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Environment and Compassion - Caring for our Earth: Strategies for Thinking

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Table of contents

- Different strategies for different purposes
- Strategies for thinking
- A way of interpreting reality and the power structures that create and control it
- Begin with reality - being aware
- Suspicion of the ideas that support the way things are
- Analysing and challenging the ideas that support the way things are
- Religious suspicion - discerning truth and falsehood
- New or restored interpretations of the Christian tradition
- So what are the positive ideas in the christian tradition that can help us be responsible and pursue justice peace and the integrity of creation?
- What would it mean to see our danger, our power and our absurdity? A further set of principles for action (Hermeneutic principles)
- ACTION - getting involved in reality

Different strategies for different purposes

There are several different strategies for caring for our earth. Each of them is important.

- Taking individual action - adjusting our own lifestyle, consumption patterns, choice of products, way of disposing of waste, organising our own local environment (home, work, neighbourhood) so it is environmentally responsible
- Taking action communally - working with others with similar interests eg bush regeneration, community gardens - working with other individuals to care

for the earth - participating in the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment area Greenparks program.

- Taking action communally - local practical, social and political action as a small group
- Taking action communally - through larger organisations eg the church, national and international environmental groups - bringing about large scale change.

We need to do what we can as individuals, and we need to participate in initiatives such as the Greenparks program but we also need to act politically to bring about change. Why?

- Consider the harm done by BHP at Ok Tedi in one day - how many years would you have to work as an individual to cancel out the pollution and destruction they cause in one day?
- Consider the issue of pollution caused by road transport - the RTA has estimated the cost of Sydney's road pollution and congestion is \$2 billion per annum. We cannot wait to convert everyone as individuals.

The problem is that the logic of individual decisions is quite different from the logic of communal decisions. Individually, for example, it made perfect sense for many of us to travel here by car today. Communally, we are part of the increasing congestion of weekend traffic. **Environmental responsibility is not merely about willpower - it is about changing the logic of decisions - changing the way society and the economy work so that the environment is protected from the logic of individual, individualistic decisions.**

That is why we need to talk about justice, peace and the integrity of creation - these are communal concepts which need to undergird the way society functions. We have probably all heard the slogan - think globally, act locally. I fear that too often that has been translated by people as: only local action on local issues matters. This is not true. The issues of justice, peace and integrity of creation are issues for individuals, groups, local government, business, state government and national government.

Strategies for thinking

My concern is: how do you think about what change is needed - how can we assess government and business policy, how can we decide what changes we should work for or be involved in? And how does our Christian faith help or hinder us in this process?

Too often we focus on strategies for action, without having adequate strategies for thinking. This session is about STRATEGIES FOR THINKING. You may find the diagram on the last page helpful.

A way of interpreting reality and the power structures that create and control it

This strategy for thinking is termed a "hermeneutic circle" or "hermeneutic spiral". Hermeneutic simply means "a method of interpretation" - a way of making sense of

something. So feminist hermeneutics use feminist principles to understand what is happening in society. Biblical hermeneutics uses certain principles of belief as the basis for understanding the Bible. It is a circle or spiral because it brings you back to the starting point, which can be re-examined in the light of what you have learned during the process.

Begin with reality - being aware

In my work, most hermeneutic principles are based on "justice, peace and integrity of creation". When I deal with social justice issues, ie issues focused on people who suffer injustice, the circle starts by talking to the people. The problem with the environment is that it has no voice of its own. The forests are silent, but the loggers have a voice. The oceans and their biological communities are silent, but the trawler owners have a voice. On the other hand, there are many ways in which the environment lets us know something is wrong, if we are willing to become aware of the context in which we live, the REALITY where something is not quite right:

- the pollution over the cities looks and smells awful - it is not a matter of aesthetics, but of danger signs
- incidence of respiratory and other diseases can be correlated with movements of polluted air - eg asthma is on the increase, and it is higher in the western and south western suburbs
- cities are becoming crowded, unpleasant, frenetic
- the land is suffering from salination
- there are algal blooms on waterways
- dust storms sweep away huge amounts of precious top soil, reddening sky and ocean.

Suspicion of the ideas that support the way things are

The list could go on and on and on...danger signs, warning lights that should lead us to be SUSPICIOUS, to think that something is wrong and to be wary when business or government tells us everything is OK and the earth and its web of life can put up with whatever we do to them.

