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Emne: Documentation from Just Peace With Earth meeting on Iceland

Vedlegg: Towards Just Peace with the Earth Message from WCC Icelandic meeting on Just peace with Earth 13 October 2017.pdf; Conference objectives. Rev. Henrik Grape.pdf; Reykjavik oktober 2017 Wejryd.pdf; arcticcircle Kainulainen.pdf; sermon15thOctHatéigskirkja Pauliina Kainulainen.pdf; Tore Johnsen.Presentation at Breakout session Artic Circle Assembly.pdf; indigenousspir.ppt

Dear friends!

It was a pleasure and a blessing to meet with you all in Reykjavik.

I hereby send you some of the documentation from our meeting. There are still some more to come and they will come later. I hope that these can serve as inspiration for you and your work.

All the best

Rev Henrik Grape

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Conference Message: Towards Just Peace with the Earth

Kópavogur, Iceland, 11-13 October 2017

Preamble

That the earth and all that is in it belongs to God (Psalm 24:1) is a mark of the Abrahamic religions as well as of indigenous cultures throughout the world. St Francis expresses this in his praise to the Lord through thanks to “our Sister, Mother Earth”; but now she “groans in travail” (Romans 8:22) for the violence inflicted on her, as we are reminded in Pope Francis’ encyclical letter *Laudato Si’*.

Nevertheless, as recalled in the World Council of Churches’ *Statement on the Way of Just Peace*, “we, according to His promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth in which justice dwells” (2 Peter 3:13), are assured that the Triune God will perfect and consummate all of creation at the end of time, and recognize justice and peace as both promise and present – a hope for the future and a gift here and now.

As His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I has written, the ecological crisis has spiritual roots. The exploitation and destruction of creation constitute a perversion and distortion of the Christian ethos, rather than the inevitable consequence of the biblical command to “increase and multiply” (Genesis 1:22). In defiling and destroying the environment that is held in sacred trust from one generation to the next, we sin against God and nature. There cannot be any sustainable development at the expense of spiritual values and the natural environment.

This conference - convened under the auspices of the World Council of Churches, hosted by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, and held in conjunction with the Arctic Circle Assembly 2017 - explored strategies on the part of faith communities to deepen commitment for and to secure a sustainable future. As Bishop Agnes M. Sigurdardottir, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Iceland, stated in her opening words to the conference, “a radical reaffirmation of the value and demands of Christian stewardship” was a guiding principle in our reflections.

As religious leaders and people of faith, we share our concerns and perspectives with the policy makers and stakeholders gathering for the Arctic Circle Assembly (13-15 October), and at the forthcoming UN Climate Change Convention meeting (COP 23) in Bonn, Germany (6-17 November), as well as with the fellowship of churches around the world, calling in Christ’s name for the necessary policies, actions and attitudinal shifts to protect and preserve the environment on this earth, God’s precious living creation, our beautiful and fragile home.

Faith Communities’ Contribution: Transformation for a Sustainable Future

Churches and faith communities have been as complicit in environmentally-harmful practices as other sectors of society. But history also demonstrates the power of religion to foster worldviews that guide people to new social, political and cultural alignments. Faith communities can be powerful sources of the social capital for positive change. The ecumenical movement and religious leaders have played a key role in advancing the concepts of sustainability and ‘climate justice’ in international and national policy forums. Now we seek to engage the transformative power of faith in promoting the social,

economic, cultural and behavioral transformations required to confront the challenge of climate change and to achieve sustainability in practice.

We encourage churches to use their own familiar and authentic biblical language and church traditions to raise awareness, to promote action, and to foster sustainability in church and society. We encourage the active engagement of churches in this mission of promoting and modeling environmentally sustainable behavior at all levels, from the national level to the local congregational level. And we welcome decisions by churches and church-related organizations to direct their investment funds away from environmentally unsustainable industries.

Given the vast national and global constituencies of people and communities represented through the churches, there is enormous potential in our networks, as well as in our relationships with interfaith partners. We should use all available means, including our communications capacities at national and international levels, to mobilize this potential.

We also need to utilize and build on the instruments and commitments negotiated through the United Nations to galvanize political will and to promote accountability to commitments made – such as Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Paris Climate Change Agreement, expressing the voice of faith and ethics in support of those processes.

Even more fundamentally, the contribution of faith must be to confront the essential immorality of lifestyles and economic systems that are based on the conquest and selfish abuse of nature and of others, and that are indifferent to injustice and ecological repercussions.

We also underline the inextricable connections between peace with the earth and peace on earth, rejecting the insanity of spiraling military expenditure and the continued reliance on nuclear weapons, and welcoming the adoption of the Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons as an important measure to protect the environment as well as human lives and communities.

