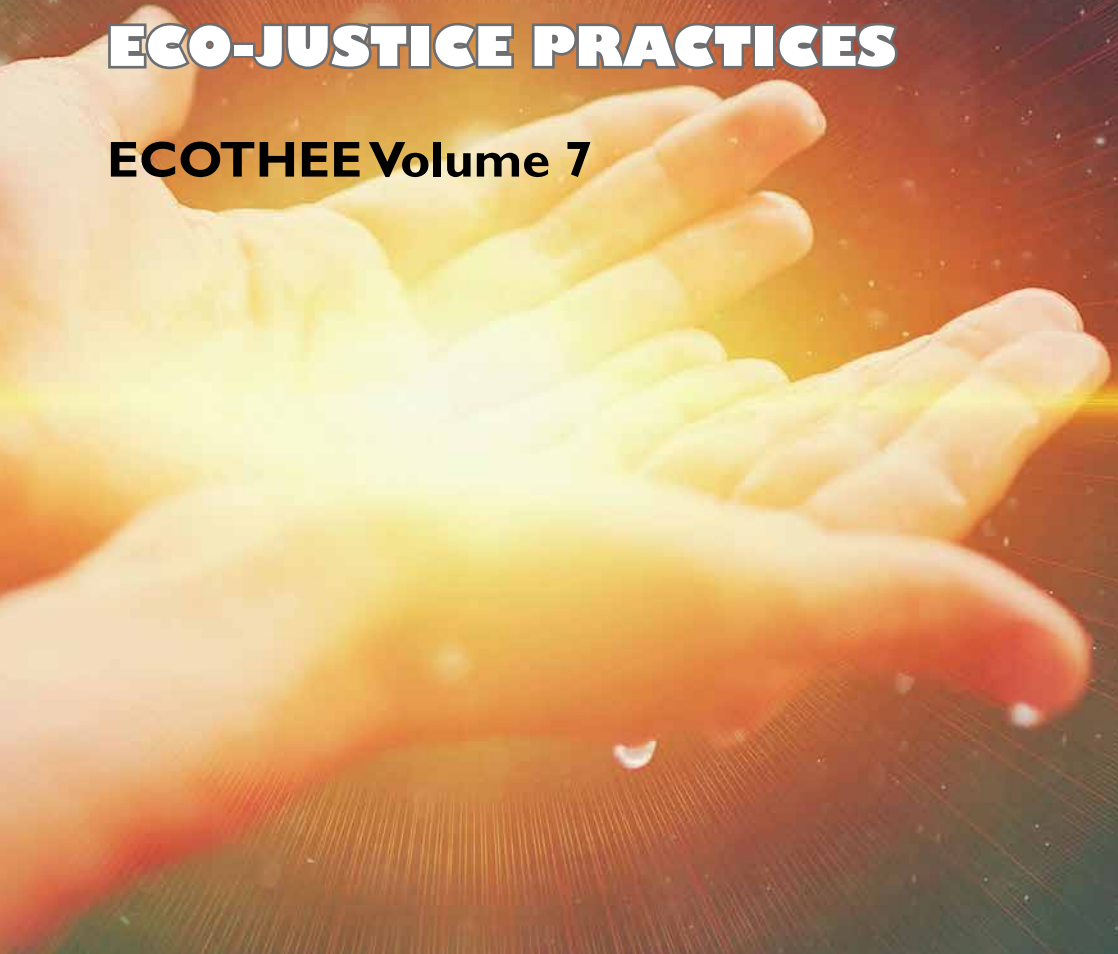


Edited by **NADJA FURLAN ŠTANTE, LOUK A. ANDRIANOS,**  
**TOM SVERRE BREDAL-TOMREN**

**AN ANTHOLOGY OF  
CONTEMPORARY ECOTHEOLOGY,  
PHILOSOPHY AND  
ECO-JUSTICE PRACTICES**

**ECOTHEE Volume 7**



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An Anthology of  
Contemporary Ecotheology,  
Philosophy and Eco-Justice  
Practices: ECOTHEE Volume 7

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# An Anthology of Contemporary Ecotheology, Philosophy and Eco-Justice Practices: ECOTHEE Volume 7

*Edited by* Nadja Furlan Štante, Louk A. Andrianos  
and Tom Sverre Bredal-Tomren

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KOPER 2023

**An Anthology of Contemporary Ecotheology, Philosophy and Eco-Justice  
Practices: ECOTHEE Volume 7**

*Edited by:* Nadja Furlan Štante, Louk A. Andrianos and Tom Sverre  
Bredal-Tomren

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# Introduction

The 7th International Conference on Ecological Theology and Environmental Ethics (ECOTHEE 22) was organised under the auspices of the World Council of Churches and His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I from 26 to 29 October 2022 at the Orthodox Academy of Crete (OAC) in Kolympari, Chania. The conference was the result of collaboration between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Orthodox Academy of Crete (OAC) under the academic leadership of Dr. Louk Andrianos, a senior collaborator of the Institute of Theology and Ecology (ITHE) at the OAC and a consultant for the care of creation, sustainability and eco justice at the WCC. This book is the seventh volume in the ECOTHEE book series, which is published every two years and was first published in the field of ecumenical ecotheology in 2008, following the first ECOTHEE conference (ECOTHEE 08) held in Crete on the occasion of World Environment Day on June 5, 2008. Each ECOTHEE publication collects academic papers and statements by scientists, theologians, sociologists and researchers from different fields under the motto: “Religion and science can provide solutions to sustainability problems.” The first ECOTHEE book, with more than forty selected articles written by ecumenical participants, focused on promoting cooperation between religion and science in addressing the ecological crisis. Subsequent

ECOTHEE publications in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019 included more focused articles on ecological theology and environmental ethical engagement. The articles selected in this seventh volume, ECOTHEE 22, continue the development of ecotheological resources on environmental ethics and sustainable solutions for the common oikos. We, as humans, are beginning to re-envision ourselves as part of this glorious creation, a member of an Earth community, at the same moment as Earth is entering a severe ecological crisis. This growing crisis leads more and more people to cry out in agony (cf. Psalm 103/104:29). This book follows the ECOTHEE goal and seeks to engage theology on key ecological concerns from a variety of religious traditions and perspectives. The emphasis is on theological and ethical implications of contributing to a sustainable ecological future.

