



# Introduction

## The Importance of “A Manifesto for Earth”

I have not found anything in life to be more meaningful than the Earth. Since boyhood I have preferred to live in small, quiet places where woods and fields are nearby. Walking has always been my preferred means of locomotion. I recall that when I was ten or twelve years old I kept a little journal that I labeled “Wanderings and Musings.” The world was less noisy then. There were airplanes and cars, but it was possible to walk along roads leading to a fishing hole or a berry-picking spot without seeing an automobile more than occasionally. Even in youth I was not particularly attracted to towns and felt no inclination at all to visit any large city. I still feel little attraction for such places. I have lived in British Columbia for nearly fifty years and have never been to Vancouver or Victoria and do not feel deprived. To the very best of my ability I have tried to remain part of the natural world that I love. Somehow I believe that the subtleties of Nature communicate hints, moods, feelings and insights to our unconscious mind.

One of my strongest convictions is that humanity has unwittingly created a perilous situation by detaching itself from Nature, and in considering itself to be superior and the only species that is important to the universe. The conquest of Nature, which has been expressed as a goal by modern entrepreneurs, has always seemed to me a sign that our species is disloyal to the very source of its existence. I do understand that some theologies postulate that we are direct offspring of deity (as are all other

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organisms?) and have been given Earth as a gift for our private use. I suspect this is at best fanciful, and this is why I proposed in *The Soul Solution* that a theology of the Earth might elevate us to a deeper reality and a willingness to care for our planetary home.<sup>1</sup> It seems to me that if we believe in a creator we should also show great respect for the creation designed by that creator. Our maiming of ecosystems and the ecosphere indicates that such respect does not exist.

One of the reasons I decided to write this book was because of my acquaintance and friendship with the late Dr. Stan Rowe, professor emeritus from the University of Saskatchewan. Our mutual interests in ecology made us compatible companions and we would walk, talk, or communicate by letter or telephone. In 2004, Stan with his friend and colleague, Dr. Ted Mosquin, a specialist in systematics and evolution and a widely accomplished man, teamed up to create “A Manifesto for Earth.” This was a scientific article that first appeared in *Biodiversity: Journal of Life on Earth* (January–March 2004, see appendix). Rooted in ecology, it offered eleven principles that, if followed, would move humankind toward a respectful, compatible relationship with Planet Earth and the multitude of other organisms with which we share this life. They hoped many of the most idealistic ideas society has conceived would become part of our thought if we realized our intimate ties with other members of the super-family of life on Earth.

Ted Mosquin gave an interesting perspective on the intent of the Manifesto authors when he addressed members of the Canadian Association for the Club of Rome (CACOR) in 2005. In answer to the question “Why another Manifesto?” Dr. Mosquin clarified the viewpoint adopted by Dr. Rowe and himself.

“Some reviewers of the early drafts of the Manifesto pointed out that humanity already has a half dozen charters, proclamations, platforms, declarations and the like, and suggested to the authors that we explain why yet another of these kinds of texts was needed. The answer is that all these earlier attempts are thoroughly or partly anthropocentric in that they place humans rather than the living Earth at the center of value. They reflect a deeply embedded anthropomorphism, seeing the world of Nature as being valuable only to the extent that it served some human purpose. Hence, the Manifesto was written to fill this gap in the literature on environmental ethics by explaining the ecological basis for the ecocentric worldview.”<sup>2</sup>

Inasmuch as I also share the idea that the Earth is of vastly greater importance than any of its expendable species, I feel that an ecocentric

worldview is a prerequisite for truly civilized behavior that would always keep a weather-eye alert to the health of the Earth context in which we live. In communication with Ted Mosquin I was impressed by a thought he expressed, that since we always capitalize the names of other planets — Venus, Jupiter, Neptune, for example — we should also capitalize Earth as a matter of respect. This led me to the further thought that addresses are incomplete without Earth completing the full address. Having worked as an educator, I reflect that when children learn their addresses, they should be taught that Earth is a natural part of that address. Because we display habitual unconcern about our planet, it might be a valuable part of all education to remind people at an early age that Earth is home. An international ballad, “O Earth, We Stand on Guard for Thee,” might help all humans to realize that wars in all their forms — civil, religious, or international — are primarily destructive and no wiser than bashing your own feet with a sledgehammer. It is quite amazing that politicians have not yet come to the realization that peace is an inviolate need.

After reading through “A Manifesto for Earth” a number of times, and pondering upon the eleven principles stated by its authors, I recalled that some years ago Buckminster Fuller wrote a book he called *An Operation Manual for Spaceship Earth*. Fuller had lamented on more than one occasion that such a manual was not available. Realizing that operating manuals are given for everything from lawnmowers and garden tractors to refrigerators and sewing machines, it could be said that he had a valid point. Fuller’s book made many pertinent observations. Earth, though, with its complex living, dying, reproducing, mutating multitudes of amazingly specialized and integrated organisms, is infinitely more than a spaceship. It is an ecocentric masterpiece that not only nurtures its offspring, but also is the parent of philosophies and spiritualities that hint of unknown destinies. It then occurred to me that the Mosquin and Rowe essay would be a realistic foundation for a manual to guide wise and respectful beings toward a harmonious, mutualistic future on the planet.

