

The Place of Environmental Theology:
a course guide for seminaries, colleges
and universities



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Environmental Theology Courses in Europe- Where are we now?

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When the dust has settled from our time in Prague, what conclusions can we make about the present state of adult Christian environmental education in Europe? The aims of the present paper will be to conduct a preliminary survey of what is available, and to provide some leads for those who might wish to develop courses in this topic area in the future. As far as I am aware there has been no previous attempt to conduct a survey of this type. What follows is obviously going to be a personal view, and will undoubtedly have some bias towards the situation in the UK in 2007. I was fortunate to attend both the Prague meeting and a meeting organised by Dave Bookless of *A Rocha* on a similar theme in October 2005.¹⁶⁴ Building on these meetings, I have conducted extensive web searches¹⁶⁵, consulted with attendees at the London and Prague conferences, and contacted several Christian environmental organisations. However, this will not be an exhaustive survey, but rather a sampling exercise, and I am fully aware that I simply do not know what is happening everywhere!¹⁶⁶ Quite evidently, we need to consider a whole range of types of institutions and contexts. So I will split these up into three major categories: teaching at secular institutions; teaching at Christian theological colleges; and distance learning courses.

Secular Institutions

In some respects the teaching of environmental theology at secular institutions could be seen as tangential to the main theme of the Prague conference. However, it should be remembered that large numbers of Christians do take courses at secular institutions.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, as Canon Tony Dickinson¹⁶⁸ states, "In many European countries, particularly in the Reformed/Lutheran north, theological colleges as understood in the UK do not really exist. Ordained ministers in, say, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) or the Church of Sweden do most of their theological training in the theology departments of universities (which may or may not be "secular" and which will, like those in British universities, include students who are not going on to ordination). The institutions which bear the closest correspondence to UK-style theological colleges are probably the "Predigerseminäre" of the EKD or the Pastoral Institutes of the Nordic Churches, but these are concerned primarily with ministerial formation, with the basic theological tools provided in the course of a university career." So in some denominations, and in some parts of Europe, Christian ministers will receive most of their training in secular institutions. In many of these institutions the theology and religious studies courses include substantial amounts of material on subjects such as environmental ethics. The motivation for including courses in this topic area at secular institutions often seems to be that they wish their students to reflect theologically and ethically on the subject matter. Other topics that

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¹⁶⁴ Environment & Theology Consultation- 12th Oct. 2005 at Church House, Westminster, London, UK

¹⁶⁵ All web sites cited in this article were accessed between 15th January 2007 and 19th March 2007.

¹⁶⁶ I am grateful to Ruth Conway who pointed out some courses that I was not familiar with.

¹⁶⁷ It is not always entirely clear what constitutes a "secular institution" as it is now very common for theological colleges (e.g. in the UK) to be attached in some way to Universities or other higher education establishments.

¹⁶⁸ Tony Dickinson is Ecumenical and European Officer for the Diocese of Oxford, UK

they include for similar reasons are just war, media, sexuality, feminism and literature. In some cases institutions do not run whole modules on environmental theology, but the subject is included within other modules. For example, Eryl Davies, Head of the School of Theology and Religious Studies at *University of Wales, Bangor*¹⁶⁹, writes, “We do not have a module specifically on environmental issues though we do have a few lectures on environmental ethics in the module that I teach on the Ethics of the Hebrew Bible. It’s one of the issues that the Old Testament seems to say much more about than the New Testament. I usually give 3 or 4 lectures on notions such as stewardship of God’s creation and the relation of humans to nature as reflected in the Old Testament generally.” Speaking from the perspective of a secular institution he goes on to say, “interest in the subject is increasing gradually (no doubt in part owing to current concerns about global warming etc.).”