We were fortunate to enrich this seventh ECOTHEE publication with additional articles from the 5th SAPREJ conference on sustainable alternatives to poverty reduction and eco-justice and the roles, responsibilities and initiatives of religion, science and civil societies for ecological justice and biodiversity protection, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May 2023.

As it is written in the book of James 2:26, saying “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”, the SAPREJ’s goal is to work by sharing experience, faith, vision and applied knowledge to alleviate poverty and socio-ecological problems. SAPREJ conference should be usually held in “vulnerable” countries with acute economic or ecological problems. The reason is humanitarian and spiritually driven as pilgrimage of justice and peace with the needy; a vision that is also shared with the World Council of Churches to tackle poverty and ecojustice.

Therefore, the present ECOTHEE 22 book is structured into the following sections:

- Introduction
- Section 1: Towards Reconciliation and Justice for all Creation (Eco-ethical Theological and Philosophical Reflections)
- Section 2: Governance, Politics, Good Practices, and Critical Evaluations of Ecological (In)Justice

The “Reconciliation and Solidarity to Avert Ecological Crisis – Interreligious Encounters” volume of ECOTHEE delivers chapters on contemporary insights into various religious, spiritual, philosophical reflections towards reconciliation and ecojustice for a sustainable future.

*Nadja Furlan Štante, Louk Adrianos and Rev. Tom Sverre Bredal-Tomren*

**SECTION 1:  
TOWARDS RECONCILIATION  
AND JUSTICE FOR ALL CREATION  
(ECO-ETHICAL THEOLOGICAL  
AND PHILOSOPHICAL  
REFLECTIONS)**



TOM S. BREDAL-TOMREN AND  
HANS MORTEN HAUGEN<sup>1</sup>

# Ecotheology in Different Denominations. A Comparative Review of 50 Years of Environmental Statements from Global Summits and Leaders

## Introduction

Our time is referred to as the Anthropocene era. This expression refers to a period of the earth's existence when humanity's influence affects all life on earth. Contemporary climate scientists, ecologists and physicists tell us that the lifestyles of particularly the affluent part of humanity reduces diversity in nature to such an extent that it also threatens their own existence. In other words, the Anthropocene era can, to a large extent, function as a synonym for the term *environment and climate crises* which has been frequently used since the 1960s. The concept and the reality of a global ecological crisis has been known for more than fifty years. Even the churches have become increasingly aware of the situation. As early as in 1967, Lynn White Jr. focused

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<sup>1</sup> The article is essentially written by Bredal-Tomren, who is therefore the first author. The second author, Haugen, has contributed with updating, expanding, and adjusting the material, so that the analysis of Anglican ecotheology includes the text from the Lambeth conference 2022 and the Word Communion of Reformed Churches 2017, and other improvements of the text.

on the roles and responsibility of the global – or more precisely Western – church in the ecological crisis.<sup>2</sup> Since then, both official ecclesiastical forums and individual theologians have worked with the theme and the questions and practices it involves. Long story cut short: the efforts of churches and Christian academics to promote protection of the environment and how to tackle climate problems, has created a new discipline that is often referred to as *ecothology*.

In an earlier publication, one of us defined ecotheology as:

[A] theology developed to motivate religious individuals and institutions to engage in ecological sustainability. Ecotheology includes systematic theology, environmental ethics, practical theology, and environmental politics. The concept is normative and interdisciplinary.<sup>3</sup>

We will examine how statements from global general assemblies and global top leaders of various Christian's denominations have understood and expressed themselves in terms of the environment and climate. We will examine how they perceived the environmental crisis, how they articulated their concerns in theological and ethical terms. Since this study focuses on written declarations, the method will be hermeneutic. A hermeneutic approach in this context – where one analyses texts in order to understand how the text frames and interprets the issues of nature versus humans and the value system it is grounded in – is frequently referred to as ecocritical analysis. This article seeks to contribute to this tradition. The terms and categories used in this examination originate from previous research on ecotheological texts. Specifically, we will explore the historical context, case focus (topic), theological motifs and ethical arguments in selected declarations from global top leaders

2 Lynn White Jr., "The historical roots of our ecologic crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203–1207.

3 Tom Sverre Tomren, "The articles in this book and the discipline of eco-theology," in *Ecothee volume 6th-Orthodox Academy of Crete Publication: Contemporary ecotheology, climate justice and environmental stewardship in world religions*, ed. Louk A. Andrianos and Tom Sverre Tomren (Steinkjer: Embla Akademisk, 2021), 32.

or summits. Throughout the article we will also compare the traditions in order to highlight similarities and differences between the approaches.<sup>4</sup>

In this presentation, we limit ourselves to the period of 1967 to 2022. In other words: the first fifty-five years of church ecotheology.<sup>5</sup> The first category of this analysis will be that of *Reformed ecotheology*.

## Reformed ecotheology

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC; previously: WARC; sources from before 2010 refer to WARC) is the closest we get to a common global body for the Reformed churches for the period in question. It has 233 member churches and 100 million members.<sup>6</sup> The General Council, the highest body, normally convenes each seventh year. Until 2004 the general assembly was convened twenty-four times. The first time the General Council put the spotlight on environmental questions was in 1970. After 1970 environment questions have been on the agenda in every General Council, also after WARC merged with REC (Reformed Ecumenical Council). to create WCRC.