Being suspicious is uncomfortable. It is more comfortable to be complacent. It is hard when you think something is wrong,

but cannot yet explain to people exactly why.
 Being suspicious often means that you see things in a different way to other people. For example, most business executives, most bureaucrats, and most politicians, know nothing about biology. Worse still, many economists seem to assume the biological world will fit with the human economic agenda. There are some notable examples of economists, and economic commentators, who presume to dismiss ecological concerns on economic grounds, but attack those who question their economic viewpoint on biological grounds ("You should be quiet because you do not know economics, but we can speak although we know nothing about ecology"). They do not want to admit that the biological world has its own laws of functioning, and cannot and should not be bent to the human will and economic goals.

Analysing and challenging the ideas that support the way things are

So we need to EXAMINE AND CHALLENGE THE IDEAS WE ARE FED through the media, through politicians and commentators and through advertising. We need to be critical, to trust our suspicion that something is wrong. And we need to be willing to acquire information, explore ideas, test the truth of what we are told, and to expose the falsehoods. This is IDEOLOGICAL CRITIQUE - a critique, a rational, well informed analysis and criticism of the system of ideas which allows the environment to be damaged.

WHY DO PEOPLE ACCEPT WHATEVER IS HAPPENING - WHAT IDEAS SUPPORT THE PRESENT SITUATION?

When we use the concepts of justice, peace and the integrity of creation as basic hermeneutic principles, we discover that ideas that support the system, but are questionable. These ideas that we need to critique include:

- Business as "wealth creators" - as if society could not survive without the huge economic machine and the companies that keep it running.
- Individualism - that everyone should have what they want - that everyone functions as an individual and the only choices that matter are made for one's own benefit.

- Materialism - that the most important dimension of life is one's possessions - life is what you have, not what you think or feel or how you relate to others or to creation.
- Human-centredness - the world and everything in it exist for the benefit of human beings - other species of living things have no independent value or right to exist; they exist only for our use.
- Human beings stand over against the biological world, and are not part of it. Being human consists of conquering our biological destiny and transcending it. We do not need the web of life with its cycles of birth, growth, death, decay, and new life. We exist for ourselves and everything else exists to serve us.
- The only place that matters is here. The only time that matters is now. We do not need to think about our affect on other nations, peoples, places, or the future.
- Our standard of living, our quality of life, is measured by the monetary value of what we produce and what we can each buy and what we each spend and do. So clean air, clean water, forest, waterfowl, dolphins and so on have no intrinsic value but only instrumental value - value based on how we use them.
- An infatuation with our own technological accomplishments, a desire to be "sophisticated" and "modern" or even "post-modern". People once wondered at the stars but we wiped them out with electric light. People once wondered at snowflakes but now we are impressed only by virtual reality. People once felt awe when they saw towering trees thick with age, but now we bulldoze the trees to build skyscrapers and Centrepoint Towers.

The list, again, could go on. Ideas are powerful. We live in a world where ideas no longer have depth - they are reduced to slogans, to the "fifteen second grab" for TV. We feed, and absorb, the most utter tripe. The problem is that it is dressed up in attractive, respectable packages and called "reality". Anything that takes time and effort to understand is dismissed as irrelevant

and not worthwhile, unless it will make us money. I am not talking about the pseudo intellectualism that hides behind complicated and often stupid jargon and thereby appears profound but is really snobbery. I am talking about the profound ideas that are often expressed in simple straightforward language, but that require us to stop, take time to reflect, and change our perspective, so that we discover something new about the world and about human life - the ideas that call on us to adapt and to change our agenda, our sense of purpose and value.

**WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE IDEAS?
Developing THE IDEOLOGICAL
CRITIQUE through STRUCTURAL
ANALYSIS**

Usually ideas are not just isolated concepts - they are often presented as a system which follow from a particular set of assumptions and way of looking at the world. Such a system is an ideology. Often people are unaware of the basis of the ideology they accept - we encounter it so often, in so many ways. Its like breathing air - we take it for granted.