Looking at environmental ethics modules it is quite evident that they vary considerably in their content. Environmental ethics is not a specifically “Christian” subject, but it would be an unusual course (particularly in a European context) that did not at least include some consideration of Christian thinking on the environment. Here are a few examples of modules taught at secular institutions:

- The Department of Philosophy at the *University of Wales, Lampeter*, UK, runs a module in Environmental Philosophy for their undergraduate Philosophy students.¹⁷⁰
- *Oxford Brookes University*, UK runs a single honours level module in Environmental Ethics¹⁷¹, which is available to its undergraduate Theology and Religious Studies students.
- The *Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Brescia*, Italy has a module in Environmental Ethics available to its undergraduate students in the Faculty of Science.¹⁷²
- The *University of Pisa*, Pisa, Italy has an Environmental Ethics programme in its Bachelor’s programme in its Economics Faculty.¹⁷³
- The *University of Chester*, UK has an optional module in Green Theology and Environmental Ethics as part of its MTh programmes in Science and Religion and in Applied Theology.¹⁷⁴
- The School of Divinity at the *University of Edinburgh*, UK, runs a module in Ecology, Ethics and Spirit as part of its MTh or Diploma in Theological Ethics: Ecology.¹⁷⁵
- The *University of Oslo*, Norway, has module in Environmental Philosophy and Ethics that is part of its Masters in Culture, Environment and Sustainability.¹⁷⁶
- The *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*, Leuven, Belgium, has a module in Environmental Ethics in its Master of Applied Ethics programme.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁹ See www.bangor.ac.uk/trs/

¹⁷⁰ See www.lamp.ac.uk/philosophy/Part%20Two%20Courses/modules/envphil.html

¹⁷¹ This is currently taught by Martin and Margot Hodson. See www.brookes.ac.uk

¹⁷² See <http://facolta.dmf.unicatt.it/programmi2006/prtri037.html>

¹⁷³ See www-dse.ec.unipi.it/cleta/html/gallenietamb.html

¹⁷⁴ See www.chester.ac.uk/postgraduate/applied_theology.html

¹⁷⁵ See www.div.ed.ac.uk/ecologicalet.html

¹⁷⁶ See www.uio.no/studier/emner/annet/sum/SUM4014/

¹⁷⁷ See www.kuleuven.be/onderwijs/aanbod/syllabi/A00C4AE.htm

- The *University of Zürich*, Switzerland, includes a module in Environmental Ethics in its Master of Advanced Studies in Applied Ethics course.¹⁷⁸
- A number of Swedish Universities and colleges¹⁷⁹ run courses in Environmental Ethics and related subjects. The Centre for Research Ethics at *Uppsala University* runs an advanced course in Environmental Ethics.¹⁸⁰
- The Philosophy Department at *Högskolan Dalarna at Falun* run an undergraduate course in Environmental Ethics.¹⁸¹
- The Department of Geography at *Stockholm University* has a basic module in Environmental Ethics.¹⁸²
- *Lund University* are also planning a course in animal and environmental ethics at their Centre for Theology and Religious Studies.
- The *University of Augsburg* in Germany is unusual in offering a whole Postgraduate Diploma course in Environmental Ethics¹⁸³, including a considerable amount of theology.

What is clear from my survey is that many of the courses available at secular institutions are at postgraduate level, rather than undergraduate. In many cases, at secular institutions environmental topics are taught from a multi-faith or secular perspective, and so the individual Christian taking such a course may have to do some work to integrate what they have learnt from their studies with their Christian faith. However, some of the above modules are taught by Christians or come from a Christian perspective. So many Christians are gaining insights into Creation care and environmental issues by attending courses at secular institutions, and the amount going on here should not be underestimated.

Christian Theological Colleges

Christian theological colleges are themselves a very diverse group of institutions, and it is not surprising that the way they approach environmental issues varies considerably. In contrast to the secular institutions, Christian theological colleges (and the distance learning courses coming from a Christian perspective) include environmental issues in their curricula because they see it as important or potentially important for the future ministry of their students. There is little doubt that the environment will be one of the major issues of this century, and these institutions want to prepare their students to meet this challenge. There are four potential approaches:

Approach 1) Ignore the environment altogether.

Fortunately, this option no longer seems to be as common as it was in the past. However, there are still some institutions, and some parts of Europe where this remains the case. For instance Daniel Lešinský, of the Catholic Ecology Forum,

¹⁷⁸ See www.ethik.uzh.ch/asae/allgemeines/allgemeines.html

¹⁷⁹ I am grateful to Anders Melin, Assistant Professor in Ethics at Lund University, for help in locating Swedish courses.