### GENERAL COUNCILS WITH ENVIRONMENT ON ITS AGENDA

In 1970 and 1977 Centennial Consultation and the centennial consultation discussed the following topics: pollution, waste of natural resources, destruction of fauna, genetic research, overpopulation, consumer society, environmental problems tied to the war in Vietnam, energy, nuclear pollution,

4 Parts of this material have previously been published in Norwegian, but it is only now that the data and reports are available in English for an international audience (Cf. Tom Sverre Tomren, *Miljøetikk og økoteologi i Den norske kyrkja: Ein analyse av miljøfråsegnene til Den norske kyrkja i perioden 1969-2007* (Stavanger: Misjonshøgskolens forlag, 2014), and Tom Sverre Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft; Ein studie av miljøfråsegna i dei store kyrkjesamfunna i perioden 1969-2019 og ein detaljanalyse av korleis Den norske kyrkja har arbeid med et grøne skiftet gjennom 50 år* (Steinkjer: Embla akademisk, 2019). The WARC General Council decisions (1970, 1977, 1982, 1989, 1997 and 2004) are no longer available online; they can be obtained by contacting Tomren.

5 It must be stated that many of the quotations in the article are based on translations of some of the quotations from English into Norwegian and thus back to English.

6 World Communion of Reformed Churches, "About us," accessed November 2023, <http://wcrch/about-us>.

and global justice.<sup>7</sup> With the exception of genetic research, the problems discussed in the 1970s reflect the international environmental debate still ongoing in the present day.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1980s, WARC discussed the overuse of resources, pollution, destruction of nature, shifting balance in nature, biotechnology, the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect and the connection between the environment and poverty.<sup>9</sup> The focus in the 1980s largely corresponds to the UN report *Our Common Future*. In the 1990s, WARC focused on the relationships between economic injustice and environmental problems, the greenhouse effect, deforestation, pollution of seas and water and nuclear waste. This corresponds with the focus in the UN conference in Rio in 1992.<sup>10</sup> At the WARC General Council in 2004, climate change, overfishing, deforestation, erosion and freshwater reserves were all highlighted, in addition to economic injustice.<sup>11</sup> At the first General Council of the new WRCR, the focus was on how the economic neo-liberal structures stood in the way of social, economic, and ecological justice.<sup>12</sup>

In short, the focus in the declarations from the general councils of the Reformed churches is governed by international environmental debates. What distinguished the environmental debate in WARC/WCRC from the general political debate, however, was that the problems were interpreted within a theological framework. Thus, the framework, problem interpretation and

7 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the Uniting Centennial Consultation of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) held at Nairobi, Kenya, August 20-30, 1970*, edited by Marcel Pradervand and Fred Kaan (WARC, 1970); World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational), held at St. Andrews, Scotland, August 22-29, 1977* (WARC, 1977).

8 Cf. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963 [1962]), 3; Barbara Ward and René Dubos, *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1972), 5-6.

9 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational), held at Ottawa, Canada, August 17-27, 1982*, edited by Edmond Perret (WARC, 1982); World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational), held at Seoul, Republic of Korea, August 15-26, 1989*, edited by Edmond Perret (WARC, 1989).

10 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational), held in Debrecen, Hungary, 8-20 August 1997*, edited by Milan Opočenský (WARC, 1997).

11 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational)* (WARC, 2004).

12 World Communion of Reformed Churches, *Grand Rapids 2010. Proceedings of the Uniting General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches*, 2011, <http://wrcr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/WCRC-UGC2010-Minutes.pdf>.



proposed solutions were all linked to theological thinking and theological categories.

In the minutes from the General Council of 1970, the root cause of the environmental problems is outlined as a question of cosmology and biblical interpreting:

Traditional western thought saw the created world as a finished work in which no fundamental change took place between the creation, the fall of man and the final consumption. Modern science sees nature rather as a developing process.<sup>13</sup>

Western thinking and theology have traditionally understood nature as something static, but today we know that this is not the case. In modern natural science, far more emphasis is now put on processes and dynamics than had been the case previously. This change in understanding thus opens up new biblical interpretations than those that have prevailed.<sup>14</sup> The idea that is visible here, is that environmental problems are a result of humanity's insufficient understanding of nature. This reflects the main conclusion in Lyn White Jr's essay of 1967 – in fact, WARC's proposed solution in 1970 is the same as White proposed, namely, that new nature-oriented biblical hermeneutics must be promoted.<sup>15</sup> In other words: The WARC text from 1970 must be read as a response to the discourse introduced by White Jr. The proposed solution, to focus on process and dynamic ontology, is reminiscent of the thinking of the Methodist process suggested by theologian John B. Cobb Jr., who further built his ecotheology on the process philosophy of Charles Hartshorne and Alfred North Whitehead. Cobb was in a very productive period around 1970 and was one of the few theologians who worked with ecotheology at this time.<sup>16</sup>

In 1982, there was a shift in WARC's interpretation of the root cause of environmental problems: The environmental problems are now to a higher degree explained as result of harmful behaviour than because of false ideology or cosmology.<sup>17</sup> In other words, WARC's position can be understood as that of shifting towards an ethical interpretation and emphasis. In 2004 and 2010, WARC/WCRC returns to a more ideological explanation of the environmental problem: Environmental destruction can now be interpreted

13 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1970.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, "Creation in Ecumenical Theology," in *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North*, ed. David Hallman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 96–105.

17 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1982.

as an effect of neoliberal ideology.<sup>18</sup> WARC's interpretation of the problem was thus first guided by ideology critique, including that of White Jr., which then moved into a phase with focus on actions and ethics, before returning to somewhat more ideological explanations.