When I thought about the idea of a manual for Earth, I became conscious that although Canadian politicians may be 24-carat whizzes in political science matters, they frequently demonstrate acute estrangement from the Earth. They do not appear to realize that Canada is a vast land with an integrated storehouse of enormous vitality. The preservation of that vitality is the essential factor upon which any intelligent government ought to be focused. A minority of legislators may understand this because they have sprung from a farming background, or have compre-

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hensive knowledge of some scientific discipline; but political science is too thin a discipline to engender knowledge about the importance of concern for the health of the planet.

There are many other people whose narrow focus overlooks concern for Planet Earth. Businesses, or corporations, are too pre-occupied with wealth to have regard for anything more important than the economy. Many voters accept the glamorous pretensions of politicians while they themselves possess only a superficial awareness of Earth as, literally and figuratively, the miracle that supports all life every day of every year. And still another important segment of society, the educational system, focuses on human achievements and aspirations and, without apparent intent, fails to root young people in the Earth context that makes their lives possible. An instructive Earth manual would be of immense value to each of the groups just mentioned. The lack of such a valuable “operating manual” is apparent today.

Upon reading the eleventh principle of the Manifesto — Spread the Message — I felt that I should do just that by providing some general expansion on the principles stated in the Manifesto and attempting to give insight into some of the problems we face.

Unfortunately our society has set so many negative factors in motion that it will take a monumental awakening to divert ourselves from the abyss toward which we are accelerating. Just as much as any religion seeks renewal, people need a revelation, both logical and spiritual, to help them become loyal citizens of our planet. This statement leads me to think of another aspect of the Manifesto. It is that the principles stated by the authors are not merely scientifically valid. Their manuscript transcends strictly academic science, as I think it must do. It displays both philosophical and spiritual conviction. It does not hesitate to speak of some behavior as “morally reprehensible.” It offers hope by suggesting behavior that would open a “new and promising path toward international understanding, cooperation, stability, and peace.” Focused on broad ecological concepts, it displays a truly holistic Nature.

In writing this book I am also prompted by my own deep respect for Earth. This respect probably led me to studies in geology, and later in ecology. My interest also caused me to peruse writings in classics to better understand early attitudes toward Earth. As indicated in a later chapter, concepts that eventually formulated the idea of Earth wholeness appear throughout history. Ecology is a science that had its inception in the thoughts of sages whose intellects had not disassociated physical factors

from moral evaluation. Its integrative Nature and ecocentric worldview is vital to human survival and extremely necessary at this time. Sharing Mosquin's and Rowe's own holistic outlook I have tried to expand on some of the factors, concerns and attitudes that such a worldview entails.

Since it has long been known that fools step in where angels fear to tread, I can justify my own attempts to spread the message while being fully aware that I will step on some toes and perhaps on some cherished (but I think hollow) ideals, such as one espoused years ago that "the business of Canada is business."

I believe strongly that the ideas of the Manifesto are not merely useful but are direly needed. What I hope to do is to spread the message more widely so that the idea of ecology as a taproot for social structure, for the economy, for education, and for survival on Earth will become the realistic conviction of enough people to make a difference. Instead of trying to shape the world to fit our own desires, we must file down our own prominent abrasive edges and become constructive members of the ecosphere.

Our present commitment — giving the economy top priority in our lives — is steadily degrading the Earth. Actually, there are three evidence-filled concepts in our awareness, which we view in the wrong order of importance. As we think of them they are economy, education, and ecology. To understand how we have reversed the proper order of priorities, we must visualize ourselves as part of the cosmos, which scientists have described as a seamless whole. The word cosmos, from the Greek *kosmeo*, means "order" or "arrangement." An example of cosmic order is our solar system, which consists of planets regularly orbiting a star we call the Sun. Predictability is a factor in our cosmos.

The incongruity of selecting the economy as our most important concern is becoming clearly evident. The need for rethinking our own priorities is enormously important.

Two of the three concepts mentioned above share a common root, *eco*, derived from Greek *oikos*, which means household. In the order in which they should be emphasized, the first of these words is ecology, which is senior because it means the study of the household. It is logical that the study of the household should precede economy, which refers to the management of the household. It becomes more obvious daily that, if we knew more about our household, we would not manage it as badly as we do. Our world would not be filled with life-threatening garbage and pollution, which contaminates our soil, air, and water. Ubiquitous toxicity is a direct result of our incompetence as planetary managers.

