

God's World – God's Body

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ABSTRACT

If the majority of process theologians and some feminist theologians are right, then God's world can be understood as God's body. A view that reveals environmental degradation in a different light. The essay 'God's World – God's Body' first of all presents Charles Hartshorne's as well as Sallie McFague's panentheistic conception of God. Both concepts stress the idea of God's corporeality. In a second step the author hints at the concepts' environmental implications; she explains what the consequences are, if Hartshorne and McFague are to be correct. Finally, the previously said opens out into showing in how far a movement 'back-to-religion' implies a 'back-to-nature-' movement.

KEYWORDS

world, body, environment, environmental degradation, panentheism,
feminist theology, process theology

'As each of us is the supercellular individual of the cellular society called a human body, so God is the super-creaturely individual of the inclusive creaturely society. Yet God is superior to all these in a manner of which the person-to-cell analogy gives only a faint idea.'¹

¹ Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany, NY 1984), 59.

28 ... 28 is the number of hectares of rainforest that were deforested within the last one minute. 28 hectares: that approximates 40 football pitches – in one minute!²

More than seven billion living humans on earth,³ more than five billion mobile phones worldwide,⁴ 1 billion cars.⁵ 126 liters a day is the approximate consumption of water of a German.⁶ 88.2 kilograms meat is consumed in industrialized countries per person in one year.⁷ More than 50,000 species per year are driven to extinction due to rainforest destruction.⁸ Glaciers are melting; coral reefs are dying and ecosystems changing because of fatal heat waves....⁹

If the majority of process theologians¹⁰ and some feminist theologians¹¹ are right, then God's world¹² can be understood as God's body.¹³ A view that reveals environmental degradation in a different light.¹⁴

In the following, I will *first* of all present Charles Hartshorne's as well as Sallie McFague's panentheistic conception of God. Both concepts stress the idea of God's corporeality. In a *second* step I hint at the concepts' environmental implications, that is, I aim to explain what the consequences are, if

² Cf. Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V., 'Weltweite Abholzungen gehen weiter' [<http://www.welthungerhilfe.de/abholzung-weltweit.html>] (Status: 8/2/2012 (9:30 a.m.)).

³ Cf. United States Census Bureau, World POPClock Project [<http://www.census.gov/population/popclockworld.html>] (Status: 9/7/2012 (3:00 p.m.)).

⁴ Cf. BCC News, 'Over five million mobile phone connections worldwide' (9 July 2010) [<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10569081>] (Status: 9/7/2012 (3:57 p.m.)).

⁵ Cf. Huff Post, 'Number of Cars Worldwide Surpasses 1 Billion' (9/7/2012) [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2011/08/23/car-population_n_934291.html].

⁶ Cf. Universität Oldenburg, 'Entwicklung des Trinkwasserverbrauchs in Deutschland' [<http://www.hydrologie.uni-oldenburg.de/ein-bit/12045.html>] (Status: 9/7/2012 (3:08 p.m.)).

⁷ Cf. World Health Organization, 'Global and regional food consumption patterns and trends: Availability and changes in consumption of animal products' [http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/3_foodconsumption/en/index4.html] (Status: 9/7/2012 (3:23 p.m.)).

⁸ Cf. Yann Arthus-Bertrand (director), Home (2009) [<http://www.homethemovie.org/>] (Status: 9/7/2012 (3:53 p.m.)).

⁹ Cf. International Union for Conservation of Nature [<http://www.iucnredlist.org/>] (Status: 9/7/2012 (3:47 p.m.)).

¹⁰ E.g. Charles Hartshorne, Daniel Dombrowski.

¹¹ E.g. Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (London 1993); Grace Jantzen, *God's World, God's Body* (Philadelphia, PA 1984). See also: Celia Deane-Drummond, *Eco-theology* (London 2008), 146–163, esp. 150–153. I recommend Deane-Drummond's postscript, which delivers a helpful explication of the interconnectedness of theology and eco-ethics. Cf. 179–185.