¹⁸⁰ See www.fef.uu.se/default.asp?s=13

¹⁸¹ See www.du.se/templates/EducationPage.aspx?id=3900&kod=FI1017&language=

¹⁸² See www.utbildning.su.se/katalog/Kurser/1753.asp

¹⁸³ See www.kthf.uni-augsburg.de/studium/studieninformationen/umweltethik

Europe,¹⁸⁴ writes, “In Slovakia we have just started to talk about these topics at a theological level, and we are trying to convince church leaders of the importance of topics like environmental protection and its relationship to spiritual development, but it is hard work. So unfortunately, we are still quite far away from developing courses. There are a number of university courses on different aspects of environmental protection such as waste and water management, but this is something different.” Similarly, Will Simonson of *A Rocha Portugal*,¹⁸⁵ says, “I am not aware of anything in Portugal that is relevant, and would be surprised if there is.” In some parts of Europe public and church interest in environmental issues has been lower because other topics have tended to dominate. This is then reflected in the theological colleges. For example, Richard Clutterbuck, Principal of *Edgehill College*,¹⁸⁶ a Methodist college in Belfast, Northern Ireland, states, “Our courses are currently tied into the Presbyterian College and Queen’s University. We don’t have anything specific on environmental issues at the moment. I suspect that’s partly because the great ethical issue in Northern Ireland has been peace and reconciliation, partly because the theological atmosphere is pretty conservative. On the other hand, it’s an issue growing in importance with (for example) the “bungalowsation” of the Irish countryside and the increasing problem of waste illegally smuggled over the border and dumped.”

Approach 2) Have a few lectures on environmental theology within a whole course.

In the UK, visiting speakers from organisations such as *A Rocha* and the John Ray Initiative often provide at least some of these lectures. When *A Rocha UK* is involved, the lectures can be supplemented by a field trip to Southall in West London.¹⁸⁷ In addition, Peter Hawkins of *A Rocha UK* runs a course called Considering Creation¹⁸⁸ each summer in Snowdonia. He writes, “With a reflective, discursive style rather than didactic teaching, this is very much targeted at theological college students and is distinctive in being based in the outdoors.” At present this course is quite small, but *A Rocha UK* hope to expand it in the near future, and it does offer an additional resource beyond the traditional courses.

Many UK institutions are presently adopting Approach 2. For instance, John Weaver, Principal of *South Wales Baptist College*,¹⁸⁹ Cardiff, UK, writes, “In Cardiff there is a popular but optional module of Christianity and Science, within which I give a number of lectures on environmental issues. I also deal with concern for the environment within our college Pastoral Studies course (compulsory). The environment is not deliberately integrated within other modules, although it is a ‘hot topic’ for mission and ethics tutors. I also include it within my Practical Theology courses. Currently we have a small but growing number of students choosing to complete postgraduate studies in environmental theology.” Similarly, John Bimson of *Trinity College, Bristol*,¹⁹⁰ UK says, “At Trinity College we currently introduce environmental theology in:

¹⁸⁴ See www.cefe.ch

¹⁸⁵ See <http://en.arochoa.org/portugal/>

¹⁸⁶ See www.edgehillcollege.org

¹⁸⁷ See the section by Dave Bookless and Pavel Svetlik in this volume.

¹⁸⁸ Contact peter.hawkins@arochoa.org

¹⁸⁹ See www.swbc.org.uk/

¹⁹⁰ See www.trinity-bris.ac.uk/

a) A second-year biblical hermeneutics module, which includes 5 lectures and a seminar on the theme of 'Creation and Salvation'. Two of the lectures deal explicitly with environmental theology and it is implicit in the others.

b) A third-year module (which can also be taken at MA level) on Christianity and Global Issues.

c) I also introduce it in more minor ways wherever I can, e.g. in my module on the book of Job, I include an 'environmental reading' of the divine speeches.

