherence between the human and the cosmos . . . a sympathetic togetherness that is focused on the human person."[31] Maximus rejects the "I/Thou" relationship between humans and nonhumans advocated by deep ecologists,[32] however he also challenges the reformist movement by affirming the need for a transformation of community values and metrics of wellbeing.

The theological vision that Maximus casts for a unified created order, led by humanity, oriented around its final end and beginning in God, when creatively placed in dialogue with modern developments, could encourage not only the church's support of sustainability efforts broadly, but solutions, such as ecocities, that reflect the intrinsic unity and mutual dependence cast by both the eternal *logoi* embedded in and the eschatological unity of the created world with humanity and God.

[26] Ibid., 159.

[27] Ibid., 159.

[28] Ibid., 160.

[29] For more on the Orthodox doctrine of divinization, see James R. Payton, *Light from the Christian East: An Introduction to the Orthodox Tradition*. (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2007).

[30] St. Maximus the Confessor, *Difficulty 41*, 157.

[31] Louth, "Man and Cosmos in St. Maximus the Confessor," 62.

[32] Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement," 312.

Maximus and Ecocities: Harmony

The ecocity movement reflects both the mutual dependence suggested by the unity of the created order, and it represents an effort oriented around humanity's mediation over creation, and therefore it could foreshadow a kind of cosmological, embodied redemption, for which Maximus establishes the theological seeds. While Maximus would have no ability to foresee or explicitly evaluate and encourage the green city movement, a creative appropriation of his theological categories engenders robust theological language to promote the kinds of solutions that the ecocity movement reflects. His work could also expand the scope of and identify potential shortcomings of sustainable cities and their leaders, drawing on the values of an Orthodox version of deep ecology.

The declaration of the World Ecocity Summit describes the ecocity, like Curitiba, as:

> "…an ecologically healthy city. Into the deep future, the cities in which we live must enable people to thrive . . . with nature and achieve sustainable development. People oriented, ecocity development requires the comprehensive understanding of complex interactions between environmental, economic, political and socio-cultural factors based on ecological principles. Cities, towns and villages should be designed to enhance the health and quality of life of their inhabitants and maintain the ecosystems on which they depend."[33]

The language of a human-centered, integrated created order as the key to a sustainable and just future reflects the kind of theological imagination that Maximus provides Christians seeking to bolster the work of smart cities. Maximus describes humanity's mediating work as a recreative effort to unify the various divisions within the created order. This future requires humanity to cast and execute a vision, perhaps like Curitiba's, that promotes people-centered solutions, such as urban agglomerations, that encourage human economic flourishing and integrated interactions between the natural and human order. These efforts reflect a kind of preexistent equality and mutual dependence of the whole created order, embedded in the

[33] Kirstin Miller, "San Francisco Ecocity Declaration," (San Francsisco, 2008), https://ecocity.wordpress.com/2008/05/15/san-francisco-ecocity-declaration/.

universal *logoi*. The vision and hope of ecocities also resides in its central focus on humanity as the responsible mediator for the rest of the created order respecting and preserving the beauty and purposes of nature. In this way, ecocities reflect ideological elements of deep ecology, but its focus on humanity and practical solutions within the social paradigms with which we operate today align the movement more closely with reformist practitioners.

Maximus Evaluates Ecocities

Maximus and the ecocity movement might also evaluate one another. First, contemporary readings of Maximus' work allow us to question some of the "ecological principles" driving the ecocity movement and efforts of a similar nature. Maximus' work expands the ecologist's vision and narrative scope of what integrative and humanistic environmental preservation comprises. Whereas the encouragement of many ecologists does not envision beyond the humanistic enterprise of progress and universal preservation for future generations, contemporary applications of Maximus' thought situate efforts for environmental care within a broader redemptive narrative. The church should seize upon the theological vision of Maximus as one who envisions an eternal cosmological unity, achieved through Jesus Christ's enablement of the church, toward a recovered and enveloping communion with God.

In fact, this recreative narrative could function as a useful theological resource for winning over Christians who doubt the severity and scope of climate change. For example, the Cornwall Alliance[34] comprises a group of conservative theologians and commentators who question climate science and seek to rebut the progressive and naturalistic worldviews that seem to drive the urgent ecological efforts undertaken by movements like ecocities. Prominent theologian Wayne Grudem also questions efforts to modify or curb environmentally harmful economic activities in an interview with *Christianity Today* claiming that "it seems very unlikely to me that God would have set up the earth to work in such a way that these good and necessary activities would actually destroy the earth."[35] Grudem's intellectual and political sympathizers identify with a conservative political vision that may perceive the urgency of liberal thinkers, scientists, and theologians who press for environmental care, concern, and reform as an overemphasized attack on conservative, biblical values.[36] One evangelical student recounts her conservative family's suspicious response to her interest in Christian environmental ethics. She describes how her father associates "transformation into a 'climate activist' with a liberal agenda [he perceives as] suspect."[37]

Maximus' eschatological vision might enable the church to detach environmental ethics from the ideological location it occupies in many American Christians' minds. Maximus' theological corpus not only serves as an ancient source for environmental care, his narrative descriptions of the ends of environmental care draw on acts of recreation. Maximus delineates a kind of recovery and fulfillment of the Garden of Eden in which the universe is oriented toward the divine communion. Christian narratives of creative recovery, inspired by Maximus, envision an eternal, unified created order that is divinized in God, and this theological and rhetorical tool might prove useful in demonstrating the redemptive necessity of environmental care. Christian support of the ecocity movement, without Maximus' theological provisions, is left vulnerable to attacks of simply promoting human progress, or an attempt to merely secure the existence of the human species, bending to the will of progressive naturalists. The church can situate ecological efforts within the eternal redemptive narrative of recreation and recovery, which Maximus describes.

