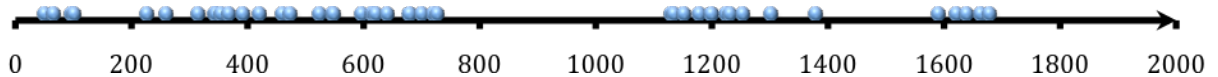


Church and Environment : resistance

a) Brief historical analysis



Each point on this timeline represents a saint who had an exemplary relationship with God's Creation. There are, however, long periods of time without any "ecological saints". How can this be explained?

The Church is sometimes represented as a boat. It sails through the waves of history. We observe that at times it bears witness to a universal vision, and at other times it folds in on itself and bears witness to a strong antropocentrism.

The absence of ecological saints during the period from 800 to 1100 could be explained by the rise of the papacy, and thus a very strong hierarchy of the Church. There were also the Crusades, where "the other" was perceived as a threat.

In his *Discourse on Method* (1637), René Descartes coldly states that the animal is "only a clock made up of wheels and springs". The thesis "I think therefore I am" contributed to the commodification of creatures, making human beings the master and possessor of nature. Descartes' rationalism invaded theology.

Before Descartes, Francis Bacon had written the *Sacred Meditations* (1597), a work in which he affirmed: "Knowledge is power. "In doing so, to know nature meant to have power over it. This ideology created a profound break with a tradition of knowledge of nature that was dedicated to the acquisition of wisdom. This arrogant ideology led to the deplorable gestures of colonisation, causing suffering that was still too much felt.

The period of colonisation (from 1600 onwards) was a time when Europe suffered from a great superiority complex and perceived everything else as inferior, to be dominated. During the Age of Enlightenment (1700-1800), human beings exploited their reason abundantly and glorified themselves. Afterwards, industrialisation (from 1800 onwards) required the exploitation of the Earth's resources at an increasingly rapid pace.

In part from: Bastaire, Jean, & Bastaire, H  l  ne. (2004). *Pour une   cologie chr  tienne*. Paris: Cerf.

b) Brief social analysis

André Beauchamp was president of the Bureau des audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE) between 1983 and 1987 and is also a secular priest of the Diocese of Montreal. He has written numerous works, including "Introduction à l'éthique de l'environnement". More recently, he has sought to analyse the Church's delay in getting involved in the environmental cause and to propose perspectives for the future in the book "Environnement et Église" (Environment and Church).

According to Beauchamp, Christians are not interested in environmental issues because "questions of nature are not related to God or to the spiritual adventure of our time". Moreover, he determined that three perceptions of the environment have prevented Christians from engaging with this issue: the environment is dirty, complex and political.

The environment is **dirty**: "it refers to pollution, death, deterioration, what smells bad and is a health risk. "Images of oil spills and factory fumes inspire no one. "For thirty years now, environmental literature has locked us up in horror and violence to the point that the first feeling we experience is one of repulsion.

The environment is **complex**: "In order to find the right solution, we need to understand how the ecological system works and what action needs to be taken to improve the situation in a sustainable way".

The environment is a **political** issue. Politics, however, involves conflict. "Politics means struggles, confrontations, tensions, power, use of the force of law and reason of state. Let us also recall how the Quiet Revolution in Quebec traumatised Catholics here by the separation of Church and State.

These three perceptions explain very well the Church's reluctance to engage in the protection of Creation. The challenge now is to ensure that the discourse on the environment in the Church is simpler, more unifying and full of hope.

Source : Beauchamp, André. (2008). *Environnement et Église : le temps de l'engagement*. Montréal: Fides.