

'Green' thinking moves into the religious mainstream

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — More than a decade ago on an Aegean island, the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians made a startling proposition: That pollution and other attacks on the environment could be considered sins. At the time, the idea earned him little more than a nickname — the "green patriarch."

It's no longer such a radical view. Eco-friendly attitudes have increasingly moved into the mainstream of many faiths — from Muslim clerics urging water conservation in the fast-growing Gulf states to evangelical preachers in the United States calling attention to global warming.

Next week, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I will lead another high-profile group of religious leaders, scientists and activists on a trip to examine the interplay of faith and ecology. The weeklong voyage along the Amazon starting next Thursday will be Bartholomew's sixth green journey since the first in 1995 to the Greek

island of Patmos — where biblical tradition says the book of Revelation was compiled.

The efforts of Bartholomew and others have energized some of the most lively theological explorations in recent years — with fresh studies and interpretation of Scripture along environmental lines. The global movement also offers rare common ground for religious groups at a time of confrontation on issues from gay clergy to suspicions between the Muslim world and the West.

"The environment brings a sense of urgency and shared purpose that few other issues can bring," said Mary Evelyn Tucker, a co-founder of the Forum on Religion and Ecology, a group that will begin a relationship with Yale University in September. "It cuts across all religious traditions."

Evidence of an expanding environmental ethos can be found in nearly every faith.

In New York, the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life

draws clear links between Judaic traditions and the battles to ease global warming. In China, a Buddhist conference in April urged greater emphasis on environmental protection. Hindu religious scholars have raised alarms about possible environmental fallout from the rapid modernization in India.

In June, Pope Benedict XVI told a crowd in St. Peter's Square to shun "fake freedoms which destroy the environment and man," though he did not elaborate.

In Iran, Grand Ayatollah Yusuf Saanei said it was "the duty of every Muslim" to protect the environment. Many fatwas, or religious edicts, across the Muslim world echo similar Quranic readings that God entrusted humans to protect the earth.

"Religion is built on story telling. The stories reach people in ways that academics or activists or NGOs cannot," said Victoria Finlay, a spokeswoman for the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, a London-based group founded by Prince

Philip, the husband of Queen Elizabeth.

"It took a while for the two sides to begin to understand each other. But now the NGOs and others recognize what a powerful force religion can play."

Among the alliance's current projects is encouraging Muslim imams in Kenya to denounce the widespread use of dynamite to catch fish and push for a return of traditional nets, which trap large fish but allow smaller, breeding-age fish to escape.

"The environment is a great unifier," said the Rev. James Keenan, a Boston College moral theologian who is hosting a meeting of more than 400 Catholic scholars in Padua, Italy, starting Saturday. "You are not going to find anyone saying, 'Well, there is no moral connection between religion and the environment.' All the faiths can bring something to the table."

Bartholomew's trip hopes to draw the attention of religious leaders to the critical pressures facing

the Amazon, including clearing pristine rain forest for farmland. One goal is to tap the immense reach of Brazil's Pentecostal and evangelical-style churches, which continue to chip away at the Roman Catholic majority.

In the United States, many evangelical leaders have discovered the message of ecology — drawing links between the biblical command for proper stewardship of the Earth and environmental activism.

The Evangelical Environmental Network — best known for its clean-air campaign "What Would Jesus Drive?" — opened a new effort earlier this year against global warming, the Evangelical Climate Initiative, which drew some of its most prominent supporters to date, including the Rev. Rick Warren, author of the runaway best seller "The Purpose Driven Life."

But some skepticism remains within the evangelical community. Christian leaders with close ties to the Bush administration, calling themselves the Interfaith Steward-

ship Alliance, said "the science is not settled on global warming," and argued that most evangelicals do not back the call for regulating greenhouse emissions. Among the alliance's supporters are James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, and the Rev. Richard Land, head of the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Still, small acts indicate the mood of many congregations, like the Unitarian church in Lewisburg, Pa., that's looking for a new building.

The congregation recently sold its historic home and is working with an architect who specializes in designing "green" places of worship. It techniques include recycled construction materials and aligning the structure to use the maximum natural light.

On the Net:
Bartholomew's Religion, Science & the Environment symposia: <http://www.rsesymposia.org/home.asp>

Bible School calendar

Bible school planned in Rexford
Rexford Community Church is holding Vacation Bible School from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Tuesday, through Thursday.
Children 4 years old to fifth grade are invited to attend.
Lunch and snacks will be provided. Children are asked to bring an offering each day for a missions project and extra clothes for water games.
A supper and program for parents and community members will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday. For information, call 687-3333 or 687-4861.

Brewster church plans Bible school
Brewster Community Church will be having Vacation Bible School from 9 a.m. until 2:30 pm on Tuesday.
Children in kindergarten through sixth grade are invited. They will be studying "The Ten Commandments." For information call (785) 694-2720.