In the above list, I have not indicated what is wrong with the ideas I mentioned. If we have time for small groups, you might discuss what you think is wrong with them. In thinking about this, you will need to consider:

- Where did these ideas come from? What was/is there context?
- What assumptions underlie these ideas? Do we believe the assumptions? Why, or why not?
- Do these ideas work for everyone - for poor people, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders? for people who are unemployed? for families with children who suffer asthma and other illnesses? What happens to the environment, to other species, to the web of life...?
- What do we learn from the biological sciences, the behavioural and social sciences, and other sources of information and analysis about whether or not these ideas are true, sensible, valid, realistic? What empirical evidence do they offer as to whether the ideas are true or false?
- Who benefits when we accept these ideas?

- Who (or what) pays the cost when we accept these ideas?
- What alternative ideas make more sense? Why do we think these alternative ideas are more valid than the present ideology?
- How would "the system" change if we rejected the present ideology and substituted others that seem more responsible and realistic?
- Who has the **power** to keep the system as it is? How do they use that power?
- What would the people who benefit from the present system have to give up?

Some people base their critique of a different system of ideas, such as feminism, or marxism, etc. As Christians, we have much to learn from these ways of viewing the world - but they all have their own assumptions and problems. Any system of ideas, when it becomes an absolute, when it can no longer be questioned, is dangerous.

All this can seem a bit much. Part of my task as Research and Liaison Person on Social Issues is to do this sort of work at some depth, on behalf of the church. But it is important that church members do their own thinking to the extent that they have time, energy and resources available - this is a task for the whole church, not one person. The task becomes easier as you tap into the variety of sources which offer alternative perspectives on issues - material from the churches, and material from environmental groups.

One of the ways we try to avoid slavish commitment to an ideology in the church is through the use of ethical principles called middle axioms. These are only ever INTERIM - the best wisdom of the moment, but open to refinement as we learn more or as the situation changes. Even our understanding of Christianity changes over time. For example, two hundred years ago, none of the churches understood about human rights - now all the major churches accept human rights as fundamental. Forty years ago, theologians were talking about substituting celebrations of the motor car and other manufactured goods for harvest festival - now we know that such a celebration needs to also acknowledge the harms caused by industry.

Ideological critique is a scary task - it amounts to saying that the emperor has no clothes. It involves trusting our sense of suspicion and saying that the fundamental assumptions of our society are wrong.

Religious suspicion - discerning truth and falsehood

But worse is to come. We also need RELIGIOUS SUSPICION. The Church and Christianity are not pure and beyond reproach. We need to recognise that religion has contributed in a variety of ways to destruction of the web of life. How it has done so will vary. I will offer one example only.

The Western Tradition according to Hugh Morgan

In 1992, Hugh Morgan, an influential businessman in Australia and an outspoken person on behalf of Australian mining companies, wrote an article strongly critical of "Environmentalism". In the article he claims to identify with Rex Connors, a politician from the 1970s, and goes on:

He wanted to build things. It is a very important part of the Western tradition, which is based on classical Greek values and thinking and on the Old and New Testaments, to want to build things - great cathedrals, opera houses, magnificent bridges, railway stations, even large dump trucks and front end loaders. These things are the results of carrying out the injunction given in the first chapter of Genesis 1, verse 28, to:

'Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it'.

I have quoted that text from time to time when speaking about environmentalism and the environmentalist movement and it has been fascinating to observe that, in doing so, I committed some sort of deeply offensive blasphemy.

For the true Environmentalist...Man is subordinate to Nature and the history of the Christian era is a history of gross impiety and

sacrilege. Contemporary environmentalism, in its pure form, is as radical and uncompromising an attack on the entire structure of Western society as can be imagined.

There are many problems with these comments I have quoted, and with his whole article. I have written a detailed article using this and other examples, and offering a detailed critique and alternative understanding of Scripture. This is called "[To nurture the earth or to trample](#)", and is available on request from the UnitingCare office.

His interpretation of the Bible seems to reflect his own approach to life and to nature, rather than a serious study of Scripture. As the head of a mining company, he sees the enormous "dump trucks" used to transport mined ore as the fulfilment of God's purpose in creating heaven and earth, plants and animals, and humankind.