¹² While I usually adopt McFague's usage of the earth as 'the world' (cf. McFague, *The Body of God*), it is more precise to talk about 'the universe' – in the sense of 'God's whole creation' – being God's body (as Jantzen points out: cf. Jantzen, *God's World, God's Body*, 122f.).

¹³ However – in a panentheistic view – God is more than God's body.

¹⁴ Cf. Jantzen, *God's World, God's Body*, 156.

Hartshorne and McFague are to be correct. *Finally*, the previously said opens out into showing in how far a movement 'back-to-religion' implies a 'back-to-nature' movement.

1. CHARLES HARTSHORNE'S AND SALLIE MCFAGUE'S CONCEPTS OF GOD¹⁵

In Charles Hartshorne's point of view, God lives in a real, close, reciprocal and bilateral relationship with each and every one of us. This God-creature-relationship is actually the center of Hartshorne's religious philosophy. Unlike classical theism, Hartshorne's neoclassical theism refuses to adopt Thomas Aquinas' idea of God being the 'unmoved mover.'¹⁶ In Hartshorne's process theism, God is viewed as the cosmic power, which permanently interacts with the local powers, thus with God's creatures. God is considered to be dipolar, meaning that the *one* God has an absolute, unchanging and abstract pole on one side. Divine attributes like God's love, benevolence, God's essence and status as the highest, can be considered as eternally unchanging. However, on the other side, God also interacts with God's creatures. Thus, the relative and changing pole refers to those attributes that are the concretion of God's abstract attributes. Therefore, the relative pole is the one existing in relation to God's creatures. This interacting and flexible part of God influences God's creatures just like God is influenced by God's creatures.¹⁷ For Hartshorne, 'to be' means – in the platonic sense of 'dynamis' – 'to

¹⁵ For an analysis of Hartshorne's concept of God, see also: Julia Enxing, *Gott im Werden: Die Religionsphilosophie Charles Hartshornes* (Regensburg 2013 (forthcoming)).

¹⁶ Cf. Thomas von Aquin, *Summa Theologiae / Die deutsche Thomas-Ausgabe: Vollständige, ungekürzte deutsch-lateinische Ausgabe der Summa theologica* (Salzburg et al. 1982), I, q.8, art.1 ad2; q.28, art.1 ad3; q. 105, art.2 ad1.; Klaus Müller, *Glauben-Fragen-Denken: Selbstbeziehung und Gottesfrage* (III) (Münster 2010), 756f.; Klaus Müller, 'Paradigmenwechsel zum Panentheismus? An den Grenzen des traditionellen Gottesbildes,' in: *Herder Korrespondenz (Spezial)/2* (2011), 33–38, esp. 37. Viney points out that the argument of God's necessary unchangeableness stems from the Platonic tradition. In Plato's *Politeia* each way of changeability is described as a lack of perfection. If one assumes that God is perfect, changeability is thus excluded. Cf. Donald W. Viney, *Reading on Philosophy of Religion* (2007) (unpublished manuscript), 3; Daniel Dombrowski, 'Hartshorne, Platon und die Auffassung von Gott,' in: Julia Enxing & Klaus Müller (eds.), *Perfect Changes: Die Religionsphilosophie Charles Hartshornes* (Regensburg 2012), 53–72, esp. 54; Charles Hartshorne, *Man's Vision of God and the Logic of Theism* (Hamden, CT 1964), 23; Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven; London 1967), 36, 143.