All of these are optional modules. It also comes into some Mission modules, one of which includes an annual visit to Southall and the *A Rocha* UK Minet site. We are acutely aware that environmental issues are under-represented in our courses and are looking at ways of addressing this, either by introducing a dedicated module or by linking the subject with topics already taught, especially in compulsory modules." Finally, David Heywood of *Ripon College Cuddesdon*,¹⁹¹ near Oxford, UK reports that the college does not "have any dedicated course which features environmental issues." However, Dave Bookless of *A Rocha* UK has been a visiting lecturer for a number of years, and the College have placement students working at the new *A Rocha* project with Simon Brignall in Lewknor.¹⁹² In addition, environmental issues feature as part of the optional rural ministry week, and in 2007 one Masters student was working on environmental theology for her dissertation.

The situation in theological colleges in France seems mostly to fit into approach 2. Frédéric Baudin of "Culture Environnement Médias" (CEM)¹⁹³ in France sent the following report: "Actually, I think that there are no environmental theology courses in any seminary in France. I regularly lecture about *Bible and Ecology* in churches and last summer (2006), I taught about *Faith and Ecology* in a "summer university" (6 hours!) at the "Faculté Libre de Théologie Evangélique", in Vaux-sur-Seine, near Paris¹⁹⁴, but it was not a "regular" course, and I think it was the first time in France. Of course, Henri Blocher, one of the most famous French scholars¹⁹⁵, and other professors who teach in this seminary, also speak about environmental theology in their courses. Moreover, Pierre Berthoud does at the "Faculté Libre de Théologie Réformée", in Aix -en-Provence¹⁹⁶, where he deals with some aspects in his courses in Old Testament (The Theology of Creation and the Cultural Mandate in Genesis; Biblical Anthropology) as well as in Apologetics."

In the Netherlands, Petra Messelink, the coordinator of *A Rocha* Netherlands¹⁹⁷, teaches a module in environmental communication for third year students in communication at a Christian college, *Christelijke Hogeschool Ede*¹⁹⁸. In this course there is one session on philosophy and Christian views towards nature, including material on the Greek vision, the Jewish vision and the biblical vision of nature.

¹⁹¹ See www.rcc.ac.uk

¹⁹² For details of this project see the article by Simon Brignall in *Sage Words* (Jan. 2007) at www.sageoxford.org.uk/swords2007a.htm

¹⁹³ See www.cemfrance.org Frédéric Baudin published *D'un jardin à l'Autre*, Aix-en-Provence, CEM, 2006.

¹⁹⁴ See www.flte.free.fr

¹⁹⁵ Henri Blocher is well known as author of *Révélation des Origines*, PBU, Lausanne, 1988

¹⁹⁶ See www.fltr.net

¹⁹⁷ See <http://en.arochoa.org/netherlands>

¹⁹⁸ See www.che.nl

Approach 3) Have one or more whole modules included in a course.

Usually these are optional modules, and a small sample are listed below:

- At the **International Baptist Theological College** (IBTS), Prague, Czech Republic, the MTh in Applied theology (validated by the University of Wales) includes an optional module in Church and Environment.¹⁹⁹ IBTS not only runs this optional module, but it also has a very comprehensive environmental policy for all of its operations, and attempts to integrate environmental concern in many aspects of its life and worship.²⁰⁰
- The **Irish Mission Union Institute**, Navan, Co. Meath, Ireland, have a Diploma or MA in Ecology and Religion in association with the University of Lampeter.²⁰¹
- **Redcliffe College**, Gloucester, UK, have a Postgraduate MA in Global Issues in Contemporary Mission, which includes an optional module on The Greening of Mission.²⁰²
- The Oxford Summer Programme based at **Wycliffe Hall**, Oxford, UK, are running a topical seminar (3 weeks duration) on the Bible and the Environment.²⁰³ Unusually, this is aimed at American and Canadian Christian college students who come to the UK for a short period of study in the summer and take back credits to their own institutions.
- **Benediktbeuren**, a Catholic institution in Bavaria, Germany runs a number of courses in Environmental Ethics and related subjects at the Zentrum für Umwelt und Kultur (ZUK), a centre for environment and culture.²⁰⁴

Approach 4) Integrate environmental theology across the whole syllabus.