The ethical argument for WARC to become involved in environmental questions changed throughout the period of 1970 to 2010. In the text from 1970, the General Council based its understanding and argument on an anthropocentric and theocentric foundation, while the document from 1977 contained biocentric and theocentric arguments. From 1982, we find anthropocentric, biocentric and theocentric expressions discussed together in the text. A section of the 1997 WARC text illustrates this well, as follows:

We are accountable. We are accountable to God. We are accountable to one another. We are accountable to the myriad of creatures with whom we share this beautiful planet.<sup>19</sup>

## Classic motives with new content

The main motif in the 1997 ecotheological text from WARC is that of "reconciliation" and "Christ's lordship". The cosmic aspect of the reconciliation shows that Christ is Lord of all creation.<sup>20</sup> Both motifs were gradually used in other branches of the ecumenical family, for example in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in 1977, the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1983 and in European Ecumenical Assemblies (EEA) in 1989.<sup>21</sup> The concepts of reconciliation and Christ's lordship became central in reformed ecotheology. These expressions are also found in central Calvinist terminology (e.g. in the works of Calvin and Barth) and are expressions that have traditionally been used in anthropocentric theological frameworks. WARC admit that traditional reformed theology has gaps in its reflection concerning man and nature. WARC tries to fill these gaps by broadening and transforming motives known in traditional theology to include God's and humanity's relation

18 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 2004; World Communion of Reformed Churches, *What does God Require of Us? Discerning, Confessing, and Witnessing in an Age of COVID-19 and Beyond. Proceedings of the Uniting General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches* (World Communion of Reformed Churches, 2020), 137.

19 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1997.

20 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1970.

21 Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft*, 31.

to nature.<sup>22</sup> It is possible to see this extension of anthropocentric motives to more ecocentric motives as influenced by the work of White Jr. In addition to the classic reformed motifs, the 1970 WARC text contains several ecotheological motifs that are new in ecclesiastical context, such as: “nature as gift”, “nature his place in eschatology”, “man as God’s co-creator”, “nature as process” and “the integrity of the creative work”.<sup>23</sup>

Quite a few of the ecotheological motifs which we find in this early WARC text appears, as we will see, in statements from other denominations and from the ecumenical forums in years to come. In other words, the WARC text from 1970 is a pioneering ecotheological text.

One of the new motifs in the 1970 text is that of “integrity”, namely: “God respects the right and integrity of the created and of man”.<sup>24</sup> This motif became central in ecclesiastical ecotheology: In the 1980s and 1990s, the term was used in texts from the major ecumenical and confessional institutions, and not at least in the WCC. Bo Brander at the University of Lund claims that the actors in the WCC have forgotten who it was that originally introduced the ecotheological term “integrity” to the organization.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, its unknown origin results in a certain amount of speculation. Somme claims that the motif came from the New-Age movement, others – such as Charles Birch and Ronald Preston – believe it may have originated from the WARC itself, as WARC greatly influenced the WCC during this period.

The WARC text from 1970 suggests that Birch and Preston are on the correct track. The phrasing “integrity of the created world” was in use in WARC as early as 1970. That being said, it must be noted that the reformed theologian Francis Schaeffer used the motif in the same the year.<sup>26</sup> If we trace this further back, we also find that H. P. Santmire used the expression in 1967 in the title of a speech he gave at the third conference organised by the Faith-Man-Nature Group in the USA. The title for this speech was *The Integrity of*

22 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the Uniting General Council 1970*.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Bo Brander, *Människan och den ekologiska väven: Om människan som mikrokosmos och som Skapelsens förvaltare [Man and the Ecological Fabric: On Man as a Microcosm and as Steward of Creation]* (Bjärnums: Artos Bokförlag, 2002), 22–23.

26 “We should treat each thing with integrity because this is the way God made it.” (Francis A. Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970), 40.)

*Nature*, and the lecture was published the same year.<sup>27</sup> Santmire's doctoral work, which he delivered in 1966 was a study of Barth and an examination of his view of nature. It is very likely that the integrity motif originates from Santmire, and that it was captured through publication in the Faith-Man-Nature Group and then used in reformed theology, before it made its way to ecumenical ecotheology. WARC's use of the term in 1970 differs quite a bit from the use that would to dominate in the WCC Programme on justice, peace and integrity of creation.<sup>28</sup> In the WARC text from 1970 the integrity motif is primarily used in reference to God's relation to nature. On the other hand, in the WCC Programme that came out of the 1983 WCC General Assembly, it is largely used to express that everything in nature is connected, that nature has self-worth, and that people must respect Earth's ecosystems.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, in the next WARC text (1977) we find motifs that are new in ecclesiastical ecotheology. The main motif in 1977 is "the world is the theatre of God's glory".<sup>30</sup> WARC derives the term *Theatre for God's sanctuary* from Calvin. McFague points out in *The Body of God* (1993) that in this motif, Calvin's thinking expresses that he sees the Earth as a stage for God's salvation of mankind. Nature in itself is not important.<sup>31</sup> In the text from 1977, WARC transforms the motif into an ecotheological motif: "It is God himself who achieved the denouement of the drama enacted in the vast theatre which is the world".<sup>32</sup> In the statement, it is expressed that whole of creation comes from God, the whole of creation is reconciled through Christ, and the whole of creation is on its way to God.<sup>33</sup> The theatre motif is thus used to express that the Earth has value because of God's relationship to it, and therefore becomes a theocentric motif. The motif is later picked up, used and transformed in orthodox ecotheology (cf. *The Sofia Conference* of 1987).<sup>34</sup> Most of the motif from the 1977 text is concentrated on God's relation to creation.

27 Paul H. Santmire, "The Integrity of Nature," in *Christians and the Good Earth: Faith-Man-Nature Group* (Virginia: Faith-Man-Nature Group, 1967), 128.