Some REASONS FOR SUSPICION might include:

- It seems strange that God would create the world and its living creatures so carefully and lovingly, and declare them good, and then tell human beings to do what we like with them, without any sense of the value of the world in its own right.
- His comments on building are hard to justify from Scripture, particularly as Genesis 11:1-9 is a direct challenge to the whole philosophy of building ever greater buildings.
- Australian indigenous people would also question the value of the tradition he espouses. They did very little building before European invasion and see Western style buildings as cutting people off from the land and its life. They see our enormous buildings as harmful to our humanness and our spirituality. But he pays no attention to their viewpoint.
- Some Australian indigenous women describe mining operations as an act of violence against their mother, the land.
- His article makes no reference to ecology as an empirical science and

academic discipline. There is no reference to the needs of living organisms and the ecosystem. His comments reduce the environmental debate to an ideological battle, in which there is no need to understand the biological world and no awareness of our relationship to it. His comments on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, are highly critical of the outcomes, but fail to address the biological needs which that conference attempted to address

- He raises mining and building to some sort of absolute good, as if this is the purpose for which God created humankind and the earth. Mr Morgan's comments appear to glorify industry and its products as ends in themselves. Only the wants of human beings are important in his eyes, and in this way he can justify whatever industrial "man" does to the earth and its creatures. He is unaware of the wonder of God's creation, blinded by his fascination with what man "builds".
- His views are not disinterested - the Mining Industry has a vested interest in promoting such views.

New or restored interpretations of the Christian tradition

This RELIGIOUS SUSPICION or THEOLOGICAL SUSPICION leads us to challenge his interpretation. The problem is that while most of the recognised commentators on Genesis would disagree with Hugh Morgan, some of their arguments are flawed. So let me suggest, very briefly, one alternative approach.

In seeking to understand the meaning of these commands, we need to take account of another factor in this story. Genesis 1: 26-28 says that God created humankind in his *tselem* (statue, image, model) and *demuth* (pattern, form, shape, image). That is, in Israelite religion, human beings replace the idols of other religions; we represent God. When people look at one another, they should see something of the nature and power of God.

To understand this power which God gives to humankind, we must

look at the context in which 1:28 occurs. The meaning depends on that context. The power is the outcome of the process of creation and must be consistent with that process.

What then is the meaning of the command to subdue the earth and rule over it?

Obviously when we trample on the earth, we are not representing the God of Genesis 1: 1-24.

In the context of Genesis 1, a sense of wonder and awe would guide humankind's use of power. Human power would be exercised with the understanding that humankind is only one part of God's creation, all of which is valuable. God made us in God's image, and the way in which we use our power over creation should reflect God's nature and God's attitude towards creation. We know that God considers creation good, and sustains that creation. God did not create this world to exploit it, but to love it, and calls us to do likewise. Like God, humankind has the power of life and death, but like God, humankind is to use that power for life, not for death.

This is consistent with the impression given in Genesis 2. The earth is a garden and humankind is the gardener. Gardeners have absolute power of life and death over the plants within their garden; they can uproot things or fertilise and water them. When one tramples heedlessly over the garden, instead of cultivating it, one ceases to be a gardener. When one turns the whole garden into a concrete patio, one is not a gardener. The role of the gardener is to cultivate, protect and tend the garden, so that it may live and blossom.

It is when humankind uses its power in this way, to cultivate, protect and tend the earth, that we fulfil our role as rulers over the earth, who represent God to the whole of creation.

There are other religious ideas that work against creation and responsibility towards creation. Some of them are not about the world, but about what it means to be Christian. Let me give a couple of examples of the sort of things we should look out for and be willing to question:

- Faith is good, doubt is bad. Suspicion is similar in some ways to doubt - especially religious suspicion. BUT: we need to remember that we are not called to "have faith" in the abstract, but to have faith in the God of Jesus Christ - to have the faith which enables us to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Often the church, and its ministers, give us the impression that faith is about believing what "they" tell us, without question. It is not. Faith in Jesus Christ is actually about testing everything else, including what the religious establishment tells us, to see whether it is consistent with the Jesus Christ of the Gospels.
- Being a Christian disciple is about obedience. So we should not question authority or leaders. BUT: discipleship is about following Christ, and that means testing everything. But also, we are called to love God with heart, MIND, soul and strength. We do not love God with our mind if we act out of mindless obedience to other human beings.
- There are Christians in all the political parties so its all a matter of opinion and there is no "Christian" view that is more correct than any other. We should avoid arguments about policy issues. BUT: what is at stake is the world God created, so we have a responsibility to wrestle with the issues - how could we possibly put politeness ahead of caring for God's creation? That is childishness, finding excuses instead of accepting responsibility. We should be wary of demonising any political party, but we should work out what we believe is right, and why, and use that to judge policies. We live in a democracy, and we must exercise our political vote and our power as consumers wisely and responsibly - that is what discipleship is really all about. Otherwise, we divide life into little boxes, as if God had no interest in what happens to the world or to creation.