We investigated this idea in the workshops at Prague, and the conclusions are included in the present volume. The key factor that has come over many times in discussion with theological educators is that the syllabus for theological colleges is already very packed. So the idea of adding in yet more material, this time on environmental theology, is not very attractive. Although it is better than nothing, the problem with the optional module is that it can be opted out of. It is only when environment becomes integrated across the whole syllabus, and into college life, that Christians will come out of the colleges with a full appreciation of the issues involved. IBTS in Prague are to be congratulated, as they certainly seem to offer the most integrated approach yet available in Europe. It is to be hoped that many theological colleges will be looking to move from approach 2 at least to approach 3 in the near future, but finding suitably trained staff may not be that easy, at least in the next few years.

Distance Learning Courses

¹⁹⁹ See www.ibts.cz/academics/

²⁰⁰ See the section on IBTS by Lina Andronovienė and Petra Veselá in this volume.

²⁰¹ See www.imudalغانpark.com/ecology_religion_dip_ma.htm

²⁰² See www.redcliffe.org/standard.asp?id=2063&cachefixer=cf11114481802006

²⁰³ See <http://osp.bestsemester.com/contentID.1/academic.asp>

²⁰⁴ See www.zuk-bb.de/konzept/index_e.html

Again one might argue that distance learning courses are not that relevant to the overall theme of the Prague conference, or to this book. However, I would argue that they are relevant for the following reasons:

- 1) They are potentially the most widely available courses in Europe, and are not dependent on the student living near a university or theological college that happens to run a suitable course.
- 2) They have considerable potential in continuing ministerial education after church ministers have left their colleges.
- 3) Several are based in theological colleges, and have many possibilities for interactions with those institutions.

Examples

As examples, I will give brief details of four modules/courses that are based in the UK and then concentrate in more detail on two others.

- **Imperial College**, London, UK includes an optional module in Environmental Ethics²⁰⁵ in its postgraduate courses in Environmental Management.²⁰⁶
- The **Open University**, UK has a postgraduate level module in Environmental Ethics that is taught by distance learning.²⁰⁷
- **Exeter University**, Exeter, UK has a Level 3 module in Environmentalism - Ethics and Theology in the Green Movement as part of its Environmental Studies undergraduate programme.²⁰⁸
- **St John's College, Extension Studies**, Nottingham, UK offers a single module in Sustaining the Earth as part of their Faith for Life programme.²⁰⁹

Case study 1: OTC

The **Open Theological College (OTC)** based at the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham, UK²¹⁰ includes an optional basic (Undergraduate Level 1) module on Christian Faith and the Environment²¹¹ in its certificate/diploma/BA course. The module is designed to take 120 hours of study. Written for the OTC by the John Ray Initiative, this module counts for 12 CATS points. Students receive telephone and email support by a specialist tutor, a printed study guide, online resources, and may also opt to participate in a two week online seminar. The module starts in September every year, and runs through to the end of January. Students can register: as part of an undergraduate Higher Education Certificate, which can later be extended to a Diploma or Honours Degree; or as a stand-alone module. The following is a brief summary of this module:

Unit 1. Introduction. A guide to the textbooks and the OTC systems.

Unit 2. Global environment. Relates local environmental awareness to global issues, and describes major physical and biological systems affected by human activity.

²⁰⁵ See www.imperial.ac.uk/distancelearning/course/outlines/c63.pdf

²⁰⁶ See www.imperial.ac.uk/distancelearning/course/eb/em.htm

²⁰⁷ See www3.open.ac.uk/courses/bin/p12.dll?C01T861

²⁰⁸ See www.education.ex.ac.uk/dll/details.php?code=LLN3042D

²⁰⁹ See www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk/html/distance_learning/course_details/faith_for_life/f41-ste.shtml

²¹⁰ See www.glos.ac.uk/faculties/ehs/humanities/otc/courses.cfm Thanks to module leader, John McKeown, for providing the material on the OTC module in this section.