28 World Council of Churches, *Gathered for life. Official report, VI Assembly World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 24 July–10 August 1983*, ed. David Gill (World Council of Churches, 1983), 251, <https://archive.org/details/wcca20/page/250/mode/2up>.

29 Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft*, 58–60.

30 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the Centennial Consultation 1977*.

31 Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 182.

32 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the Centennial Consultation 1977*.

33 Ibid.

34 More about this later in the chapter.

When we turn to the General Council of 1982, the text moves toward a focus on the relationship between nature and humanity: “We believe that in God’s eyes the created world and its inhabitants constitute one theatre, not many theatres.”<sup>35</sup> This wholeness motif emphasises that everything on earth is interwoven in a God-willed ecological community, including humans. This inspired the WCC to adopt the wholeness motif in years to come.<sup>36</sup>

When we turn to the text from the 1989 General Council, however, the concept of “covenant” becomes the main ecotheological motif:

There are many ways in which it is possible to describe the future, but for our particular branch of the ecumenical church no language is more important than that of “the covenant”. When we think of God, we think of One who is turned towards the whole creation in love. God’s covenant is God’s determination to fulfil what God began in creation.<sup>37</sup>

God’s promises are at the forefront here, and are addressed to *the whole* of creation, with the WARC text from 1989 going on to express that this message is best illustrated through the motif of the *covenant*.<sup>38</sup> In other words: Twelve years passed from the time the covenant motif was introduced in WARC (1977), until it gained greater status in 1989 as *the most important* language to describe God’s relationship to nature. During these twelve years, Reformed theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann and Alasdair Heron published eco-theological works focusing on the covenant motive. In *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (1997; first edition 1985), Moltmann develops his ecotheology based on the idea of God’s covenant with the entire creation.<sup>39</sup> Moltmann actively and officially developed the ecotheology of WARC.<sup>40</sup> In fact, he wrote one of the five articles in the study material that formed the basis of WARC’s work leading up to the UN conference in Rio (1992).<sup>41</sup> It is most likely Moltmann’s influence that is visible in the text where WARC authorises the covenant as the most important Reformed expression of God’s will for Earth. The covenant motif was gradually integrated into both the statements from WCC and from EEA and later also in statements from the Anglican church.

35 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the General Council 1982*.

36 Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft*, 63–64.

37 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the General Council 1989*.

38 Ibid.

39 Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985/1997), 54.

40 Lukas Vischer, “Foreword,” in *Rights of Future Generations Rights of Nature: Proposal for Enlarging the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, ed. Lukas Vischer (Geneva: WARC, 1990), 6–9.

41 Ibid.

Even after 1989, Moltmann continued to be a central provider of ecotheology to WARC – the text from the General Council in 1997 contained yet another motif that was central in Moltmann’s ecotheology, namely that of “the Sabbath”.<sup>42</sup> WARC used *the Sabbath* as early as 1989, but it was not until 1997 that it became the core motif. The sabbath motif underlines the Earth’s right to rest and God’s joy over creation. The Sabbath in the Old Testament (OT) points towards a lifestyle based on an understanding of the human being as an integrated part of the created world and a co-worker of God.<sup>43</sup> The 1997 General Council included a call to work further with the Sabbath motif:

This process requires within WARC and its member churches: to explore the meaning of the sabbath as it relates to creation, contemporary challenges and their own contexts, and to give special emphasis to God’s gift of creation in the churches’ educational work at all levels, especially with children.<sup>44</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that the text from 1997 is the first of the ecclesial texts that contain the metaphor “the web of life”. This expression has later been important in certain churches, for example in the Swedish bishop’s environmental manifesto from 1989. The metaphor communicates that everything in nature is related. The metaphor thus communicates an ecological ontology. The web of life metaphor is, however, an old one, originating from the work of John Bruckner (1726–1804), but it is important to note that WARC is the first of the global confessional organisations to incorporate it into an ecotheological statement.<sup>45</sup>

The 2004 General Council adopted a concretisation of the ecotheological pact, being an ecotheological confession of faith: “By confessing our faith together, we covenant in obedience to God’s will as an act of faithfulness in mutual solidarity and in accountable relationships”.<sup>46</sup> Almost fifteen years later, WARC underlined the covenant motif as the best starting point for reformed ecotheology, and the organisation confirms this through the pledge for ecotheological confession. As with all texts from 1982 onwards, the stated ethics in the 2004 text contain anthropocentric, biocentric and theocentric arguments side by side.

In the first WCRC General Council (2010), emphasis was placed on the fact that everything that lives constitute a communal society – a *communion*,

42 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 5–7.

43 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the General Council 1989*.

44 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the General Council 1997*.

45 Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft*, 33.

46 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the General Council 2004*.

and that this gives direction for humanity's stewardship obligations. In short, the church is obliged to work for unity, justice, and equality for both humans and for the rest of creation.<sup>47</sup>

The text from the 2017 General Council presented two opposing realities, by stating that:

the way before us can lead our paths toward a future devastated by climate change, by a paradigm of development based on destructive industries and a distorted vision shape by greed. Nevertheless, we always have the opportunity to "choose Life" (Deuteronomy 30:19).<sup>48</sup>

We see that destructive industries and greed are to blame. We will return to Reformed ecotheology in the last part of this article.

## Ecotheology in Lutheran churches

Texts from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) provide the starting point for our study of Lutheran ecotheology. The LWF has 140 member churches with approximately 66 million members. The general assemblies of the LWF gather each seventh year. In the period between 1977 and 2017, ecological discussions were present at all of them.