¹⁷ Cf. Santiago Sia, *Religion, Reason and God: Essays in the Philosophies of Charles Hartshorne and A.N. Whitehead* (Frankfurt am Main; New York 2004), 32. – John B. Cobb & David R. Griffin (eds.), *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia, PA 1976), 47f., 68. – Müller, *Glauben-Fragen-Denken*, 732f, 757. Regarding relative and absolute perfection cf. Hartshorne: God, as personal. – Whitehead also assumes a dipolar nature of God. He describes the poles as 'primordial' and 'conse-

have some kind of power' and further: 'to be is to create.'¹⁸ Consequently, if God calls other entities into 'being' then those entities are God's co-creators, are the local powers. It follows that God cannot be considered as the only one having power, neither as almighty, without saying that God is just 'one of us.'¹⁹ God is superior to us, God cannot be surpassed by any one of us; however, God can and does constantly surpass Godself. This is why Hartshorne refers to the divine as the 'self-surpassing surpasser of all.'²⁰ God has the highest possible power, the greatest influence, without being almighty or all-determining. In the process theistic point of view – as Hartshorne represents it – God's way of interacting with God's creatures is through *persuasion*.²¹ God's goal for the world consists in increasing harmony and in sight of this goal God persuades and guides the local powers. Furthermore, Hartshorne proclaims a panentheistic God-world-view. Panentheism states that the world is in God, in the same way as everything is in God, without saying that God and the world are identical – like the pantheistic position proclaims.²²

quent nature.' The question, in as far as they can be compared to the Hartshornian concept of a concrete and abstract pole is not analysed in this article. – To this, cf. Randall C. Morris, *Process Philosophy and Political Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne* (Albany, NY 1991), 54. – Tobias Müller, *Gott-Welt-Kreativität: Eine Analyse der Philosophie A. N. Whiteheads* (Paderborn 2009), 126–139, esp. 126–132. – Müller, *Glauben-Fragen-Denken*, 72f. In the idealistic concepts (foremost in Schelling), Hartshorne had already seen a modern panentheism with a dipolar conception of God represented. – Cf. Charles Hartshorne & William Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago, IL 1953), 233–243.

¹⁸ Cf. Dombrowski, 'Hartshorne, Platon und die Auffassung von Gott,' 58.

¹⁹ Cf. Charles Hartshorne, 'Das metaphysische System Whiteheads,' in: *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 3/4 (spezial print) (1949), 566–575, esp. 575; Dombrowski, 'Hartshorne, Platon und die Auffassung von Gott.'

²⁰ Hartshorne, *Divine Relativity*, 20.

²¹ 'This divine method of world control is called "persuasion" by Whitehead and is one of the greatest of all metaphysical discoveries, largely to be credited to Whitehead himself.' Charles Hartshorne, *Divine Relativity*, 142; cf. 135. Cf. Alfred N. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York 181969), 53, 87–109. – Cobb & Griffin, *Process Theology*, 69; Marian Sia & Santiago Sia, *From Question to Quest: Literary-Philosophical Enquiries into the Challenges of Life* (Newcastle 2010), 215, 220. Whitehead speaks of God's *lure*, whereas Hartshorne speaks of God's *persuasion*. Cf. Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York 1969), esp. 103, 105, 107, 214, 216f, 262; Hartshorne, 'Das metaphysische System Whiteheads,' 575; Ingolf U. Dalferth, *Gott: Philosophisch-theologische Denkversuche* (Tübingen 1992), 180.

²² Karl Friedrich Krause (1781–1832) introduced the term *panentheism* (although the panentheistic idea is much older, this is why Brierley talks about a 'quiet revolution' (Michael W. Brierley, 'Naming a Quiet Revolution: The Panentheistic Turn in Modern Theology,' in: Philip Clayton & Arthur Peacocke (eds.), *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God's Presence in a Scientific World* (Grand Rapids, MI 2004), 1–15, esp. 4f., cf. 2f, 13.) Cf. Karl C. F. Krause, *Vorlesungen über die Grundwahrheiten der Wissenschaften* (Göttingen 1829), 484; John W. Cooper, *Panentheism. The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI 2006), 121; Klaus Müller, 'Gott – größer als der Monotheismus? Kosmologie, Neurologie und Atheismus als Anamnesen