- The church should not be political. I agree that the church should not be party political, supporting one party and demonising the rest. BUT we have a responsibility, as a social and religious institution, to live our life together on the basis of what we believe. If we believe in a God who cares about justice, peace and the integrity of creation, we believe in a God who IS political, in the sense that GOD CHALLENGES POWER AND THE WAY IT IS EXERCISED by whoever is in Government, and whoever has power in business. When we look at what we believe, and challenge false and destructive ideas, then we will be political - the point of ideological and religious critique is to challenge the ideas which distort reality and allow power to be misused.
- Indeed, it has been forcefully argued by theologians in many countries where there is or has been blatant injustice, that the church is being political when it is silent, as much as when it speaks. The church in Nazi Germany was silent - but is now considered to have acted in a highly political way. When the church is silent, it implies that politicians, bureaucrats and business can do what they like - kill Jews, have apartheid, commit genocide against Aborigines, destroy the environment - THAT is being political.

So what are the positive ideas in the christian tradition that can help us be responsible and pursue justice peace and the integrity of creation?

I have already made some suggestions of alternative religious ideas, and I assume that Charles Birch has offered a number of ideas in his talk earlier today. Let me draw on two Biblical passages.

If we are to end violence against the environment, then we need also to rethink our Christology and recognise the cosmic Christ, the Christ who relates to the cosmos, the whole world, and not merely to human beings.

Colossians 1: 15-21 is one example of this theme in the New Testament.

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were

created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers - all things have been created through him and **for him**, He himself is before all things and all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and **through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven**, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

If we are to have a Christian environmental ethic, then we must recognise that **Christ reconciles the whole creation to God**. God has heeded the groaning of creation (Romans 8). God does not love us alone, but all that God has created. Our ethics and our lifestyle should reflect this awareness of the Cosmic Christ - how can we destroy what Christ has reconciled to God, except where our own life is at stake? Dare we sacrifice the creation for which Christ died, merely to satisfy our desires?

In **Proverbs 8**, the feminine figure of wisdom cries out her message to all who would listen, to all who would be wise.

Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the
beginnings of the earth.
When there were no depths I
was brought forth,
when there were no springs
abounding with water.
Before the mountains had been
shaped,
before the hills, I was brought
forth-
When he had not yet made
earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.
When he established the
heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the
face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies
above,
when he established the
fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its
limit,

so that the waters might not
transgress his command,
when he marked out the
foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him like a
little child (some translations:
master workman)
and I was daily his delight.
rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and laughing at (delighting in)
the human race.
(Proverbs 8: 23-31, NRSV,
except for "little child" in place
of "master workman" in verse
30 and "laughing at" instead of
"delighting in" in verse 31)

Wisdom is inherent in creation.
Wisdom recognises God's hand in
creation - all that is comes from and
belongs to God.
Wisdom points us to creation.
Wisdom sees the wonders of the design
of creation.
Wisdom is a small child who enjoys
creation and who recognises that
humankind is only one part of creation.
All is made by God; all is to be delighted
in.

The end verses of this passage puzzle
many scholars. The Hebrew suggests a
little child, dancing around, pointing her
finger and laughing.

They cannot cope with wisdom as a little
child. Yet it is often children who have a
sense of wonder which we lose as we grow
older. It is only as we recover that sense of
wonder at creation that we will live wisely
with creation.

The scholars, it seems, cannot cope with
wisdom laughing at human beings. Yet we
desperately need to learn to laugh at
ourselves, our false values, our
pretentiousness, if we are to see ourselves
in the proper perspective as only a part of
creation, as creatures who should know we
are less than God. When we learn that
humility, we may recognise the evil of our
destructive lifestyle.