### LWF WITH ENVIRONMENT ON AGENDA

The first General Assembly of the LWF that made a statement regarding environmental problems was held in Dar-es-Salaam in 1977. This was seven years after WARC's first ecotheological statement in 1970 and – as we will see – nine years after the first from the Anglican Church's Lambeth Conference. The proceedings addresses social injustice, the environment, energy use and nuclear power.<sup>49</sup> The next General Assembly (1984) and the one after

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47 World Communion of Reformed Churches, *Gran Rapids 2010*, 134.

48 World Communion of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the 26th General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches* (WCRC, 2017), 248, <http://wcrch.ch/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/GC2017-Minutes-EN.pdf>.

49 Lutheran World Federation, "Seminar III report," in *Christ a New Community: The proceedings of the Sixth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation* (Geneva: LWF, 1977), 140.

that (1990) are more specific, by highlighting rainforest destruction, erosion, pollution, decomposition of ozone layer, greenhouse effect, radioactive waste, reduction of biological diversity, spreading of poisons, acid rain and desertification.<sup>50</sup> At the General Assembly in 1997, LWF were preoccupied with the environment on a general level, and to only to a small extent addressing specific environmental concerns.<sup>51</sup> In 2003, the two last sections of the adopted Message explained the different specific environmental problems like desertification, extinction of species and climate change by the consequences of neoliberal economic globalization. Other consequences identified were hunger, poverty, “patenting of life forms... at the expense of everyone who depends on them”,<sup>52</sup> and the privatisation of water resources. While promoting “learning from the insights and experiences of minority cultures and Indigenous peoples”,<sup>53</sup> it deplored the devastating consequences of the neoliberal economic globalization:

This “false ideology” is grounded in the assumption that the market, built on private property, unrestrained competition and the centrality of contracts, is the absolute law governing human life, society and the natural environment. This is idolatry and leads to the systematic exclusion of those who own no property, the destruction of cultural diversity, the dismantling of fragile democracies and the destruction of the earth.<sup>54</sup>

This message that was reiterated in the 2010 General Assembly message,<sup>55</sup> affirming its centrality. In 2010, the focus was on climate justice and the right to food and water. In 2017, the focus was on the relationship between social justice and the environment, and for the first-time environmental concerns were addressed by stating: “Human beings are created cocreators with God.”<sup>56</sup> The LWF thus addresses the same issues as WCRC. As with WCRC, the LWF

50 Lutheran World Federation, *In Christ – Hope for the World. Official proceedings of the Seventh Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation* (Geneva: LWF, 1984), 242–243; Lutheran World Federation, *I Have Heard the Cry of my People. Official proceedings of the Eight Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation* (Geneva: LWF, 1990), 88–89.

51 Lutheran World Federation, *Christ Called to Witness. Official proceedings of the Ninth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation* (Geneva: LWF, 1997).

52 Lutheran World Federation, *For the Healing of the World. Official Report*, 2003, 62, [https://lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/10a-assembly\\_report-2003-en-low.pdf](https://lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/10a-assembly_report-2003-en-low.pdf).

53 *Ibid.*, 63.

54 *Ibid.*, 61.

55 Lutheran World Federation, *Give Us Today Our Daily Bread. Official Report*, 2010, 65, [https://2010.lwfassembly.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Assembly\\_report\\_FINAL/LWF\\_Eleventh\\_Assembly\\_Report-EN.pdf](https://2010.lwfassembly.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Assembly_report_FINAL/LWF_Eleventh_Assembly_Report-EN.pdf).

56 Lutheran World Federation, “Liberated by God’s Grace,” in *Assembly Report*, 2017, 62, [https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/12a-assembly\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2023-02/12a-assembly_report_en.pdf).



are thus stimulated and affected by the environmental focus in the discussions in the UN, but the Lutherans often catch on to such changes somewhat later than the Reformed. Both WCRC and LWF do deplore the prevailing economic system in a more explicit manner than the UN. In addition, the LWF sees environmental problems and economic justice as related to each other. But as we shall soon see, the LWF also problematises the relationship between environmental protection and economic growth for the world's poor to a greater extent than the WCRC.

The LWF used a theological framework of interpretation in the General Assembly's statements on the cause of environmental problems – in 1977, 1984, 1990 and 1997 they see the environmental problem as a consequence of the fall of sin in the garden of Eden. The environmental ethical arguments in the LWF proclamations are, for the most, of a theocentric and anthropocentric nature. The text contains fewer biocentric arguments than the texts from the WCRC.

#### ECOTHEOLOGICAL MOTIFS

The ecotheological report from the sixth General Assembly in LWF held in Dar-es-Salaam in 1977 was based on a lecture by William Lazareth, titled: "In Christ – Responsible Care for Creation".<sup>57</sup> Lazareth opens by discussing Christology and ends by introducing a topic related to the doctrine of the two kingdoms:

God is the living Lord of all life. To exclude the crucial realm of politics from Christian thought and action is not merely ecclesiastical apathy; it is ultimately theological heresy and ethical disobedience.<sup>58</sup>

The message from Lazareth is that God cares about the entire creation and because of this, environmental care (and environmental policy) must be included on the church agenda. The debate concerning the doctrine of two kingdoms and environmentalism is a continuation of a discussion at LWF's preceding General Assembly in Evian (1970). In Evian, the doctrine of two kingdoms was discussed in association with social-ethical questions. In Dar-es-Salaam the perspective expands, and environmental questions were

57 Lutheran World Federation, *Christ Called to Witness*, 115.

58 William H. Lazareth, "In Christ-Responsible Care for Creation," in *Christ a New Community: The Proceedings of the Sixth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation* (Geneva: LWF 1977), 130.

incorporated into the discussion.<sup>59</sup> In addition to the two-kingdom motif and the sin motif, the 1977 text contained several ecotheological motifs that is known from WARC statements and Anglican texts, cf.: the creation motif, the cosmic motif, the salvation motif, the hermeneutic motif, and not at least the stewardship motif.<sup>60</sup>