God is more than the world and cannot be fully identified nor comprehended by any creature. It becomes clear that the classical assumption that God and world are two completely different parameters and that God stands on the one side while the world stands on the other side; while God is able to influence the world without being influenced by it, as Anselm of Canterbury states in his *Proslogion*,²³ is rejected by process theism. Hartshorne himself, but also feminist theologians like Grace Jantzen, Carter Heyward and Sallie McFague express the idea of the world being God's body. However, just like God's creatures have a body – or *are* bodies, as McFague suggests in her book *The Body of God*²⁴ – but are themselves more than pure bodies, God's world is God's body, but in a panentheistic sense, not saying that God and God's body are identical, even though the world can be considered as part of God's identity.²⁵

McFague's *theological cosmology* is based on two pillars: her renewed theology of creation²⁶ and her body-of-God concept. In this concept 'body'

einer verdrängten Denkform,' in: Frank Meier-Hamidi & Klaus Müller (eds.), *Persönlich und alles zugleich: Theorien der All-Einheit und christliche Gottesrede* (Regensburg 2010), 9–46, esp. 43f; Müller, *Glauben-Fragen-Denken*, 744–771, esp. 744f, 747, 753f; Müller, *Paradigmenwechsel zum Panentheismus?*, esp. 36.; 'Dombrowski, Hartshorne, Platon und die Auffassung von Gott,' 56; Benedikt P. Göcke, *Alles in Gott? Zur Aktualität des Panentheismus Karl Christian Friedrich Krauses* (Regensburg 2012). Cf. The definition in the Oxford Dictionary, which Brierley (Brierley, 'Naming a Quiet Revolution,' 5.) describes as the 'classical' one. Cf. Clayton & Peacocke (eds.), *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*. This book provides a helpful insight into the diverse panentheistic approaches and positions. Regarding Hartshorne's 'panentheistic turn' cf. Klaus Müller, 'Gott: Totus intra, totus extra: Über Charles Hartshornes Transformation des Theismus,' in: Julia Enxing & Klaus Müller (eds.), *Perfect Changes: Die Religionsphilosophie Charles Hartshornes* (Regensburg 2012), 11–24, esp. 8, 22–24; Roland Faber, *Gott als Poet der Welt: Anliegen und Perspektiven der Prozesstheologie* (Darmstadt 2003), 116–118.

²³ Cf. Anselm von Canterbury, *Proslogion: Lateinisch/Deutsch* (Übersetzt von Robert Theis) (Stuttgart 2005), VIII, 33; Charles Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for Our Time* (La Salle, IL 1967), 55.

²⁴ 'We do not *have* bodies, as we like to suppose, distancing ourselves from them as one does from an inferior, a servant, who works for us (the "us" being the mind that inhabits the body but does not really belong there). We *are* bodies, "body and soul."' McFague, *The Body of God*, 16.

²⁵ McFague, *The Body of God*, 141. 'Pantheism says that God is embodied, necessarily and totally; traditional theism claims that God is disembodied, necessarily and totally; panentheism suggests that God is embodied but not necessarily or totally.' McFague, *The Body of God*, 149f. Cf. Daniel Dombrowski, 'Alston and Hartshorne on the Concept of God,' in: *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 36 (1994), 129–146. esp. 133f. Charles Hartshorne, 'God, as personal,' in: Vergilius Ferm (ed.), *An Encyclopedia of Religion: The Philosophical Library* (New York 1945), 302–303; Faber, *Gott als Poet der Welt*, 31, 41. Cooper appropriately points out that the assumption of the world being God's body requires a bilateral God-world-influence. It further comprehends the world as being part of God's identity. Cf. Cooper, *Panentheism*, esp. 178, 180, 184, 193.

