If globalization is inevitable, it is too bad for the environment and the human species. Even if globalization includes an economic model that embraces sustainable development, and political institutions that guarantee the environmental rights of citizens, it will still be too bad for the environment and too bad for the human species. The reason is that the cultural assumptions about the environment that underlie the western world view remain unexamined by those involved in the globalization struggle.

Capitalism has always assumed the environment was a resource to be turned into a commodity, or the source of power to turn other resources into commodities. Mult-national corporations and neo-liberalism, which serves as its ideological framework and justification, is no different. From gold to the genomes of humans and other species, the natural world is a resource for exploitation and profit. Marxism does not offer another point of view on the relationship of human beings and the environment. For Marx nature is man’s inorganic body, a means to life, and the material, object, and instrument of life’s activity. As he says, nature is to be transformed to fulfill needs, digestion or enjoyment.

While both capitalism and Marxism are thought to be secular, they rest on a cultural assumption about the environment and human beings relationship to it which is at root religious. And it is a religious view that is unique; unique in its hostility to the natural world; a hostility that is evident in its sacred texts, in its leaders, and, historically, in its institutions. The belief that the secularization of Western society meant the end of this assumption is simply not true. The hatred of the natural world inherent in this world view is present, not only in Marxism and capitalism, but consumerism, the scientific world view, the so-called Enlightenment, 500 years of colonialism, American exceptionalism, and globalization. In other words globalization will continue to be the slaughter of other less than human beings, and as the union of concerned scientists says, “a world so irretrievably mutilated that it will be unrecognizable. If one is only concerned about human beings, the outcome will be the destruction of both.

The Christian, Jewish, and Muslim creation myth is unique among religions. It establishes a dichotomy between humans and other beings; it establishes a hierarchy between humans and other beings; it identifies the natural world with evil. These themes are reinforced throughout the Scriptures, but more importantly, they received validation as Church doctrine through pronouncements by Church fathers, and they become institutionalized in the social and cultural practices of western society. The themes and practices seem to disappear with the Enlightenment and the emergence of modernity. But they just become invisible. When one examines Descartes philosophy and his pronouncements about other beings, when one examines Kant’s philosophy and his pronouncements about other beings, when one examines the assumptions and practices of modern science, it becomes clear that this religious world view is present today.

What is the nature of the dichotomy and the hierarchy that is established in the creation myth. From Genesis:

“Let us make man in our image and likeness to **rule** the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the cattle, all the wild animals on earth and all the reptiles that crawl upon the earth. So god created them in his own image and blessed them and said to them “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and **subdue** it; and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

The basis of the dichotomy that this myth establishes is that human beings are different from other creatures in that they are creatures that are made in the likeness of God. But this is not just a dichotomy, it also establishes a hierarchy. Because human beings are different, they are ordained to rule all other beings. But the rule is not necessarily benevolent, in fact, humans are told to subdue the earth, so that they may gain dominion “over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

The early Church fathers established church doctrine that reinforced this relationship of domination and subordination. St. Augustine who set much of Church doctrine answered a question about animals and salvation by saying that animals are beyond the scheme of salvation and it is alright to kill them unless they are someone else’s property. St. Thomas Aquinas established Church doctrine in his essay “Differences Between Rational and Other Creatures”. Following Aristotle, Aquinas argues that the creation is a hierarchy, human beings are unique and qualitatively different from other creatures because they have reason and intellect. Animals are not capable of reason therefore, according to Aquinas, they can be used like slaves. In fact, for Aquinas, all other beings can be used like slaves, “the intellectual nature is alone free.”

“We refute the error of those who claim that it is a sin for man to kill brute animals. For animals are ordered to man’s use in the natural course of things, according to divine providence. Consequently, man uses them without any injustice, either by killing them or employing them in any other way.”

And Western Christendom did kill animals. Cultural practices involved hunts in which hundreds of animals were killed in a day. One thousand and three red deer were slaughtered in one hunt in 1581. Fifteen hundred and thirty two wild boar were killed in one hunt in 1585, and wild bird hunts would claim several thousand at “one draught.” or a thousand birds in one day. Animals were tortured for entertainment, bear baiting, cock fighting, and bull fighting. But beyond killing animals, Western Christendom destroyed the ecosystem of North Africa and the Middle East through deforestation. It destroyed the European ecosystem through deforestation, overgrazing, and pollution. England was deforested by the 11th century, Europe by the 16th century. Spain was overgrazed by the 15th century. And overfishing had depleted the Mediterranean by the 16th century. Both wolves and bears were exterminated by the fifteenth century. It would not be overstatement to say that Western Christendom waged a war against the natural world from the fourth to the fifteen century. But the fifteenth century was not the end of the war, it was carried on in the new world by the Puritans first and then by American colonists. It was also carried on by scientists and philosophers of the Enlightenment.

There is another doctrinal theme and historical thread in the Christian Tradition that needs to be developed. It is the identification of the natural with the “wild” and the “wild” with evil. This is developed early in the Scriptures when Adam and Eve are bandished from the Garden of Eden, God’s place, to the “accursed” wilderness that “will grow thorns and thistles for you and none but wild plants to eat. This juxtapositions was reinforced in Exodus when Moses led the Israelites from Egypt into the “wilderness” where they wander for forty years until they found the Promised Land.

The New Testament identified the “wilderness” with the temptations of Jesus. And both identified the body with sin. In fact early Church fathers argued that sex was only permissible between married couples and then for procreation and without passion.

The ideal life for a Christian was self-denial; the body was the cause of temptation. The early church father, Origen, castrated himself as a way of resisting the temptations of the body.

The rejection of the natural world coincided with fear. Women were tempters; the environment was “filled with restless dread.” In the paintings, poems, and literature of Western Christendom there was virtually no appreciation of the natural world.