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The third term links ecology and economy. It is the word education, which means, to lead away from. In other words, the process we should follow is to carefully study the organization of our planet (ecology) and then transmit proper understanding (education) to those who are responsible for harmoniously blending our lives into the seamless whole pre-organized by the innate productive order of the cosmos (economy). Such an understanding would significantly change our behavior, which currently verges on suicidal brinkmanship.

### The Message of Faust

Planetary ecology vastly antedates humanity, and is activated by the portion of the sun's energy captured by Earth. This will be explained in a later chapter. At present we can recognize that something is seriously wrong with our behavior and is a problem that has beset humans for ages. The best place to find an answer is to look back in history. In *To Heal the Earth: The Case for an Earth Ethic* (1990), I referred to Goethe's *Faust* as a wonderful analogy to help us understand the problem that drives us toward self-destruction.

The play *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is based on a theme that dates from antiquity, and is also descriptive of the times in which we live. Faust, the central figure of the play, in effect sells his soul to the devil in order to obtain power and knowledge.

Many aspects of modern society repeat the *Faust* theme in that humankind has been persuaded to give up its simpler and natural relations with the reality of Nature and, as Albert Schweitzer reflected, "to seek its welfare in the magic formula of some kind of economic and social witchcraft, by which the possibility of freeing itself from economic and social misery is only further removed." He was aware that once we gave up our individual personalities and succumbed to the witchcraft of economic dominance we would have to give up our own ideals and accept the materialistic philosophy of the masses.<sup>3</sup>

Faust, the hero of the play, is saved from damnation by his recurring realization of the integrity of Nature, and later by taking an active role in restoring land to agricultural productivity that had been flooded by the sea. In similar fashion, the salvation of people today will only be found by working wholeheartedly to restore the Earth to health. This will entail a more frugal, less machine-intensive, pollution-banning form of life. It

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will involve serious change in our ways, and necessitate control of corporate actions. It will not be an easy job because of the reckless and even demonic way that Nature has been ravaged. In the parlance of World War Two days, we will have to choose between “shaping up or shipping out.” It is not surprising that many ordinary people realize that Nature is presenting her bill and expects payment. Win or lose, it would be a remarkable saving grace for us to finally cherish what has been nearly ruined, and thereby become spiritually healed.

About 600 BC the *Tao te Ching*, attributed to Lao Tzu, identified the universe as a sacred vessel which was not made to be altered by humans. The *Tao* advised that the world would be ruined by tinkering with its established order. Basic to the *Tao* was the idea that we are incapable of comprehending Earth’s wholeness.<sup>4</sup>

In *Faust*, Goethe makes it clear that separation from Nature is the greatest error into which man can fall. The central message of the play is the *danger* of such alienation from the security that Nature affords. People today have successfully alienated themselves by turning their backs on reality in their pursuit of trivial distractions. In *Faust*, the hero is subjected (as we have been) to numerous erring adventures. After each of these he returns to a new life in Nature. At last, there breaks through in his heart the “longing to once more win, at whatever price, a normal relationship with Nature.” This might be our saving grace. This stanza stands out in the Faust drama:

I have not yet fought through to liberty.  
If I could from my path all witchcraft banish,  
Let all the formulas of magic vanish,  
Stood I a man before thee once again,  
That would be worth, O Nature, all the pain.  
A man I was before I sought the shadows.

Goethe (1749–1832) lived in a period during which the ethical way of life was considered to be promotion of the common good. The flaw in this concept was that while the majority of members might make sacrifices from which no gain would accrue to them, other individuals acting purely from self interest would attempt to gain an undeserved amount of personal prosperity for themselves. Profiteering is prevalent today. The prob-

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lem with ethics demanding that everyone work for the common good has always been that those who do not participate will easily gain at the expense of others. Goethe realized that a good society is one in which respect, reverence, and a sense of duty rise *upward* out of an individual's ethical character, which stems from his regard for the infinite. Some philosophers [e.g. Adam Smith (1723–1790) and Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832)] believed altruism to be a derivative of ego. Goethe disagreed. We know today that if altruism did stem from the ego then we would not have a world dominated by extreme wealth and power. Today's critical situations would not have occurred because excess wealth would long ago have been turned actively toward eliminating the manic exploitation of our planet. Whales would not have been exploited to near extinction. Fishnets miles long would not have been used. Selective logging practices would have been followed out of respect for land, rather than clear-cutting with elimination of even tiny seedlings. Well-organized mass transportation would long ago have reduced personal vehicle use. People would long ago have been educated to the preciousness of our planet and its need for judicious use, respect, and protection from the irrational greed that now dominates society. Exploitative, planet-wrecking behavior is a direct result of unbridled ego and turning our back on the real world.

Goethe, I believe, was correct in seeing the world as a manifestation of the infinite spirit. He did not mock religions but displayed a personal certainty that God and Nature are entwined.