²⁶ '[...] God as immanently present in the process of the universe'. Sallie McFague, 'An Earthly Theological Agenda,' in: *The Christian Century* January 2–9 (1991), 12–15 [<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=54> (Status: 9/7/12 (5 p.m.))]. Cf. Deane-Drummond, *Eco-theology*, 152.

functions as a collective term for all kinds of bodies. Every entity – even atoms – can be understood as a ‘body.’ I assume it being legitimate to use the term ‘creation’ – in the sense of a *creatio ex profundis et continua*²⁷ – as an equivalent for ‘God’s body.’ At this point, I do not consider it helpful nor necessary, to go deeper into McFague’s spiritualization of ‘body,’ although I assume that her idea of uniting spirit and body and comprehending body as ultimately related or entangled with spirit, opens up a new perspective that is especially interesting for her feministic approach as she succeeds to demonstrate.²⁸ However, I would like to stress McFague’s idea of God’s transcendence being immanent in the world respectively in creation. It is through our experience of the world that we experience God’s immanent transcendence and God’s transcendent immanence. Experiencing God’s transcendence in nature is a radicalization of the divine immanence.²⁹ Nevertheless, McFague makes a point by saying that all we can see and all we can experience is God’s back. Thereby, she refers to Exodus 33.23b: ‘...and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.’ (NIV)³⁰ No one has ever or will ever succeed in seeing God’s face. In the consequence, neither theology nor philosophy will find adequate terms to describe God’s face; all we can (and should!) do, is turn our attention to the planet, which is a reflection of God’s back. We are ‘invited to see the creator in the creation, the source of all existence in and through what is bodied forth from that source.’³¹

²⁷ Cf. David R. Griffin, ‘Process Theology and the Christian Good News: A Response to Classical Free Will Theism,’ in: John B. Cobb & Clark H. Pinnock (eds.), *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids, MI 2000), 1–38. esp. 12. David R. Griffin, ‘In Response to William Hasker,’ in: John B. Cobb & Clark H. Pinnock (eds.), *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids, MI 2000), 246–262, esp. 247–253; Donald W. Viney, ‘The Varieties of Theism and the Openness of God: Charles Hartshorne and Free-Will Theism,’ in: *The Personalist Forum* 14/2 (1998), 199–238 (Viney Discussion: 239–245), esp. 203f. There are diverse concepts respectively terms on creation as process theology understands it. While Viney talks about a *creatio ex hyle* (Viney, *The Varieties of Theism and the Openness of God*, 204.), Keller states a *creatio ex profundis*, cf. Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (London; New York 2003), esp. 155–228; Catherine Keller, ‘Ex profundis: Die verlorene Chaostheorie der Schöpfung,’ in: Severin J. Lederhilger (ed.), *Mit Gott rechnen: Die Grenzen von Naturwissenschaft und Theologie* (7. Ökumenische Sommerakademie Kremsmünster 2005) (Frankfurt am Main; New York 2006), 39–57; Catherine Keller, ‘Creatio ex profundis: Chaostheorie und Schöpfungslehre,’ in: *Evangelische Theologie* 69/5 (2009), 356–366. Müller, ‘Gott – größer als der Monotheismus?’ 40.

²⁸ Cf. McFague, *The Body of God*, 14f, 22–25; 141–150.

²⁹ Cf. McFague, *The Body of God*, 20.

³⁰ McFague, *The Body of God*, 131–136; cf. 144, 150. ‘The implication of this picture is that we never meet God unmediated or unembodied.’ Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, PA 1987), 184.

³¹ McFague, *The Body of God*, 133f. Cf. Deane-Drummond, *Eco-theology*, 151.

This concept, of an immanent-transcendent God, the idea that God is – somehow – present in the world, is described as ‘embodied.’³² McFague even goes further by talking about ‘The Cosmic Christ.’³³ In this context, she claims a ‘cruciform living,’ ‘an alternative notion of the abundant life, which will involve a philosophy of ‘enoughness,’ limitations on energy use, and sacrifice for the sake of others.’³⁴

