

PREFACE TO SPENCER'S PAPER "TOWARD A RECOVERY OF
AUGUSTINE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS"

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CHRISTIANITY AT FIFTH CENTURY A.D. AS MOLDED BY ST. AUGUSTINE
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Christ's apostles were punished and persecuted mercilessly for telling the truth and they paid the price by shedding their blood for obeying God for preaching the gospel and carrying the message of the Messiah to all of the world as the risen Christ commanded through the 'Great Commission (Mathew 28: 19-20). In the Mediterranean world, the upheaval against Christianity was at its peak even at the fifth century. The Goths, a Germanic tribe, invaded Rome and virtually sacked the Roman Empire in 410 AD. Christianity was established in 380 AD as the official faith of the Roman Empire. The Bishop of Hippo, St. Augustine (354 – 430 AD) wrote his monumental opus to respond to the Pagan's complaints and titled his book as "The City of God." He lived then in the Roman Empire in what is now Algeria. Next to St. Paul, St. Augustine must be recognized, in my opinion, as one of the early founders of Christianity. He essentially merged Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle with Christian theology.

St. Augustine taught in Hippo and Carthage to resist paganism and he also held a position in Milan before his conversion. He emphasized that only Christianity can give eternal salvation. He explained to people the two cities, one the physical place and the other the eternal "City of God." The citizens of the city of God are elect, those preordained by God to spend eternity in heaven because they are the ones God decided will receive His gift of grace. This implies, the corrupted citizens, who do not obey God and who live in materialistic society in earthly city, will be decayed and will never be saved. This doctrine questions the finite nature of man and proposes eternal life for all those who obey God, leading a faithful Christian life. In my dictionary, St. Augustine is the first to come with the eternal nature of man, as Adam was once conceived by God and created and then the "fall" succumbed him to be finite. St. Augustine ascertained that there is not hope for those outside the church. Augustine's book "The City of God" is really the first to define the door to heaven. He wrote that "God's city lives in this world's city" where its citizens are not seduced by the worldly concerns.

Augustine was converted to Christianity in 386 AD. Let us look at what changed Augustine from a Pagan to a Bishop of Hippo when he was ordained in 395 AD. The answer is in Mathew 22: 36 – 40. A lawyer asked Jesus: Which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus answered: "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy mind." As a scientist, I see two things, one the physiological performance of cardiac tissues in the heart that function on the principle of

“All or None” law. Secondly, Jesus brings soul (inner spirit) and mind (the brain) and applies also the same “All or None Law.” Jesus goes on further to add that the second commandment is to love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and prophets. Augustine understood these two commandments. Christ became his Lord. The Cartesian shift occurred to twist Augustin’s wisdom when French mathematician and philosopher Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650) declared:” I think, therefore I am” (in Latin ‘*Cogito ergo sum*”). The new age of wisdom dawned and the mantra of enlightened thinkers (including German philosopher Immanuel Kant) was *sapre aude* (dare to be wise). To this day, ‘Cartesian Doubt’ shapes the discussion of knowledge and what we really know about. The consequent shift for man is to put reason above truth or faith. Then the reason became science *per se*.

The ancient Hebrew concept of sin faded, replacing the Greek arrogance of man with perfect ego. Isaac Newton with his Principia influenced his generation to reawaken the presence of God as a guiding principle in life. Newton believed that he saw “God as known from His work.” In the course of human history we witnessed vividly the fundamental demarcation between naturalism (atheism) and supernaturalism (divine design of God). The psalmist glorified God for what he saw in nature as God’s wonderful creation. In Roman 13: 1, we see St. Paul reaffirming what Jesus said beforehand: “Keep the commandments; Love one another; righteousness leads to salvation.” Obedience to law is vital. When Government says that you do this or do not do this, it implies with God’s authority government regulates and enforces laws and citizens obey. If the government is corrupt, the citizens still remain in the “City of God” as St. Augustine perceived way back in the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century.

Admittedly as early as in the fifth century. St. Augustine in his paper entitled “*De Genesi and Litteram*” (On the literal interpretation of Genesis), argued convincingly that “Days in Genesis could not be literal days, if only because Genesis itself tells us that Sun was not made until the fourth day.” In my opinion, the idea of “old earth creationism” originated by St. Augsutine.

We must also recognize that St. Augustine was a believer first of Manicheaism, originating from the teachings of Persian (Iranian) philosopher Mani (216 – 277) for almost ten years. Therefore, he believed in dualistic cosmology. The paper, presented after this brief preface, deals with St. Augustine by the author Andrew Spencer who refers to ecofeminism and dualism, attributed to St. Augustine. It must be understood that St. Augustine completely abandoned “Manichaeism” in his life and became a genuine Christian. Ecofeminist Sally McFague, whose book “A New Climate of Theology: God, The World and Global Warming”, was previously reviewed by Dr. Raginal Harrell in *Theoecology Journal*. Dr. Harrell clearly questioned the wisdom of Sally McFague in advancing the ecofeminist theory. Linking feminism with ecology is, therefore, questionable in my opinion and linking feminism with ‘planetary health’ and ‘nurturing nature’. Nature nurtures and this philosophy implies that “Nature could do without

human beings but human beings could not do without nature.” This view is different from ‘Christian Creation Stewardship’, as defined by the new concept of ‘Theoecology.’ We agree with St. Augustine that all creation and created order belong to God and we are only “care-takers.”