The Lessons from Indigenous Spirituality

Indigenous Peoples need to be part of the entire process of consultation on climate change. Indigenous people are not the problem but part of the solution, on the front lines protecting Mother Earth and all Creation on behalf of all of us. Indigenous Peoples have experience, wisdom and narratives that can make an important contribution to addressing climate change.

We reject the passive acceptance that some lives, homes, lands, ways of living and therefore ways of being and identity-connection will be ‘lost’ while others ‘gain’ from climate change. Forced migrations and loss of identity from the Arctic and island homelands are unacceptable. Non-economic loss and damage (NELD) is a key reality and concern of Indigenous Peoples in the context of climate change. Climate policy discussions must take NELD and its impact on Indigenous Peoples into account.

We encourage the recognition of the wisdom of Indigenous Peoples who have deep and longstanding traditional knowledge of the environments that are their ancestral homelands. Such spirituality and wisdom is for the well being of all created life and the earth and cosmos intended for the generations to come.

With other stakeholders, we seek to advance the recognition, respect and implementation of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements that are a concrete commitment to women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and all peoples for the right to a future. An essential framework and guide for action on Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples is the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons and the 2015 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document.

There is need for concrete collaborative action plans. We pledge our resources which include visions, dreams, hopes, love, faith, and narratives of meaning to the cause. The grief we feel is a resource, but not our only contribution in this precarious moment.

Responses to the Threat from Global Warming to Island Populations in the Pacific and the Atlantic Ocean

Island populations – whether in the Arctic region, the Pacific or as seen recently and tragically in the Caribbean – suffer disproportionately from the already evident impacts of climate change and are among the most vulnerable to further climate change. The projected temperature increases in the Arctic region are twice those of the global averages. And the melting ice of the Arctic has a direct consequence for small low-lying island states such as Kiribati in the Pacific whose future existence are already threatened by rising seas levels. Relocation of people, loss of shorelines and the degradation of land and water resources are already a reality and an emergent threat.

We call for urgent global action in response to the dangers posed to small island states in these regions by rising sea levels. We encourage threatened island nations to join hands to support each other morally, culturally, financially and through the exchange of experience in confronting a perilous future.

We urge global organizations and other governments to share all available information and technical expertise with threatened island states, to help their peoples cope with climate change, to mitigate the present risks, and to adapt to the already dangerous conditions – including through public educational and capacity-building initiatives.

We further encourage churches to use their own language and rituals in the blessing of the waters – rivers, lakes and seas – as a spiritual sign of the urgency of protecting the natural environment and the lives that depend on it.

Appeal

In concluding our discussions and deliberations, our reflections and our praying together, and in anticipation of the forthcoming gatherings of policy-makers and stakeholders at the Arctic Circle Assembly 2017, the COP 23 UN Climate Change Conference and elsewhere,

We appeal:

- For urgent concerted and accelerated action by governments, private sector entities, communities and individuals to mitigate climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to meet targets in the Paris Agreement, recognizing the brief and rapidly diminishing window of opportunity for ensuring global temperature increase does not exceed 2°.

- For recognition by all individuals and communities of their responsibility and agency – as the UN and governments – in responding to the challenge of climate change.
- For the global, national and local engagement of faith communities and religious leaders in this task, as key influencers and sources of social capital for conversion from unsustainable attitudes and behaviors to a holistic approach to a sustainable future.
- Indigenous Peoples need to be part of the entire process of consultation on climate change in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the 2015 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document.

The Revelation of St John lifts up a vision of human flourishing (22:2) to which this conference adheres: “On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

Let us renew and sanctify our connectedness to nature, for the healing of the nations and of the world.

Objectives of the meeting.

Rev. Henrik Grape WCC

11 October 2017 Just Peace with Earth conference Kopvargur Iceland

To come to peace with earth – to live in peace on earth

Creation is a gift of God. God the creator of all there is. All life is a precious gift for humanity to share and to safeguard.

Today humanity plays a key role for the future of the whole planet. The effects of climate change are many. Eco-systems are endangered by human induced climate change and there are many devastating results that follows by a disrupted climate system.

Climate change reveals the injustice of the world. Those who have contributed least to climate change are those who will be and are first hit by the effects of climate change. At same time are they are very often lacking the resources to adapt.

The crisis we are facing is also spiritual. The power to change so that the world will leave the prevailing path of development, that is unsustainable, comes from spiritual sources. We, as humanity must act to avoid the worst scenarios. From spirituality sources we can find driving forces to act. We can find strength in our values and spiritualities.

Never before has humanity's decisions had more impact on the whole planets future than we have today. In such a time our values and believes are pivotal to achieve the transformation that is needed. a transformation of this world to change to a more peaceful sustainable future.