Furthermore, McFague betakes the spirit-body-issue to explain God’s relation to the world. Thereby, God is understood as ‘the spirit that is the breath, the life, of the universe, a universe that comes from God and could be seen as the body of God.’³⁵ She uses *spirit* instead of *mind*, because other than mind, spirit can be found in all creatures and entities of the universe. Doing so, she promotes cosmocentricism instead of anthropocentricism. Moreover, the spirit-body-analogy antagonizes a dualistic world approach as well as an association of the divine with the solely intellectual and controlling part, the one ordering and limiting the universe. Instead, spirit understood as the energizing and enlivening part interweaves every entity and allows for a theology of nature, focusing the God-creature-relationship instead of just the God-man-relationship.³⁶ We are only adequately described, if the spirit-body existence is taken into consideration. Neither our spirit nor our body succeeds in properly characterizing us. Moreover, I assume most readers would agree that they are *one* person, with a bodily as well as spiritually world-approach, without considering it adequate to speak of two entities within one person. Comparably, McFague articulates *one* God, existing in a bodily di-

³² Margit Eckholt, *Schöpfungstheologie und Schöpfungsspiritualität: Ein Blick auf die Theologin Sallie McFague* (München 2009), 21.

³³ Cf. McFague, *The Body of God*, 102, 179–191. McFague’s idea of the ‘Cosmic Christ’ touches the following aspects: salvation occurring in creation, in the body of God (179); the interrelatedness and interconnectedness of creation and salvation (180); the liberation of nature from oppressions (‘our oppressive practices’) (187); the healing of the human and the nonhuman (188f). Deane-Drummond, *Eco-theology*, 100–107; 152.

³⁴ Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis, MN 2001), 14.

³⁵ McFague, *The Body of God*, 144.

³⁶ Cf. McFague, *The Body of God*, 144f. Hartshorne uses the mind-body-analogy as well as the body-cell-analogy to describe the God-world-relation. Cf. ‘In sum, then, God’s volition is related to the world as though every object in it were to him a nerve-muscle, and his omniscience is related to it [sic!] as though every object were a muscle-nerve. A brain cell is for us, as it were, a nerve-muscle and a muscle-nerve, in that its internal motions respond to our thoughts, and our thoughts to its motions. If there is a theological analogy, here is its locus. God has no separate sense organs or muscles, because all parts of the world body directly perform both functions for him. In this sense the world is God’s body.’ Hartshorne, *Man’s Vision of God*, 185; cf. 174–211. Cf. Viney, *The Varieties of Theism and the Openness of God*, 205.

mension – the world – and in one or perhaps uncountable incorporeal dimensions. At this point, the phenomenological experts might not be amused by the undifferentiated usage of the terms ‘Leib’ and ‘Körper.’ Keeping in mind that myriads of books have been written on that topic, and – to put it very simple – ‘Körper’ is usually used in a more scientific-physical sense while ‘Leib’ goes far beyond scientific aspects, I am not aware that either Hartshorne or McFague emphasize the difference here. My main point in this article is to analyze the consequences of the idea that God’s world is understood as God’s body. I will do so in the next step, before making a point in saying that – based on the correctness of the arguments presented – living in a close relationship with God, that is living a spiritual life, necessarily implies a life respecting and protecting our environment, God’s world, the embodied God.

2. TAKING THE CONSEQUENCES INTO ACCOUNT

If Hartshorne and McFague are right, then what we do does not only indirectly, but directly affect God. On the one hand, Hartshorne and McFague stand in a long tradition of demonstrating in how far God encounters us in other entities, or, to talk with Buber, Levinas and Derrida – to only name a few – God is in ‘the other.’ On the other hand, the process theologian and the ecofeminist theologian accentuate a slightly different point that nevertheless affects us in an essential way: God encounters us not only in ‘the other’ – in the sense of another human being or animal – but in ‘nature.’ The eco-theological perspective brings our environment into focus, nature in its multifaceted presences, thereby bringing man into his position as God’s servant, thus the servant of nature, in contrast to his idea of being creation’s crowning glory. If one takes the assumption of God’s world being God’s body seriously, one can provocatively say:

...If God is truly embodied in nature, then God is not only in big trouble in recent years, moreover, God seems to be the subject of destruction.