This, of course, makes sense if omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience, are attributes of God. Although more a Stoic than a Christian, Goethe punned that from his thoughts and devotion to Nature, he “might be the only Christian.”

Led by economic single vision, humanity is in a state of suicidal rebellion against the natural order from which it emerged. The goal of conquest of Nature is an aberration. Control of selves and of the economic fantasia we are seeking should focus us on becoming loyal citizens of Earth.

In *Generation of Vipers*, Philip Wylie observed, “Anarchy exists nowhere in Nature. An asceticism, which is to say, a discipline, is imposed upon every living thing by its environment and its instincts...Common man has at long last got himself so far out of gear with Nature and his environment that he is beginning to see the shape of extinction, whether he likes it or not.”<sup>5</sup>

## Recognizing and Facing a Crisis

Concrete evidence of humanity's sorry plight was presented in the January 2007 issue of *ecologist*. Zak Goldsmith's editorial quotes International Red Cross Annual Disaster Reports, which reveal that the number of people affected by natural disasters increased from 275,000 in the 1970s to 18,000,000 in the 1990s, a sixty-five-fold increase.<sup>6</sup>

UNEP director Klaus Toepfer contends that the number of people seeking to escape creeping environmental destruction by 2010 will be fifty million. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) envisions 150 million people seeking such escape by 2050. The Stern Report suggests that 200 million people will be permanently displaced from homes by rising sea levels caused by a temperature increase of two degrees. (The present average temperature increase worldwide is 0.7 degrees.) Factors contributing to such projections as these include the shrinking of the Greenland icecap by eleven cubic miles per year, and The World Glacial Authority report that seventy-five of eighty-eight glaciers it has studied are shrinking. Also on the dry side, China's Gobi desert is growing at the rate of 10,000 square kilometers per year.<sup>7</sup>

The report on economic impact of climate change by Sir Nicholas Stern, former World Bank economist, recruited for that effort by England's chancellor Gordon Brown, was completed on October 30, 2005. Its message was grim, and stated that we are in a race against time to avert climate catastrophe. The *ecologist* states that Stern's "core message is inescapable: the end of the world is nigh." His conclusion is that the science of climate change is incontrovertible and we may ignore it only at our own peril. He refers to the business as usual concept as the "economics of genocide."<sup>8</sup>

As part of the *ecologist* presentation on climate change, Anna da Costa's report countered Stern's attempt to give some economic comfort and a few years time to producers. Her presentation included a sequence of images made available by the Hadley Centre for Climate Change, which show that unless large reductions in emissions are quickly achieved, parts of the Earth will be experiencing temperatures three degrees above pre-industrial levels by 2020. The images have not previously been made public except at "climate clinics" for MPs and their friends. They are grim. The report by the IPCC in 2001 that global warming is the result of human activity was verified by the Stern report and although Stern might like to engineer change in such manner as to keep

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impact on the GNP to a minimum, this would be an extremely dangerous risk. The current level of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the environment is 430ppm (parts per million) and is increasing 2.3ppm per year. Even with vast efforts, stabilization at 450ppm is nearly out of reach.

Not only the Hadley Centre but also the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research urged recognition of the seriousness of today's problem. The Hadley Centre projections were kept from public knowledge "simply because of their unpalatability, and because of the frightening message they contain." Realizing that the material I am attempting to encapsulate is very lengthy, I will state briefly what the researchers recommend. The Tyndall Centre states concisely that we cannot afford to wait for technological innovations (which may never come) or for political schemes such as carbon trading. The Tyndall Centre claims "we need worldwide to reduce our carbon emissions by an unprecedented nine percent a year for up to 20 years."<sup>9</sup> What we are heading for if we stay on our present path is "a scorched Earth right across the planet." If this book has a purpose it is as a wake-up call for humankind.

It is obviously time for us to subordinate our behavior to the imperative requirements of Planet Earth. Governments and citizens must realize that changed behavior is not a political issue but a moral issue, as well as an ecological ultimatum.



<sup>1</sup> Harrington, Robert F. *The Soul Solution* (British Columbia: White Oak Press, 2000) pp.174–190.

<sup>2</sup> Mosquin, Ted. "Some Thoughts on the Manifesto for Earth." Proceedings: Analysis of the Human Predicament, May 2006, p.31.

<sup>3</sup> Schweitzer, Dr. Albert. Quotation from a speech given as the centennial celebration of Goethe's death, in his native city, Frankfort on the Main, March 22, 1932.

<sup>4</sup> *The Soul Solution*, p.103.

<sup>5</sup> Wylie, Philip. *Generation of Vipers* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1942) pp. 103–11.

<sup>6</sup> *ecologist*, London, England, January 2007, p.005.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p.005.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p.010.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp.010–014.