To believe in God of life should also makes us more willing to thread more lightly on this Earth and to love our neighbour and respect life in all its beauty and fragility. Peace with earth goes together with peace on earth

Faith communities – a communion over every border.

Faith communities lives in are a borderless community. We are living in a Creation that comes out of the Creator. A Creation in which we are interconnected with all life. All life is interconnected and interdependent on life giving eco-systems.

St Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:24-26

“But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together”

We are one humanity on one Earth and we have to act for a transformation to a more just sharing of the gifts of the Creation and a more sustainable lifestyle.

Globalisation has made us neighbours but today we have to understand that we are all brothers and sisters. We are more closely connected than just neighbours. We are a household, Oikos, that should share and care for each other and the Earth. And to the method share the Oikos and its resources is called Oikonomia or economy. With love, faith and hope as our basic values a more sustainable sharing of the Oikos is possible and economy becomes the server of humanity instead of the master over the development.

Indigenous spirituality – thread more lightly on the Earth

Indigenous people of the world know the effects of climate change. People of the Arctic have seen the ice shrinking, the change in the weather patterns that have an effect on animals and plants. The melting of the permafrost is rapidly changing the circumstances for life in the Arctic.

Indigenous people of the earth are sharing this experience and are witnessing these changes. The narrative from indigenous people is a gift to the world about of relationship between humanity, land and the Creator.

The ancestors and Indigenous Peoples bear witness of a worldview, spiritual relationships with the land, animals, water, and the Creator, and traditional practices. Humanity needs a narrative that leads to transformation and indigenous people have resources in their stories and experience for addressing climate change.

Islands - mutual understanding in different contexts

We are gathering on an island. Iceland in all its beauty is also affected by climate change and the most obvious effects are the melting of the glaciers. This is something that we see all over the Arctic. Higher amounts of greenhouse gases make higher temperature rising and more ice and snow will melt in the arctic. The more we lose the white snow and ice on the ground less of the sun is reflected back out in space and the warmth will stay in the atmosphere. This means that temperature are rising not only by greenhouse gases. Effects like losing white reflecting areas boosted by results of higher amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere.

Some of the many effects of climate change are more rising sea levels and more energy into the weather systems, which results in heavier storms and dryer droughts. Effects that is showed on the other side of the Earth. Like in the Pacific were more erosion by more frequents storms is affecting the small islands as well as the higher water temperature are destroying the coral reef and higher sea levels in the end will lead to forced migration and loss of non-economic values like losing your cultural heritage.

We are so close connected today and people of islands know this.

I hope that our days together will be another step on our common journey as faith communities. To be in communion with each other and in communion with the Creator is a central part of our identities as churches and faith communities.

May our short time together help us to achieve a shared vision of how we as faith communities can be active agents for the transformation of the world that is needed to create a more peaceful and just future.

May our conversations also let the indigenous perspectives be more in the centre of our understanding of the role of humanity on the Earth that an industrial and unsustainable concept of development are constantly being the prevailing pattern for our lifestyles.

A melting Arctic is a melting future.

I end by quoting the Storforsen Appeal from 2015 when we gathered faith leaders and indigenous people of the Arctic in Northern Sweden;

Creation is alive with God and with the Spirit. Life is precious. The future of seven generations is at stake.

Therefore we also ask faith communities and people everywhere to rededicate themselves to stand in solidarity and support the peoples in the North, who are now already survivors and leaders in responding to climate change.

The aim of our meeting is to take this message further and as a communion of one Earth act for safeguarding the planet and act for a just peace on Earth and with Earth.

Just Peace with Earth

Reykjavik October 2017

Our conference has a rich theme: “Just Peace with Earth”. We all want it. But we do all know that each and every one of those words is quite problematic. Not only “Just” and “Peace”, but also “Earth” – and even “with”!

Just

“Just”, in this theme, stands for justice. Of course, we all know that justice in our societies is not eternally fixed, but relates both to values fairly unchanged over time *and* to values currently widely accepted in the discourse. And times and discourses change.

We have to recognize, though, that the field we are on, when talking about “Just” and “justice” has constantly grown over the last centuries. Justice was an issue of the clan and the wider family when this island was colonized. It became an issue of the *free* inhabitants when this nation was established as part of Christendom. But in Christendom slavery was tolerated for a long time and “Just” and “Justice” surely did not fully apply to slaves. When Hugo Grotius published *Mare Liberum* in 1609, it was a sign not even that “justice” linked to territories did fully cover what was needed. The growth of what we do call International Law, the founding and fall of the League of Nations and the establishment of the United Nations, are all examples of the fact that the field of justice is growing and has to grow in order to cover realities in an ever-growing interdependence between humans, nations – and species.