This ties in with Psalm 8, in which other
living things are not "lesser beings", but the
works of God's hands (Psalm 8: 6). We
face a choice. We can see ourselves as
lower than God, and decide to be
respectful of what God has created, or we
can see ourselves as only a little lower than

God, and challenge God by destroying his creation.

Both Psalm 8 and Proverbs 8 pose for us the question: how seriously do we take ourselves? In what way do we take ourselves seriously? Do we see the absurdity and the danger of our pretentiousness, when we take the future of the earth and all its creatures into our own hands, instead of respecting the whole creation of which we are only a part?

What would it mean to see our danger, our power and our absurdity? A further set of principles for action (Hermeneutic principles)

I want to propose some of the principles that have emerged as I and others have done the sort of thinking that I have described.

We would have a sense of thankfulness for the whole of creation, and honour our fellow creatures as part of the one community of life created by God. We would recognise that woman and man is in the image of God, and of the same substance, and work together in partnership.

We would question the consumption of our nation of 17 million people which consumes as much as 1 billion Africans would consume.

If we took these biblical traditions seriously, we would learn what to value and what to give up. We would see our wants and our ambitions in perspective - and be more willing to limit them because we would recognise our pretentiousness. We would find ways to end the global injustice whereby the rich cling to their privileged position (President Bush: "the USA way of life is not up for negotiation" at UNCED). The rich nations would live less well, so that poorer nations might live more well. The rich nations would pay the economic costs of caring for the environment, so that the poor nations had the financial means to improve the life of their people. We would recognise that what is valuable about human beings is not the power to destroy but the power to create. We would find ways of becoming a creative society, in the spiritual rather than material sense. We would seek balance between material and spiritual in all societies, and would recognise that global economic justice

requires sacrifice of over-consumption by the rich, rather than sacrifice of the environment or the poor.

We would learn to be compassionate, both towards our fellow human beings around the world, and towards non-human creatures. As we felt the groaning of creation we would recognise our role in causing the pain, and seek to ease that pain, instead of continuing and worsening it.

If we changed in these ways, if we followed these paths, then we would reassess the way resources are used. If that seems unrealistic, then consider the fact that a very large percentage of the world's resources, about \$ 1 trillion, goes into armaments each year. That means an enormous amount of resources from the earth, and human resources, are being channelled into destruction. Military industry destroys and pollutes the earth to absolutely no good purpose. We are absurd creatures, and we need to assess what is funny absurdity, and what is dangerous absurdity. The Bible calls humankind to a new ethic.

A more detailed set of principles adopted by the Uniting Church as a basis for evaluating policy directions will be given out to you as part of the kit distributed next session - the Rights of Future Generations and the Rights of Nature.

ACTION - getting involved in reality

We begin, I hope, to see the basis for assessing policy directions of Government and business, and so to find a basis for lobbying and advocacy for change. For example, I have used the Rights of Future Generations and the Rights of Nature as the basis for church assessment of, for example:

- the national Ecologically Sustainable Development Strategy - the NSW Synod in 1993 welcomed this strategy, but asked the BSR to monitor its implementation - the ESD strategy is consistent with the principles the church supports, but often the implementation falls far short of the rhetoric.
- the national forest policy: section on old growth forests. Again, the NSW Synod has called for implementation of this strategy, as consistent with the basic principles the church affirms. The Board for Social Responsibility has been highly active for the last three