To shed light on why the doctrine of two kingdoms was and still is an important topic for environmental discussions in the Lutheran churches, we will look to how some churches in Scandinavia have acted on environmental discussions. In the Church of Sweden (CS) the doctrine of two kingdoms has not been an obstacle for getting involved in environmental issues, while for the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Denmark (ELCD) it has been an obstacle. The first ecotheological statement from the leadership of the CS came in the form of “The Environmental Manifesto: ‘The earth is the Lord’s’” from the bishops in 1989. The Manifesto was a response to a letter from one of the Lutheran churches in Brazil, calling for their commitment in protecting the Amazon rainforest. The Swedish bishops answered by declaring that environmental protection was a central case for the Church, proclaiming that: “The fight for the environment is ultimately a participation in Christ’s work of reconciliation. The Church should see itself as ‘the wounded helper’”.<sup>61</sup> With this environmental manifesto, the environment became a priority in the CS. Three years later, other environmental work was also established, in the form of the Agency of CS’s environmental work (Svenska kyrkans miljövårn), which has served as the driving force behind a number of environmental projects. The most extensive environmental project, a system for environmental certification (Nådegåvan) was developed as early as 1998. Six years after its inception, around thirty church leaders and units (educational institutions) were environmentally certified. Representatives from CS have been active in

59 In the Lutheran tradition, the doctrines of two kingdoms are about the fact that God has divided the mandate to rule the world so that his will is realized, between two different authorities, often referred to as two kingdoms: (1) The spiritual: The church’s task is to save souls by of Word and Sacrament. The Church does not administer physical or military punishment. (2) The worldly: The prince (or the worldly authorities) must, on the other hand, ensure that society is regulated and governed according to God’s will with creation.

60 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the Uniting General Council 1970*; Lambeth Conference, *Resolutions Archive from 1968*, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/127743/1968.pdf>.

61 Bishops in CS 1989, quoted in Halvor Nordhaug, ed., *Vern om skaperverket. Kirker verden over i arbeid for miljøvern* (Oslo and Stavanger: Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations and Triangelforlaget, 1989), 35 (extract); note that the full Manifesto is a 32-p pamphlet.

the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN), and through this the Swedish projects – especially the Nådegåvan – have provided inspiration for similar projects in churches in other countries, one such church being the Church of Norway.<sup>62</sup>

In contrast to the majority churches in Sweden (and Norway), ELCD did not adopt environmental statements at this time. It is relevant that the only ELCD national church body that has a legal standing – since 1989 – is The Council on Interchurch Relations of the ELCD, and in addition the bishops hold regular meeting. In the 1980s, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) challenged the Danish bishops to create an environmental declaration modelled after the Swedish manifesto, but the attempt failed. There was too much opposition in the ELCD to what was perceived as a political matter.<sup>63</sup> Another example of how the Danish interpretation of the two kingdoms functions as an obstacle for ecclesiastical environmental engagement is a debate in 2009. During the UN climate negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009 the churches in Scandinavia discussed whether or not they could mark the event with their church bells. In Norway and Sweden the church bell rang almost without debate, but in Denmark it was seen as controversial and as a political demonstration, in the form of clerical interference in the earthly regime.

The reason for this refusal in Denmark at the end of the 1980s and again in 2009 was said to be the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms. The ELCD, being less independent than CS and Church of Norway also when these two latter churches were formally state churches, thus practices a slightly different interpretation of the consequences of the theology of the two kingdom doctrines than its sister churches in Norway and Sweden. Hence, ELCD's highest authority – notwithstanding the superior role of the Parliament – is the Minister of Church Affairs, most different from Sweden and Norway.

The discussion in the majority churches in Scandinavia illustrates why the doctrines of two kingdoms had to be clarified in order for the Lutheran church to participate in the environmental political debate, and this is why, as early as in 1977, in the preparatory text for the general assembly, the LWF and Lazareth both emphasise the importance of a correct understanding of the doctrine of two kingdoms. Lazareth claimed that a theology that keeps environmental policy out of the domain of the church, by referring to the

62 Tom Sverre Tomren, ed., *Ung i Nidaros* (Fagbok, 1997), 36.

63 Tim Jensen and Mikael Rothstein, *Gud og grønne skove: Religion og naturbevarelse [God and green forests: Religion and nature conservation]* (Århus: Munksgaard, 1991), 141.

doctrine of two kingdoms, is based on an incorrect understanding of the doctrine and is consequently heresy.

When we seek out the theological motifs in the 1977 text, we can identify the *stewardship motif*. This motif was emphasised both in Lazareth's presentation and in the final declaration. Later in this text we will see that the Anglican Church already used the steward motif in an ecotheological statement as early as 1968. Lazareth developed the idea. In the final text from 1977, this was formulated as follows: "The member churches are encouraged to give the important questions of global stewardship, limited resources, environment, energy, and nuclear power the theological and ethical attention they deserve."<sup>64</sup>

The stewardship theology (although more economically oriented) was originally introduced to the LWF in 1949. After a debate in the LWF, Helge Brattgård was commissioned to deliver a theological reflection on the term "steward", which resulted in the book *God's Stewards*.<sup>65</sup> The Stewardship Theology in the LWF was then picked up by the WCC, and during the general meeting in New Delhi (1961) the stewardship theology was further discussed.<sup>66</sup> At the same time that the stewardship theology was discussed in the LWF, Reformed, Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican theologians began to work with the same concept,<sup>67</sup> one example being Hodd's 1960 article titled "The Praxis of Stewardship in Great Britain".<sup>68</sup> Thus, the stewardship motif would later become central in the LWF, WCC and a number of other organisations, while in this first period, the motif was understood as the theology of money, time and talent. Yet, by 1968 the Anglican Church and the WCC extended – as we will see later – their use of the stewardship motif to include man's dealings with nature and the environment. In addition to the two-kingdom and stewardship motifs, the LWF statement from 1977 contained several other ecotheological ideas. Most of them were already well-known and in use in Anglican and Reformed ecotheology proclamations, like the judgment motif, the creation motif, the cosmic salvation motif, and the hermeneutic theme.<sup>69</sup>