Anti-porn group throws the Bible at adult industry

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A Christian missionary group making the rounds at U.S. adult entertainment conventions hands out Bibles with "Jesus loves porn stars" stamped on their covers.

Jesus loves porn stars just as much as he does pastors and soccer moms, XXXchurch contends.

The outreach team from XXXchurch, calling itself a "porn ministry," distributes paperback New Testaments with a gaudy purple-and-yellow cover reading: "Jesus loves porn stars."

Its Web site, billed as the number-one Christian porn site, includes downloadable Bible studies and an array of "prayer software," including "accountability programs" designed to help users resist pornographic temptation.

The Bible's text, in everyday conversational English, includes this introduction from XXXchurch:

"Jesus loves pornographers as much as he loves pastors, soccer moms, liars, thieves and prostitutes.

We're all just people who need God to save us from the mess we're in, and lead us to a better way."

Pornography brings in more revenue in the U.S. than all of professional football, baseball and basketball franchises combined, according to the conservative research group Family Safe Media.

XXXchurch has taken its message on the road for "porn Sundays," a traveling seminar "to bring healing and recovery to those struggling with pornography."

The group estimates that over half of Christian ministers use pornography regularly, and are determined to expose "America's dirty little secret."

It is not made explicitly clear how XXXchurch arrived at this number. Its pastor, J.R. Mahon, and founding pastor Craig Gross, have published a book titled "Starving Jesus" outlining their unorthodox missionary views.

The cover features a cartoon image of an emaciated Jesus with blinking bug eyes dragging a cross. Their mission: to change church culture inside out.

"We're sick of pastors with planes, pastors with record deals, pastors with bodyguards," writes Mahon. "Give to the poor, evangelize on a city street, bring the

hooker to church, just get off your butt and do something."

At the recent Los Angeles Erotica convention, Mahon spent three days spreading his message. One convention visitor, armed with a camera for snapshots of favorite pornographic actresses, was perplexed by the pastors' gift of a pocket-sized Bible.

"It's the real deal, no naked chicks in there, just the word of the lord," said Mahon.

"Well, I don't really read, but thanks," the conventioner replied before rushing off to collect autographs.

"We're not here to tell people they're going to hell," said Mahon. "We just want people to know that we dig God and we want them to dig him too."

But some believe there are better ways to attract potential converts.

"Christ would never compromise or stoop to their level. Mary came to him, remember? He didn't go to the whore house using words like sex and porn," said a typical entry in the hate mail section of the XXXchurch Web site.

"It's nothing but a gimmick to you, an excuse to mingle with the perverts. You talk more about porn than you do Jesus Christ," it said.

Mahon admits his ministry has received mixed reactions in the Christian community.

"When we first started this thing four years ago, some people looked at us and thought we were working for the devil," Mahon said.

The young ministers also had trouble finding a publisher for their porn-fighting Bible. The American Bible Society, one of the oldest Bible publishers in the US, refused to print it.

"Out of a sense of propriety, ABS felt that the wording 'Jesus Loves Porn Stars' was misleading and inappropriate for a New Testament cover," the company said in April.

Despite flaps over its methods, XXXchurch continues to make the rounds of porn conventions and congregations nationwide in its "porn mobile" — a black, customized SUV splattered with an eyebrow raising logo.

"These are the perfect places to find people to love God," said Mahon. "If Jesus was here today, he'd go to the porn shows."

SHARE the FAITH

Worship in the church of your choice this weekend.



REDEEMING LOVE MINISTRIES, INC., 345 N. Franklin, Apostle W.G. and Rev. Orvella Romine, Equipping Class, Sunday, 10 a.m., Sunday worship, 11 a.m., Wednesday, R.L.M Training Center (Bible School), 7 p.m.