Most of us can happily say that we live in nations that are governed by law. Democracy under law. But law is not always just. A constant wrestling with issues and realities and public opinion has to be there, if democracy is to be preserved and the law relevant and respected. And the wrestlers have to be many. Not only those already seen and recognized since before. They may very well be the very privileged ones.

Most mature religions have an ethical center around “Do to others what you want them to do to you”. That ideal doesn’t lead to identical laws in all times and in all places, but it leads to reflection and to cultivation of conscience. That is our task! And that ideal, “do to others what you want them to do to you”, now has to be stretched out in geography – and history, that is in space and time and from individualism to co-existence. Justice always turns out to involve more actors and subjects than ever thought of before. As it might have been said too many times before: All negotiations should have empty chairs to remind us of those not present: One empty chair for the yet unborn, one for the down-trodden, one for creation in its totality *et cetera*.

Peace

“Peace” is also problematic, but I think, in general, we are more aware of that. The discussions from the sixties and seventies made us aware. Surely, peace is not only the absence of war or immediate violence. Peace requires justice, balance and many other things. But now, when we realize that *Holocene* is followed by *Anthropocene*, we must ask ourselves whether peace is only a matter of

relations between humans or if it is also about the relations between humans and nature in general? Also here, the ideal of “do to others what you want them to do to you” is most helpful for us, but the ideal has to be stretched in time and space and expanded to address society, not only single persons.

Earth

“Earth” is of course Earth, but we will gradually find out that Earth is not independent. It is an integrated and even an integrating part of Universe. The field is ever growing!

With

“With” is a most important word. “Just peace with Earth”. To me “with” is reciprocal. “Just peace on earth” would also be a most important and indeed overwhelming conference-theme, but our thing these days has its starting point in the understanding that there are certain Rights also for the Earth, not only a fear of the Earth striking back – and the much greater moral responsibility which follows from that.

Through history most peoples have been totally dependent upon nature. Most all people have lived constantly on the verge. That taught them respect for and care of nature. Now, that knowledge is nearly only carried on by indigenous peoples, living traditional lives. They are the ones most seriously threatened by climate change. And here in the Arctic the rise of temperature is double the level of the world average and destroys lives and civilizations.

The technical developments, the optimism and alleges supremacy of the white West – and of western forms of Christianity, lifted the majority of inhabitants out of realities, into a dreamed independence of Earth.

The *with* makes all the difference. Just Peace with Earth.

Let me go on with a somewhat different perspective, a perspective of

Gift, response and responsibility.

It makes a great difference if nature is here to be lived in by us and others *or* if nature is here to be ruled over by us. The anthropocentric approach of the last centuries has brought about an unparalleled rise of wealth, knowledge and material living conditions. The resilience and redundancy of nature have made it possible. It is tempting for us to think that this will be possible also for the future. Tempting and comfortable – but untrue. We are approaching limits. We have passed limits.

Consumerism has sparked economic development – but it is a development that does not measure the costs nature and coming generations pay and will pay. Cheap fossil fuel has not only quickly expended reserves, built up over millions of years, but also polluted and changed climate.

Consumerism easily promotes an irresponsible individualism. In his Large Catechism Martin Luther explains the First commandment by asking “Who is your God” and continues by saying that your God is the one from whom or what you expect all good. God for us easily becomes health, wealth, growth, position *et cetera*. Luther sure is contemporary in this! God in very many of our societies *is* Economic Development.

Economic Development is fairly simple to measure and money is an excellent means for interchange and sharing. I cannot see anything wrong with economic development and money – as long as they are means. The problem is when these means become ends in themselves.

We all have to have overarching ideas of what this living basically is all about. The religions give us that, and also the kinds of religion which only hold respect for Life as the over-arching value, with no personal God involved. We have to have ideas of what we want to use the resources and challenges for, what is the More Important End than even health, wealth and growth.

In one of the creations myths in Genesis, it is said that “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it”. The gift is given. Till it and keep it, is what the Lord God said. The Lord God did not say: waste it and dispose of it. This, of course, was said before the fall. It is after the fall that the response to the gift through greed, fear and selfishness led to wasting and destroying.

A restricting force when it comes to responding to the gift is responsibility. In this anthropocentric time humans easily see themselves as responsible mainly to themselves and secondly to some other contemporary humans. Even respect for coming generations of humans has been suppressed. Severely limiting their choices and opportunities is in direct opposition to the ideal of doing “to others what you want them to do to you”. Of course there are no simple answers to conflicts of interests between generations but they have to be kept noticed and discussed and respected. And those who cannot speak for themselves have to be spoken for.