...If God is truly embodied in nature, then we do not only drive 50,000 species per year to extinction, we then drive God Godself to extinction.

...If God is truly embodied in nature, then we deplete God, when we use up natural resources.

...If God is truly embodied in nature, then we waste God, when we waste water.

...If God is truly embodied in nature, then we harm God, when we continue the emission of global warming gases, we expose God's body to a deathly heat shock.

Relating to McFague's spirit-body-analogy as one possible way of imagining the idea of God's world being God's body, one might say that there is a difference that is not properly taken into consideration here: the difference between God and us. Just because our bodies experience illnesses, harm and pain suggests nothing about God's body having those experiences. The difference might be that – unless us – God is perfect. Therefore God's body has to be immortal, inviolable, always healthy, while we are the incomplete and fallible creatures, thus sinning and suffering from the consequences. Hartshorne agrees, using the following example: Just because a house consists of many small rooms does not make the house small.³⁷ Just because we are panentheistically in God, and we are sinners, does not lead to a sinful God. In the same way Hartshorne does not see a conflict considering this imperfect world as God's body. However, in the consequence of Hartshorne's body-cell-analogy, God does not necessarily experience pain in the same way as God's bodily members do, but God suffers just like we – as a whole – suffer, when we, for example, cut our finger or break our leg. It is not just the finger or the leg that is suffering, we suffer. Thus, in a sympathetic, bilateral, panentheistic God-creature-relationship, God *somehow* suffers with God's creatures.

Furthermore, considering God's creation as an ontological necessity – as Hartshorne does – leads to the assumption that God necessarily needs a body. *This world is contingent, but a world – any world – is necessary.*³⁸ God

³⁷ Cf. Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 145.

³⁸ 'But the divine fiat must be as good as any other possible one. Thus God is free in what he does, and yet is not free to act in inferior fashion. He is slave to his goodness, if you will. But he can express this goodness as he pleases in any world arrangement that is not inferior to any possible other, so far as God determined or might determine it.' (Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity*, 137f.) 'God requires a world, but not *the* world. By contrast, what the world requires is not simply *a* God but *the* one and only possible God, the Worshipful One.' Hartshorne, *A Natural Theology for Our Time*, 64f. Cf. Hartshorne & Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, 22; Griffin, *Process Theology and the Christian Good News*, 12; Griffin, 'In Response to William Hasker,' 246–262, esp. 247–253. Hartshorne, 'Das metaphysische System Whiteheads,' 575. Brierley, 'Naming a Quiet Revolution,' 9; Müller, 'Gott – größer als der Monotheismus?' 43; Müller, *Glauben-Fragen-Denken*, 728, 738; Ingolf U. Dalferth, *Becoming Present: An Inquiry into the Christian Sense of the Presence of God* (Leuven 2006), 82. 'Finally, the issue over incorporeality is tied up with the issue over creation. [...] Hartshorne argues effectively that God is related to the world in two crucial respects as a human mind is related to its body: (1) God is aware, with maximum immediacy, of what goes on in the world, and (2) God can directly affect what happens in the world. On the principle that what a mind (1) is most immediately aware of and (2) has under its direct voluntary control is its body, Hartshorne concludes that the world is God's body, and hence that God is not incorporeal. But this analogy can be pushed through all the way only if, as Hartshorne holds, the

could have had a different body, maybe God has one we do not know of, but a body – *any body* – is presupposed in order to ‘furnish the World Soul with awareness of, and power over, its bodily members.’³⁹

At this point, I will briefly summarize the main statements as well as arguments so far: *In the first place*, God’s world can be understood as God’s body. Thus, the world is within God, part of God, however, God is not absorbed in the world; God is more than ‘world.’ God’s world is the place of God’s interaction with the world. *Secondly*, God lives in a close and real relationship with God’s creatures, whereby ‘creatures’ is understood in a broad sense embracing all created entities. *Thirdly*, what we do and what we fail to do influences God, with whom we live in a two-sided-relationship. *Fourthly*, even though God’s body is unique and cannot be equalized with creatures’ bodies, God’s body is severely suffering in those times, if God is – as Whitehead puts it – ‘[...] the great companion – the fellow-sufferer who understands.’⁴⁰