Furthermore, Maximus writings resonate with deep ecologists' critiques of reformists work, such as ecocities, affirming that the recreative effort, which I have partly equated with environmental sustainability, requires fundamental personal transformation in ways that uproot dominant social definitions of what comprises success and wellbeing. Whereas reformists cling to traditional metrics of economic growth and financial prosperity as indicators of human wellbeing, Maximus frequently emphasizes the life suited for the saints and its component ascetic disciplines as the fundamental requirements for the achievement of a cosmological divinization and universal, eternal wellbeing. For Maximus, asceticism occurs at a personal level and involves submitting the fall-induced passions to reason and commitment to the "the practice of virtue and the exercise of the will . . . free of unruly passions" in which Christians "will affectionately love and cleave to the *logoi* . . . [they] will love God himself."[38] Similarly, deep ecologists argue that human loves must transition away from

[34] https://cornwallalliance.org/

[35] Grudem quoted in Sheryl Henderson Blunt "Cool on Climate Change." *Christianity Today,* 2006, https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/october/8.26.html.

[36] See Wayne A. Grudem, *Politics According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010).

[37] Meera Subramanian, "Can Young Evangelicals Change the Climate Debate?" *Inside Climate News*, 2018, https://insideclimatenews.org.

[38] St. Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 59.

technological development and consumption.[39] Whereas deep ecology suggests a love for human progress balanced by an equal and opposite love for nature, Maximus affirms that human love must move from self and things to God. Deep ecology and Maximus challenge the reformist movement to embrace language of moral upheaval. The ecocity movement encourages structural changes that align human decisions more closely with environmental flourishing, such as the recycling and exchange program in Curitiba which enables the poor to gain opportunity through environmentally conscious methods. However, the ecocity movement should consider how it can encourage a kind of cultural shift that involves not only economic incentives towards environmental care for the poor, but seeks cultural, moral, and affective transformation away from the empty hopes of the world, particularly in ways that will drive the rich to reduce their carbon footprint. Maximus' vision of the ascetic life that leads to an eschatological unification involves a deep satisfaction discovered in communion with God and a turning away from the allures of the physical world. It encourages what deep ecologists advocate for as the "spiritual development . . . of the members of a community . . . not just training them in occupations . . . for consumerism in advanced industrial societies."[40] Maximus could illuminate ways in which the church could form a Christian ecology that uniquely contributes to the ecocity movement, namely, by encouraging communities to find satisfaction and hope in eternal Being, growing in love, instead of looking to the created order. This affective transformation undermines the environmentally harmful materialism that plagues communities today, and it will serve the ultimate purposes of establishing and maintaining sustainable cities in which its citizens' values reflect conceptions of wellbeing not tied to the kind of excessive consumption that harms the natural world.

Ecocities Expand Maximus' Vision

In addition to Maximus challenging elements of the ecocity, reformist, and deep ecology movements, the ecocity movement and the efforts of Christian environmentalists can expand and inform what Maximus considers as a life fitting for the Saints beyond personal renunciations of excessive passions. In his article on community organizing, Luke Bretherton considers how Augustine's political thought could frame contemporary approaches to local politics. Bretherton identifies Christian efforts to organize around causes that require the obedience of the church as disciplines reflective of the kind of ancient asceticism described by Maximus, explaining that, "from a Christian perspective, community organizing is best viewed as a political form of ascetic discipline that enables churches to resist the temptation to be either co-opted by the state, compete with other faith groups, or conform to the market."[41] Bretherton provides a helpful model of how we might expand Maximus' explanations of the kinds of ascetic habits fitting for the saints towards environmental care. Christians today should encourage and participate in organizations at local and international scales that promote environmental care and strive towards human-centered, sustainable cities, as a form of ascetic discipline and growth in virtue. For example, the urban agriculture movement seeks to capitalize on the mysterious unity of the whole created order to promote healthy environments and social cohesion. Organizations such as "Gangstas to Growers," a program that serves Atlanta citizens returning from incarceration, employing them to work on urban farms during the day, providing financial and environmental sustainability education in the evening, spring from a recognition of and attempt to live into the natural mutual dependence and interconnectedness between various elements of the created world, and strive for a peaceful, sustainable, human-centered future that also involves personal moral transformation. A community garden has sprung in Chicago's Woodlawn, seeking to embrace the natural environment as a humanizing force within communities to promote stronger bonds and peace. The Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives, located in the historically under-resourced neighborhood of Pullman, has developed a hydraulic farm that employs 50 people, providing fresh produce to the community. The CNI's efforts also reflect the goals of the ecocity in a human-centered effort to restore the environment and strive towards the unified created order that contemporary readings of Maximus guide the church to envision.

These organizing efforts do not represent the only kind of work consistent with the Christian ecocity, however, they promote a mutual engagement of humanity with the nonhuman creation in ways that elevate the nonhuman creation and that empower humanity to fulfill its mediatorial and unifying role, through the adoption of ascetic disciplines. Maximus' work clarifies ideologies that describe environmental destruction and restoration, gives the

[39] "Human welfare should not be measure by quantity of products" Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement," 311.

[40] Bill Devall, "The Deep Ecology Movement," 312 – 313.

[41] Luke Bretheron, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witnes*s, (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 106.

church a theological language to evaluate responses, especially the ecocity movement, and Maximus articulates a cosmic, redemptive narrative in which to situate recreation and strive towards its fulfillment. While the ecocity movement does not explicitly rely on religious doctrines in describing its ends, the cosmic realities Maximus describes commend its efforts of recreation.

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