Schedule of church services

- ASCENSION-ON-THE-PRAIRIE EPISCOPAL**, Rev. Don Martin, College Drive & Wheatridge Rd., 462-3041, Holy Eucharist, 9:00 a.m. every Sunday, Evening Prayer, 5:15 p.m. Wednesday, September through May. Christian Education for Youth, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, September through May
- FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**, Pastor Bradley L. Herndon, Grant & Webster Street, 462-2867, Morning Worship 10:30 a.m., Sunday School 9:15 a.m., Evening Worship 6:30 p.m., Wednesday Bible 7:30 p.m.
- COLLEGE VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH**, (SBC), Pastor Tom Huffman, 1185 Wheatridge Rd. at College Drive, 460-7144, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship services, 10:45 a.m.
- MINGO BIBLE CHURCH**, 420 Main Mingo, 785-462-2992: An independent community church served by Village Missions Pastor Chris Shubert. Sunday School: 9:30AM - all ages. Sunday Services: 10:45AM. Sunday Nights: 1st Sunday of the month: potluck following morning service - no evening service; 2nd Sunday: services at 6:30 p.m.; 3rd Sunday: informal fellowship - bring a snack to share!; 4th and 5th Sunday: services at 6:30 p.m.
- SACRED HEART CATHOLIC**, 462-2179, Father Dana Clark, Pastor, Saturday Eve. Mass 5:30 p.m., Sunday Masses 8:00 & 10:00 a.m., Confessions will be heard Saturday 4:30-5:05 p.m. and from 7:30-7:45 a.m. and 9:25-9:40 a.m. on Sunday.
- FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**, Rev. Carol Rahn, 515 W. 4th, 462-6342, Worship, 9:00 a.m.
- WESLEYAN CHURCH**, 320 W. Pine - 462-8391, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:40 a.m., Sunday Evening Cell groups at 6:00 p.m., Wednesday Youth Ministries, Kids Clubhouse 7 p.m.
- CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS**, 1145 S. Franklin - 460-6605, President Gary Slavens, 460-2656; Rocky Robbins, 1st counselor, 460-1101; Tim Wilson, 2nd counselor, 785-846-7796. Sacrament meeting 10 a.m., Sunday School and Primary 11:20 a.m., Priesthood, Relief Society, YM/YW, 12:10 p.m.; Family History Center open to public, 7-9 p.m. Thursdays or by appointment. Call 462-3571.
- COLBY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**, Rev. James Mardock, pastor, 950 S. Franklin, 462-6521, Sunday Worship Services at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Fellowship coffee 9:30 a.m., Sunday School, 9:45 a.m., KXXX broadcasts 11:00 worship. <http://www.gbmg-umc.org/colby-umc/>
- REDEEMING LOVE MINISTRIES, INC.**, 345 N. Franklin, Apostle W.G. and Rev. Orvella Romine, Equipping Class, Sunday, 10 a.m., Sunday worship, 11 a.m., Wednesday, R.L.M Training Center (Bible School), 7 p.m.
- CHURCH OF CHRIST**, 510 E. 4th, Jay Kelley, minister, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m., Sunday Eve. Worship 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, Bible Study 7:00 p.m.
- COLBY EVANGELISM CENTER**, Rev. Robert Cooper, 815 West 3rd - 462-2062, Sunday School 9:45; Sunday service 10:00 and 6:30 p.m.; Wednesday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.; Friday Youth Power Hour at 7:00 p.m.
- FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH**, (Disciples of Christ), Pastor Bradley L. Herndon, 385 W. 3rd - 460-2718, Sunday Morning Worship at 9:00 a.m.; Sunday School at 10:30 a.m. E-mail: fccolby@st-tel.net
- TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**, Rev. John L. Schmidt, East 5th & Country Club, 462-3497, Services, Sat., 5:30 p.m., Sunday; Sunday School and Adult Bible Class 9:15 a.m.; Services, 10:30 a.m.
- OUR SAVIORS LUTHERAN CHURCH**, Brewster, Sunday worship 9:00 a.m.; 2nd Sunday of the month at 8:00 a.m.
- PLEASANT HOME CHURCH**, Pastor, Charlie Busch, 694-2242, 3190 Road 70, Edson, Worship, 9:00 a.m., Sunday School 10:00 a.m., Evening service, 6:00 p.m.
- LEVANT COMMUNITY CHURCH**, 205 1st St., Pastor Jerry Vincent, 586-2376, Sunday School (classes for 3 years & up and 3 adult classes) 9:30 a.m., Morning worship 10:30 a.m.
- WINONA METHODIST CHURCH**, Rev. Michael Eurit, Sunday School, 10:30 a.m., Morning Worship 9:30 a.m. (CDT)
- BREWSTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**, PO Box 250, Brewster. Pastor Dorine Chambers, 785-462-6044, Sunday School, 9:45 a.m., Morning Worship, 10:45 a.m.
- THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF, REXFORD**, Joan Dingwerth, Director, 687-2565
- REXFORD COMMUNITY CHURCH**, Rexford, Pastor Lane Purcell, 687-3305, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Worship Service 10:30 a.m.
- BREWSTER COMMUNITY CHURCH**, Mike Pinkelman, Pastor, Brewster - 694-2720, Sunday School (all ages) 9:30 a.m., Worship Service 10:30 a.m., Bible Study 7:00 p.m., Wed. mornings 6:30 a.m. - Men's Bible Study, Wed. 7:00 p.m. - Children's Ministries (Royal Rangers/Missionettes), Wed. 7:15 p.m. - Intercessory & Prayer, Thurs. 4:00 p.m. - Women's Bible Study

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