Responsibility has often been linked to punishment. Talk about divine judgment has been silenced in modern society. Partly so because it has been misused so often before in history, but partly also because we ourselves fear responsibility and judgment so much that we suppress all mentioning of it.

But gifts received require responsible responses, especially when the gift is to be stewarded, as is the perspective of the Abrahamic religions. We are responsible, not only before ourselves and some contemporary humans, but before creation, before the living and the not yet living – before God.

God gave life, in order to have some to share his gifts with, as I think Ireneus said. God gave us life, and our responsible response is to enhance life and make room for life in its ever more developed forms. If that is not done there will never be any “Just Peace with Earth”.

As a Christian, with Incarnation and Communion being central, God’s presence in and by the world, I do not find my real life if I do not try to keep heaven and earth together.

“Do to others what you want them to do to you”!

Arctic Circle Assembly 13th Oct 2017, Reykjavik

Indigenous Spirituality – a gift for transformation of the world (Arctic and Pacific contributions)

Pauliina Kainulainen

Picture 1: Koli forest and Lake Pielinen

Greetings from Eastern Finland – I live near this sacred hill of Koli. I bring greetings of the great love and joy that these forests and lakes awaken in me, but also greetings of anguish. For example, there still are fishermen doing winter seining on the ice of these lakes, which is the most ancient cultural tradition alive on these lakes. But the winter weather and the ice conditions are changing. The time when it is safe to work on the ice is getting shorter. Young people are not interested in continuing this work that has become so uncertain.

This is only one small example of the effects of climate change. The effects are most severe in the Arctic area. Is there cause to become desperate when humanity is continuing the business as usual, extracting nature's treasures and overconsuming? Well, there is cause for desperation but for many of us that is not an option, as a Christian or otherwise.

Instead, it is time to seek tools of transformation of our minds, hearts and ways of life. World's spiritual communities begin to see, that the only power strong enough for such a transformation lies in the depths of spirit. In the depths of the human spirit but also in touch with the divine spirit abiding mysteriously in our depths and the deep currents of reality.

A great obstacle for connecting with this power is that the modern Western worldview does not really recognise this depth dimension. This is why it is crucial to listen to the world's indigenous peoples who live connected to it.

I myself do not belong to an indigenous people but as a Finn I nevertheless belong to a subarctic forest people. My Finnish culture is a mixture of different elements, and the oldest layer, the Finno-Ugric layer of my soul has many similarities with the cosmologies of indigenous peoples. For example, there is the understanding of time as predominantly cyclical. This implies respect for the crucial, sacred cycles of nature – of water, or forest etc. Actually, nature as whole is considered sacred and alive. These ideas surprisingly resonate even with the newest phase of Western natural sciences (eg. quantum physics).

Moreover, indigenous and Finno-Ugric worldviews highlight the ideal of balance, not that of limitless growth. Moderation and reciprocity are ideals, too. These worldviews include a spiritual relationship with the earth, which I consider something we all should aim at.

Picture 2: Rite at Titicaca

Nowadays I dedicate my time and energy for trying to understand these issues of a transition in our worldview and what possibilities that opens to Christian spirituality. My research work includes connections to Sami people. It also took me to Bolivia, answering to an invitation to respectful

dialogue with Aymara theologian, philosophers and activists. The most touching moment of my trip was this evening in a small Aymara village at the shore of their holy Lake Titicaca. We experienced together a rite, a ceremony that was about restoring our relationship with Mother Earth and our inner balance. This old couple led the rite, Calixto introduced himself as being a deacon of the Catholic church and continuing the ancient spirituality of his people. Personally, I noticed after the rite that the restlessness that had stayed in me during my trip was gone, I felt peaceful.

Later I came to the insight that clearly for the Aymara, the most apt language for approaching divine mystery is the language of rites. Rites are a bodily language, rites express certain slowness in dealing with new ideas, rites and physical work store the most valuable knowledge of a community. I began to see that this is true also for my own culture. The knowledge of the head is not enough to transform us, we need more.

Rites are a powerful tool for transformation. Christianity should know this because it also contains some of its treasures in the form of rites, like the Eucharist, a rite of restoration. After my trip to Bolivia I started to ask myself: could Christianity be understood as a nature religion? How far could we emphasise such elements and still this tradition could be recognised as Christian? Indigenous Christians and their interpretations are valuable here.

Picture 3: Cross at Koli

Christianity as nature religion – what could that mean? It would mean a spiritual relationship with the earth, experiencing the Holy in nature and thus considering all nature sacred. This sense of the sacred implies a sense of limits to humanity's greed.