3. THE IMPLICATIONS OF ‘EMBODIED RELIGION’

Those assumptions lead us to the concluding statement that believers need to be more aware of their ecological footprints. Moreover, one cannot live in a close relationship with God; preach a life in harmony with God’s will, thereby ignoring nature’s dignity. Therefore, Christian religion is inevitably called to accept the challenge of integrating nature – in all its facets – into their gospel. It is provoked to stop tabooing human nature as well as environmental damage. Because as McFague states: ‘Christianity is the religion of

world (some world or other) exists by metaphysical necessity, independent of God’s will. Otherwise God will not be corporeal in the strongest sense – essentially corporeal. Of course even if God brings it about by a free act of will that the world exists, we might still, in a sense, regard the world as God’s body. But in that case it would be a body that He had freely provided for Himself, one that He could just as well have existed without. He would not be essentially corporeal. If we understand corporeality in this stronger sense, and Hartshorne does espouse it in this sense, it is clear that it stands or falls along with Hartshorne’s position on creation. If the classical doctrine of creation is retained, one can deny essential corporeality, while still agreeing with Hartshorne on relativity, contingency, and potentiality.’ William Alston, ‘Hartshorne and Aquinas: A Via Media,’ in: John B. Cobb & Franklin I. Gamwell (eds.), *Existence and Actuality: Conversations with Charles Hartshorne* (Chicago, IL 1984), 78–98, here 87.

³⁹ Daniel Dombrowski, ‘Does God Have a Body?’, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 2/3 (1988), 225–232, here 230. Regarding Hartshorne’s Plato-references also see Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes*, 52–56; 59–62.

⁴⁰ Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 351.

the incarnation *par excellence*. Its earliest and most persistent doctrines focus on embodiment: from the incarnation (the Word made flesh) and Christology (Christ was fully human) to the Eucharist (this is my body, this is my blood), the resurrection of the body, and the church (the body of Christ who is its head), Christianity has been a religion of the body. Christianity during first-century Mediterranean culture, which was noted for its disparagement of the body and its otherworldly focus, defiantly proclaimed its message of enfleshment.⁴¹ And yet, Christian religion stands in a long tradition of excluding, bashing, concealing and demerging man's bodily needs instead of facing the challenge of integrating them into a Christian lifestyle. Similarly, it remains true to itself, by defying and neglecting the 'body nature.'⁴² However, if God is truly embodied in the cosmos, then we urgently need to think about what the actualization of 'embodied religion' could be.⁴³

Reading this article up to here took approximately 20 minutes. Within those last 20 minutes, eight hundred football pitches of rainforest were lumbered.

⁴¹ McFague, *The Body of God*, 14. Cf. Jantzen, *God's World, God's Body*, 157.

⁴² In this context, McFague talks about the *interconnectedness of oppressions*. Cf. McFague, *The Body of God*, 14. 'Whatever else salvation can and ought to mean, it does involve, says the body model, first and foremost, the well-being of the body. A theology that works within the context of the body model claims that bodies matter, that they are indeed the main attraction.' McFague, *The Body of God*, 18.

⁴³ 'In sum, a Christian nature spirituality is Christian praxis extended to nature. It is becoming sensitive to the natural world, acknowledging that we live in this relationship as we do also in the relationship with God and other people. ... A Christian nature spirituality, then, is loving nature in the same way that we love God and other people: as valuable in itself, as a "subject." A Christian nature spirituality tells us further that in our time nature is oppressed and needs our special care. To care for it properly, we must pay attention to it, learn about its need, become better acquainted with it.' Sallie McFague, *Super, Natural Christians: How We Should Love Nature* (Minneapolis, MN 1997), 24f.