²¹¹ See www.glos.ac.uk/subjectsandcourses/undergraduatefields/otc/descriptors/otc115.cfm

Unit 3. Limits to growth. Looks at energy, resources and waste, and the impacts of population and consumption. Compares voluntary responses and legislative controls as solutions.

Unit 4. Sustainability and values. Explores the roles of 1) science and technology, 2) management and political systems, and 3) law and rights. Considers the concepts of utilitarian and intrinsic value. Evaluates the viability of ‘sustainability’ as an environmental ethic.

Unit 5. Anthropocentrism. Historical roots of environmental problems. Looks at different varieties of anthropocentrism in ancient, medieval, renaissance and modern secular and Christian thought.

Unit 6. Creator and Creation. History of earth-affirming and earth-negating views of the world. Dualisms of matter/spirit and body/soul. Deism and pantheism are contrasted with doctrine of creation.

Unit 7. Eden and the Promised Land. Background information about life in biblical times. Theme of land explored through Eden, the Promised Land, and the whole earth. Raises issues of land ownership and use.

Unit 8. Fellow Creatures. Scientific and biblical insights into what humans have in common with other creatures. Also considers the theology of humans being uniquely created “in the image of God”.

Unit 9. Dominion and Stewardship. Examines different interpretations of biblical texts, especially Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

Unit 10. Sin, Curse and Fall. Explores differing views of the impact of sin on the earth including (i) a fallen world, (ii) a cursed earth, (iii) direct effect of environmental abuses - and their implications for the selection of appropriate responses to environmental problems.

Unit 11. Covenant. Considers the promises of blessing in Genesis 1, and their renewal in the rainbow covenant. Theology is applied to the issues of biodiversity conservation and extinction.

Unit 12. Law and Ethics. Explores different methods of deriving ethics from biblical laws, including the Sabbath and Jubilee, and their environmental dimensions.

Unit 13. New Testament. Investigates why there seems to be less about the environment in the New Testament than the rest of the Bible. Explores themes including the incarnation, the Kingdom of God, Jesus’ ethical teaching, Jesus as Lord and healer of creation.

Unit 14. Earthing future hopes. Secular and religious forms of apocalyptic nihilism are contrasted with doctrines of bodily resurrection and the life of the age to come. Explores ways of thinking about eschatology that offer affinity and commitment to the earth.

Unit 15. Church and Worship. Compares recent environmental declarations by international church bodies. Looks at issues raised for church worship and liturgy, especially concerning earth-inclusive language.

Unit 16. Lifestyle and Politics. Considers the relative contributions of individual awareness and responses and public policy. Also looks at vocations to professional work in environmental science or conservation.

Unit 17. Christian Mission. Explores holistic mission, contextual evangelism, issues in co-operation with non-Christian environmental groups. Examples are given of UK and international Christian ventures.

The first registration for the OTC module was in September 2005. By December 2006 a total of 13 students had registered for the module. Of these five students have completed, and one withdrew.

Case study 2: CRES

Ripon College Cuddesdon²¹² (RCC), nr. Oxford, UK validates a Certificate and Diploma in Christian Rural and Environmental Studies (CRES)²¹³. I am involved in the running of CRES and, as a result, can give some more detailed insights here. The CRES course is unusual, in that it is a complete course, as opposed to an individual module, covering environmental theology (admittedly it does also contain modules in rural studies). CRES is a part-time distance-learning course jointly run by two charities, the John Ray Initiative (JRI) and Christian Rural Concern (CRuC), and is ecumenical, with staff and students from many denominations and diverse churchmanships. The course usually starts in September/October. From September 2005, RCC has provided quality control for the course, and facilities for many of the associated CRES meetings. The course had been run in its original format by CRuC since the 1980's, and was formerly validated by Keele University. Many students interested in rural ministry have taken the course, and benefited from it. For example, clergy with experience of urban ministry took it as a conversion course when moving to the countryside. In 2002, CRuC and JRI formed a partnership to revamp the course, and introduced modules in environmental studies. The writing team included Prof. Sam Berry and Sir John Houghton, and the course now has options that allow for specialisation in either rural or environmental studies, with a central theological strand. The CRES certificate course is intended to be of interest to all with a personal or professional concern for the environment and countryside, rural communities and churches. CRES has great flexibility, enabling students to tailor coursework topics to their own particular concerns. Students work through six out of eight module booklets, and are examined on study papers and a work diary, one per module. The presently available modules are: The Living World; Farming and Food; Christians as Salt and Light; Economics; The Physical Environment; The Biological Environment; Rural Communities; and The Church in the Countryside. In the final year of the course, students work on a written project, the topic being chosen in consultation with the tutors. This is presented at the annual residential consultation, a suitable climax to the course, after which the student graduates. Although CRES is a distance-learning course, students are found a local personal tutor from the JRI and CRuC networks to guide them through. There are also regular course meetings (mainly at RCC), which are opportunities to meet with other participants. In recent years a CRES Diploma course has been developed that allows students to get to grips with one major topic in depth.