Luckily, we have this kind of elements in the mystical current of Christianity. There is the panentheistic idea of God: God is intimately present in everything, but at the same time also beyond it. God is immanent and transcendent. God is present in every tiny leaf of a tree (Luther), in every animal, every lake and geysir.

Maybe you ask: what is the point of putting our hope in the transformative power of indigenous Christian spiritualities in a world where Christianity is largely losing its authority? Well, that development, especially in the West, has much to do with the problem that Christianity without a depth dimension does not make sense to people. It does not meet their yearning or feed their hope. We need to find the depths, the contemplative dimension of silent prayer and meditation again.

And in this we can look again to Jesus Christ in the Gospels and see in him also a teacher of ancient wisdom. He teaches *metanoia*, an inner transformation. It means letting go and finding inner freedom and calmness. This attitude of letting go is acutely needed, because the root of overconsumption lies in fear and clinging to security. Letting go of this kind of cravings is a necessary part of the transformation of individual seekers and communities and humanity as whole.

With the language that is most popular nowadays we are talking about mental and spiritual resilience. Not getting paralysed when facing the huge threats but finding again and again new paths forward.

This transition of our worldview and this renewal of Christian spirituality – they both grow from the wisdom of indigenous cultures and the Biblical wisdom tradition. They offer paths to a life that is more vigorous and happier than the present. Like at this Temple of Silence on Koli hill, people feel attracted to this kind of inner oneness, a more integral mind and life.

Sermon 18th Sunday on Trinitatis, Mark 10: 17-27
15th October 2017 Háteigskirkja, Reykjavik

Pauliina Kainulainen

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

greetings from the lakes and forests of Eastern Finland! I came from my soul landscape to visit your wonderful country for the first time, to meet your soul landscape.

I am a pastor of the Finnish Lutheran Church, but for the last years I have dedicated my time to research work, which means thinking, praying, writing and acting in some civil movements – all this has to do with our nature relationship which I see as severely ill. How to heal it? How to find a balanced and respectful relationship with nature? What could be the role of Christianity in the healing work?

These questions brought me and many others this week to Iceland, to participate in discussions and to exchange and deepen ideas together.

Today we who are gathered here in Háteigskirkja can ask these questions in the light of today's Gospel story. Maybe it's link to ecological issues is not quite clear...but let's have a closer look...

The enthusiastic young man is searching an integral life, an ever more coherent way of living and serving God. He has already followed a spiritual path since his youth, and now he has an opportunity to meet a great teacher of wisdom, the famous Jesus from Nazareth. But the answer he gets from Jesus is shocking.

Jesus saw that for this young man, the next step would be *letting go*. In order to get the great treasure or to buy the most valuable pearl, one must gladly let go of every other attachment except God.

This is teaching about the Kingdom of God. What is Kingdom of God actually? As I understand it, it has several dimensions.

Firstly, the Kingdom of God or Kingdom of heaven can be understood as the perfect dwelling place in heaven, after our death. Our lives will always remain imperfect here on earth but God has promised us a wholeness in God's nearness, as a gift of grace. But this is not all there is to say about the Kingdom.

Secondly, the Kingdom can be interpreted as something that resonates powerfully also in this world, in our everyday life. It can refer to a state of increasing justice and peace among people, and joy. Jesus' message was clear: he was sent to tell the poor and oppressed good news of liberation. Jesus expressed this message with words but also with deeds: he preferred to spend time with marginalised people, sinners, prostitutes, children and foreigners. In our days, it has been said that nature is the new poor, meaning that we must seek ways towards the integrity of creation.

Thirdly we come to today's Gospel passage. Jesus is teaching about the Kingdom as an inner transformation. Jesus taught a lot about *metanoia*. It is often translated as repentance and that is correct and important, too. But literally it means "going beyond the mind". It means that we are supposed to seek the larger mind that is to be found beyond this narrow everyday mind of ours. My

everyday mind gets so easily worried about all kind of things and it attaches itself to things that are not worthy enough for the soul. The larger mind is the deep one, the one that stays calm below the waves of the surface.

This calmness makes it possible to let go. Jesus teaches us to let go of our needs for wealth, for security, fame and controlling our lives. Yes, I know this sounds hard, but Jesus is looking at us lovingly as he says these things. Jesus shows us the gate to inner freedom and holy independence. But it is a narrow gate, an eye of a needle – and we carry as much things as camels do.

We poor camels in a world that suffers from overconsumption and human greed! Who can help us to let go of them? As the root causes of overconsumption are fear and our craving for a comfortable life, the teachings of Jesus are most relevant today. We must tackle the root causes of ecological crisis with silent prayer in the presence of Jesus, meeting him at the Eucharist, but also meeting God in the creation, in the silence and beauty of nature. Nature helps us in this inner transformation, calming our minds.