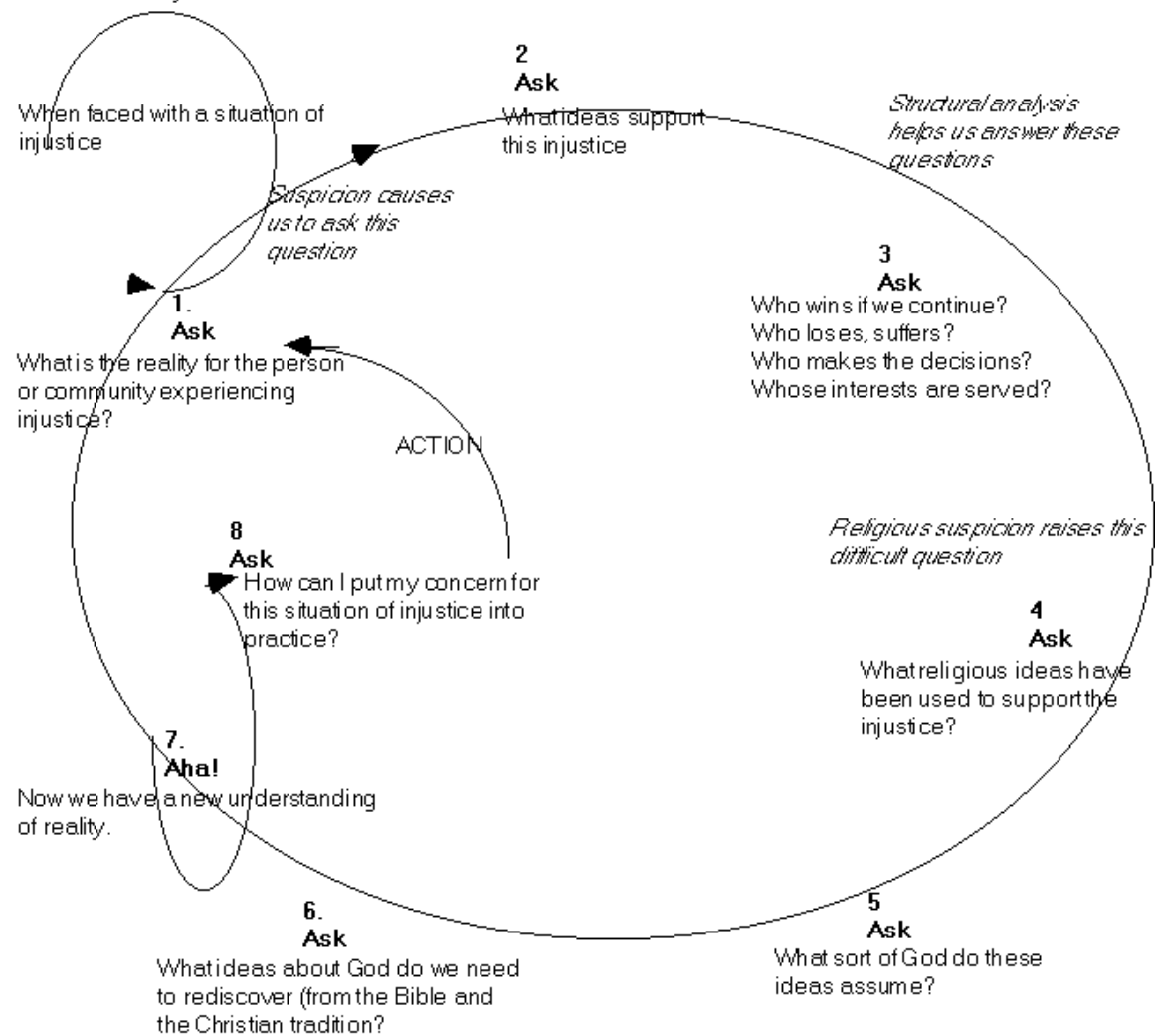
years in criticising the way the government has "implemented" this strategy, because they have failed to fulfil the purpose of the Old Growth forest strategy, which is to preserve old growth forests and their diversity.

- the Board for Social Responsibility has also raised questions with the State and Federal Governments about air pollution and public transport - areas where the national ecologically sustainable development strategy sounds good, but is not being effectively implemented.
- the National Ecumenical Social Justice Forum is at present discussing how the Australian Churches might participate in the World Council of Churches worldwide campaign to lobby the governments of industrialised nations to implement the agreements made at Rio to act to limit Greenhouse Gas emissions. When we consider our small population, Australia makes a particularly high contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. The coal industry has lobbied the previous government, and will no doubt lobby

the present one, to sacrifice its commitments on greenhouse gases for the sake of a healthy coal industry. This is related to a "no regrets" policy. For us, "no regrets" is most likely to mean that in the future, we want to have no regrets for the way we have treated the environment. For government and business, "no regrets" is about having no economic and financial regrets - we should not sacrifice world competitiveness for the sake of fulfilling our commitments on greenhouse gas.