In its first two years (to 2006), eight CRES students have graduated (seven on the Certificate and one Diploma student). Three of these have been church pastors. Two of the Certificate students did such excellent work that they were granted distinctions. Currently (March 2007) there are nine continuing students on CRES.

²¹² See www.rcc.ac.uk

²¹³ See www.cres.org.uk

CRES is now actively looking at expanding the range of modules offered, and at internationalising the curriculum to make it easier for non-UK students to take the course. The CRES staff team have also been involved in a number of initiatives beyond the running of the course itself. Using The Living World module as the basis, CRES provided a study leave for a Church Mission Society (CMS) Mission Partner from Bangladesh. Several CRES tutors collaborate with Canon Glyn Evans, the Rural Officer for Oxford Diocese, to provide a whole week on Rural Ministry as an option on Pastoral Studies for ordinands at RCC. One of the CRES staff gave a lecture on Christian Eco-spirituality to the part-time ordination students from the Oxford Ministry Course that is based at RCC. Two CRES tutors fronted a day conference for rural ministers at Sarum College, Salisbury, UK.²¹⁴ Many of these activities have arisen because of the desire of both RCC and CRES to form a strong partnership, helping each other.

Distance learning courses are making a small, but strong, contribution to adult Christian environmental teaching. Total numbers on these courses are still quite small, but the students tend to be highly committed, and the courses have a great potential for the future. A feature of the three modules/courses based in theological colleges is that they are aimed at Certificate level (first year university in the UK), and/or have fairly open admissions policies. Unlike many of the modules mentioned above, most of the distance learning modules/courses are free standing. In other words, students do not have to take whole theology courses just to take the one course available in environmental ethics. The difficulty at the moment is that such courses appear to be strongly UK based and UK focussed, and this needs to change.

Conclusion

The above sample of courses suggests that adult teaching on Creation Care, Environmental Theology and Ethics is increasingly available. However, there is little doubt that there is still considerable room for enhancement. In particular, the present uneven provision in theological colleges needs to be improved. It is, perhaps, understandable that environmental theology is often taught in postgraduate courses, as the subject involves integrating vastly different disciplines. However, most people never do postgraduate courses! So there is a real need for increased provision at the undergraduate level.

In almost all cases environmental theology is still not really integrated into the curriculum of theological colleges. Such integration will, however, take time. Changes in the curriculum do not happen overnight, and the teachers need teaching before much can happen. How have such changes in the curriculum happened before? A similar process came about with the “New Perspective” teaching on the Jewish roots of Christianity. In the 1960’s this was the preserve of just a few theologians, but has now become far more widely accepted and integrated into the curriculum, and most pastors in training will now be exposed to these ideas. Similarly, issues concerning developing countries are now routinely included in the programmes of theological colleges, and this is a relatively new idea. For the present I think we will probably have to be satisfied with making any inroads into theological colleges, however small. But as this century wears on, and the scale of the environmental crisis

²¹⁴ See www.sarum.ac.uk

becomes clearer and clearer, then I predict that environmental theology will increasingly be seen as a core part of the curriculum, and the integration we all seek will happen. At least I hope so.