World's indigenous peoples can be of great help to all humanity on this way of transformation. We must listen to them. But it is also important to connect with the wisdom that lies deep in our own cultures. It lies much deeper than our over-technologised cultures recognise. Jesus wants us to throw our nets to deep water, and meet there the power and abundance of God's Spirit.

We desperately need this transformative power of the Spirit in order to survive.

Jesus looks at us knowingly, and lovingly. When we stumble on our path of following him, he stretches his hand and raises us up. This is grace.

I am thinking about the young man in the Gospel story. He became sad and went away. But – maybe? - he remembered Jesus' loving eyes and his words all his life? Maybe there became a time in his life when he felt a great longing for a deeper life and he was ready to let go? Maybe he found his way to the newly born Christian community?

We cannot know, but we know that this story that we still tell in our communities, has changed the lives of many.

We are asked to join this path. Jesus is walking it with us.

Let us pray:

Dear Jesus,

I want to follow you but this path is difficult to walk.

I am not sure if I have enough strength to take me to the top of the mountain.

Help me, support my good intentions, show me the next step.

Help me to slow down my life in order to find time to be with you.

In the silence of prayer, awaken in us the sources of imagination, so that we can together find ways to a better, deeper life.

So that we can heal our relationship with nature, find again a loving and respectful way of living with all our fellow beings.

Let this inner change happen in me, in all of us, and in our communities.

Have mercy on us and on this world of yours.

Thank you for the joy of your presence and your loving look at me.

Amen.

Indigenous spirituality – a gift for the transformation of the world

Presentation given at Breakout Session, Arctic Circle Assembly, Reykjavik, 13 Oct 2017

Thank you for the invitation to participate in this panel.

The theme of this breakout session is “Indigenous spirituality – a gift for the transformation of the world”. Let me start by sharing a short initial reflection on this theme, before I present myself. I guess the transformation of the world we wish for, presupposes a parallel transformation of the ways we think about ourselves in the world. It is a matter of our life philosophies and our worldviews. Henrik was in his introduction talking about values. Yes, we need values. But values are not existing in a vacuum so we can just pick them from the shelf, claim them as ours, and then they will automatically work. Values need to be rooted in, and constantly informed by, deeper layers of our philosophies; meaning that they are reflected in our fundamental narratives about what kind of beings we are and what kind of reality we are living in. I think I will start with that.

I got some questions from Henrik for preparation, and I will start with the first one. What is my understanding of indigenous spirituality?

Well, I think we need to remind ourselves that “indigenous spirituality” is a very generic term. What we are talking about is actually a very rich diversity of spiritual traditions around the globe. Indigenous peoples probably represent a majority of the world’s languages, implying that we also deal with a lot of cultural differences. Our spiritual traditions are expressed in a multitude of myths and rituals reflecting particular local environments. So, when talking about “Indigenous spirituality” we need to bear this rich diversity in mind. However, as a contrast to the philosophies of the modernist paradigm that have developed over the last centuries, some striking communalities between indigenous peoples’ traditions seem to emerge. Many indigenous scholars talk here about *relational ontologies*, meaning that the very deep structure of reality is seen as being relational on all levels. The human individual is not a closed system. We are our relations. I’ll come back to that.

I have been challenged to say something about what indigenous spirituality means to me, and how I am connected to indigenous spirituality. That is actually a story about a journey from values to their underpinning philosophies. I am Northern Sami from the Norwegian side of Sápmi. Next year, my Sami father would have been 100 years old. My mother had a Norwegian mother, and I will return to her in the very end. But my Sami father, passed away when I was 18 years old. His father was born in 1878, so his references went quite long back. I am a river-Sami, and I was introduced to my father’s world of how to relate to the environment when we were going for salmon fishing in one of the tributaries of the Tana River. There was something about how he was relating to that. I got that in my body, but he passed away before I had the possibility to ask him about what the teachings he had learned.

The last summer my father was living, we were sitting outside his home in Tana drinking coffee. I was reading the newspaper, and suddenly I saw a notice about an upcoming movie. It was the first Sami movie ever called *The Pathfinder*, and it was based on an old Sami legend about the čuđe-people that in old times sometimes organized violent raids among the Sami. In

one of the versions of this story a Sami boy is tricking the intruders over a cliff, and the movie was based on this. So, I asked my father: Have you ever heard about this story? Of course, he replied. He pointed over to the other side of the river saying: "The cliff over there is where it happened." Some weeks later my father passed away, but I realized that he grew up with the traditional stories.