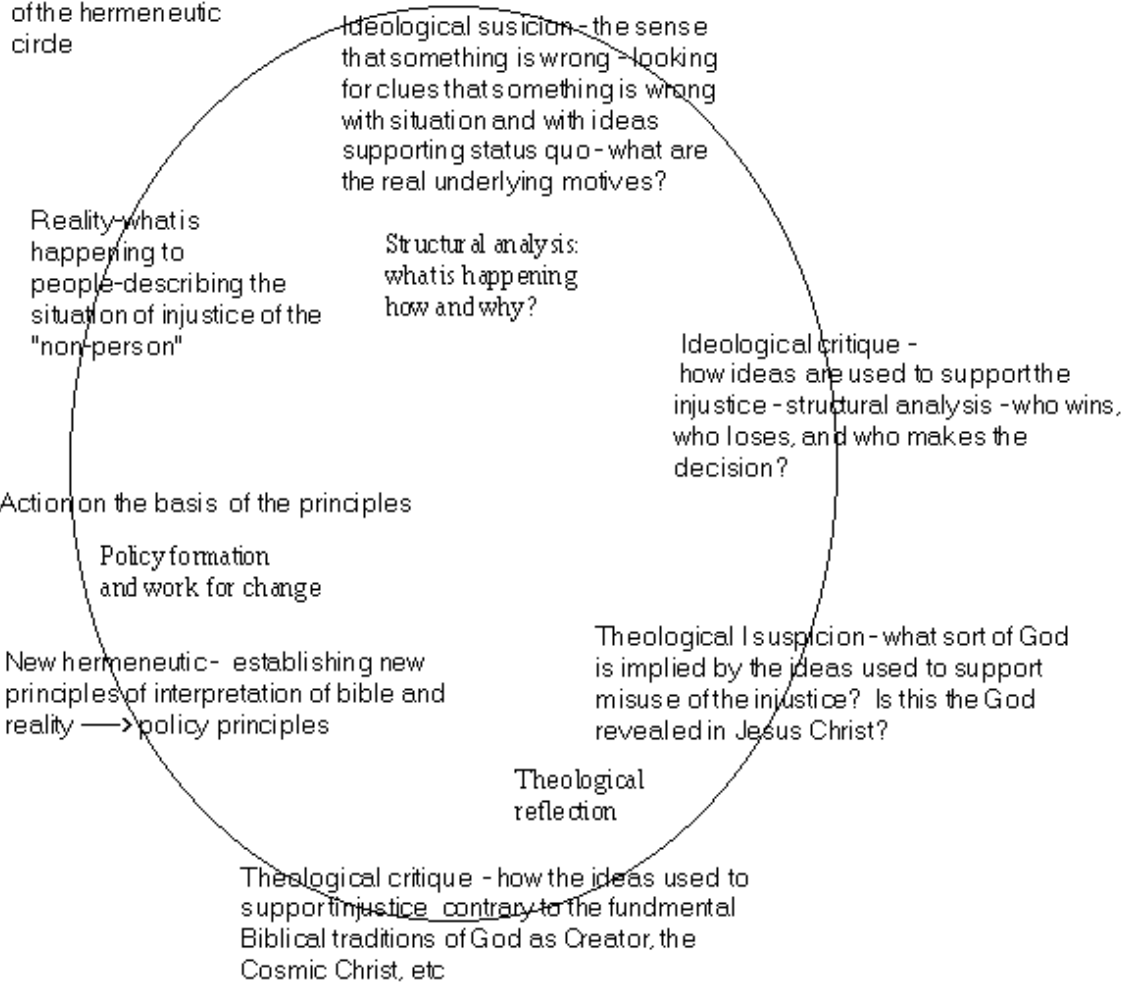
At this point it becomes evident that one can continue around the circle again, for each of these separate issues - and for each of the other environmental issues facing Australia. That is, as we begin to use the hermeneutic principles as the basis for action, we discover that each individual issue also opens up new questions, new suspicions, and the need for further analysis. We need to keep a balance between acting on what we already know, and ensuring that we do not become arrogant and presumptuous, assuming that what we already know is enough.

Fifth elaboration of the Hermeneutic Circle
 - a version for lay education



Ann Wansbrough (1995)
 Developed in consultation with
 Ian Richardson

Fourth elaboration
of the hermeneutic
circle



Ann Wansbrough 11/95

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