So, my life journey, my faith journey and my journey as a theologian has in many ways been a journey of exploring deeper into this tradition; a tradition which has been a kind of underground tradition in our context due to the strong stigma placed on it. We however seem to see a new reclaiming of these traditions. Just before going to this conference, I attended the first seminar ever launched by the Sami University College on Sami spiritual traditions and cultural customs.

I previously mentioned that we need to be aware of the diversity and differences among indigenous spiritualities. Characteristic to the Sami history is that we had a very long history of parallel coexistence between Christianity and the indigenous Sami religion, probably 3-400 years, before the traditional religion was crushed and disappeared from the public sphere in the 18th century. This long history of coexistence implied that the apprehension of Christianity was informed by indigenous ways, explaining why many of the Sami traditional customs and stories also are expressed within a Christian framework. For instance, up to recent days it has been a custom, when slaughtering a reindeer, to make the sign of the cross three times on the antlers with your knife or axe, before putting them away. In 2002, I was interviewing elderly people about the meaning of this. Some had only learned that this was very important to do, but had not got any explanation. An old Christian Sami however told me: "Well, it like a blessing of that animal so it will live again when you bless like this." Many old people can tell that they have learned that in every new thing you are starting with, you are supposed to bless. You should approach everything you do with humility. And everything you take, you need to receive with gratefulness. Because you are in relations to all these things. The human being has an obligation to take care its responsibilities. And I think we saw a very powerful expression in the plenary yesterday, when the archbishop sat down before the leadership before he gave his own speech. So, I think this is some of the commonalities in these stories; that we need to approach things with humility. That we have an obligation to bless and to be a cosmos-power instead of being a curse or a chaos-power in the world.

It is often said that modern cultures are future-oriented while indigenous cultures are oriented towards the present or the past. But isn't it an irony that when it comes to sustainability these "future-oriented cultures" seem to be very short-sighted while so-called "present-oriented cultures" seem to emphasize long-sightedness. Why so? Again, I think it has to do with a particular type of relationality. The obligations you have in all your relations is namely not limited to the here and now. They rather transcend the present by extending both into the past and the future in relational terms. You have an obligation both to the ancestors, and to the generations coming after you. So, within these indigenous space-oriented philosophies, also the future dimension is built in, but conceptualized somehow differently than in the philosophies that are very future-oriented.

I think that one of the problems regarding how the Christian story often has been conceptualized is that it has become too future-oriented, by emphasizing an ultimate future disconnected from our fundamental relations here and now. I will, however, give you one example where a narrative obviously coming from the Sami indigenous tradition, has merged together with the Biblical narrative in a very interesting way. Here the Sami story's reference

to the linear future-oriented narrative of Christianity is turned into an argument for the importance of maintaining your relations to all creation here and now.

The story is about the covenant with the dog, which once was a wild animal. It starts by saying that in the beginning, all things had the ability to speak. One day the dog approached the Sami offering help to herd the reindeer. They agreed that the dog would help the Sami. In exchange the Sami should give the dog protection, good care and provide good food. Then the reference to the Christian future-oriented scheme comes in because the story then introduces the reference to the Last Day. It says that you need to take good care of the dog and of all other animals because on the last day, every being will get back its ability to speak. And then they will witness against you if you have not treated them well. While the reference to the Last Day quite likely is reflecting the Christian narrative, the twist of the story is that it implicitly expands the meaning of “loving your neighbor as yourself”, embracing all creation. By so doing, the reference to the Last Day becomes a message about the need to be committed to your relations here and now. I think the wisdom of this story is that it shows us that the path towards God should never be a path leading us away from this world, but rather a path towards ever deepened relations to the entire creation.

I'd like to end my reflections with referring to my Norwegian mother raised in a small-farmer community in Southern Norway before machines were introduced. A couple of years ago, as then general secretary of the Sami Church Council I was involved in organizing an event in the north called “Mother Earth's Last Oil? Hope for the future, indigenous peoples and climate change”. We were challenging the oil policies of Norway, and had the indigenous elder Francois Paulette from Canada with us. When telling my 89 years old mother about this event, I was kind of thinking: What do you think about this “activist Christianity” approach? To my surprise, she responded: “That's good! I think they speak to little about this in the church.” And then she adds: “I remember my father. When he had sown the land, he took off his hat. He was always wearing his hat. But then he took off his hat and walked around the fields.”

I guess that in all traditions there has been a traditional reverence of the earth, but in many societies, it has been suppressed almost to its extinction. Today it is a need to reclaim this connection as part of our own humanity. We need to take the hat off for the right things. In this process, we all become more human. In this sense, the transformation of the world therefore is about the transformation of ourselves. It is an identity question – a question about our own identity as beings taken from the soil. Thank you!

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