64 Lutheran World Federation, "Seminar III report," 140.

65 Cf. Helge Brattgård, *God's Stewards* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 1–21.

66 Brander, *Människan och den ekologiska väven*, 72.

67 Brattgård, *God's Stewards*, 1963, 17–18.

68 Quoted in Brattgård, *God's Stewards*, 1963, 211.

69 World Alliance of Reformed Churches, *Proceedings of the Uniting General Council 1970*.

The seventh General Assembly of the LWF (Budapest 1984) had “Caring for God’s endangered creation” as the title of its ecotheological proclamation. One of the main motifs was nature’s place in the eschatological kingdom of God – the message here being that creation *has a part in the salvation*. The Budapest Assembly interprets this motif as a statement of the fact that nature has intrinsic value for God. As a consequence, humanity has a God-given responsibility to take care of the creation.<sup>70</sup> The cosmic salvation motif was not a new ecotheological motif as this time. It had been in use both in WARC in 1970 and in the LWF in 1977. In the academic ecotheological discourse, Santmire used the motif in 1970.<sup>71</sup> Other motifs in 1984 include: the creator motif, a motif that deals with God who owns nature, and nature as a gift. In other words, when the LWF used the eschatological salvation motif as an argument for the ecotheological responsibility of the churches in 1984, this was not a theologically innovative idea.

The eight General Assembly in the LWF, six years later (Curitiba 1990), contains a new, lesser known ecotheological core motif which would become central both in ecclesiastical and academic ecotheology. In addition to the motif of liberation, the Curitiba text contains a large variety of ecotheological motifs: the creator motif (God has created life and keeps it together), an aesthetic one-god motif (God wants Earth to be full of happiness and kindness), the trustee motif (the human being is created in the image of God as “the steward of life”), the motif of wholeness (the human being is part of the creative work), the redemption motif (the creative work must be redeemed), a Christological new-life motif (a new world arises in Christ), the sacrament motif (baptism and communion shows the context between God, nature and man), and the hermeneutical motif and the ecclesiological motif we recognise from 1977 (the church is part of God’s creative work and must therefore commit to such creative work).<sup>72</sup>

The title of the statement from Curitiba was “A Liberated Creation”. The liberation motif deals with both social liberation of the poor and an ecological liberation of nature. In the text, the interconnections between these topics are underlined. Firstly, environmental destruction can lead to social ruin (migration and urbanisation), and secondly economic growth and industrialisation can lead to environmental destruction. In this text, the LWF

70 Lutheran World Federation, *In Christ – Hope for the World*, 241.

71 H. Paul Santmire, *Brother Earth, Nature, God and Ecology in Time of Crisis* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1970), 106–112.

72 Lutheran World Federation, *I Have Heard the Cry of my People*, 88–89.

problematizes the claims from the World Commission saying that economic growth is necessary if humanity is going to be able to take care of the global ecosystems. The chair of the World Commission for Environment and Development, Gro Harlem Brundtland, was one of the speakers at the General Assembly in 1990. The problematisation was in other words a Lutheran contribution to the discourse on the concept of sustainable development which was introduced in the Brundtland report. The position of the LWF is that environmental problems cannot be solved through technological innovations alone; what is needed to solve such issues is both a new value set and the re-discovery of the spiritual dimensions in existence in the world.

The way the LWF uses the liberation motif are influenced by traditional liberation theology. At the end of the 1980s, liberation theology holds a strong position in many theological circles all over the globe. The liberation theologians were mostly anthropocentrically directed; but in the years after 1990, prominent liberation theologians started to take an interest in environmental questions, including the most prominent of them: Leonardo Boff. Boff started his writings with a focus on social justice. In 1989 Per Lønning criticised Boff (and liberation theology as a whole) for being anthropocentric.<sup>73</sup> Three years later, Boff responded to the criticism with “Ecology and liberation – a new paradigm”.<sup>74</sup> The fact that the LWF used “liberation” as an ecotheological term in 1990 may have contributed to several liberation theologians, including Boff, starting to include the environmental aspect in their theological concepts.<sup>75</sup>

The ecotheological session from LWF’s ninth General Assembly held in Hong Kong 1997, was titled “Faithful Stewardship of God’s Creation”. In this session, the hermeneutic perspective and bible reading was discussed. Under the heading “Through Faithful Stewardship of God’s Creation” the General Assembly adopted the following statement:

A purely “spiritualistic” reading of Scripture is neither pure nor spiritual. Scripture is to be read in its fullness, just as prayer and praise are incomplete

73 Per Lønning, *Creation: An Ecumenical Challenge?* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1989), 146.

74 Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 7–8.

75 Fourteen years later, in 2006, many liberation theologians work with ecotheology, and Ben Willie Golo argued in his PhD thesis that the liberation model is to be considered as one of the main models within ecotheology (Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo, “Towards an African Earth Theology of Liberation: A Study of Deforestation in Ghana in a Globalised World” (PhD dissertation, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2006), 226).

without corresponding praxis in the environment. Theological traditions should also include a discussion of the theology of land.<sup>76</sup>

The Hong Kong General Assembly emphasised that the Bible contains themes that can help the church to see the environmental questions correctly, and to help them to act adequately.<sup>77</sup> The motif in the 1997 statement is characterised by diversity: God's peace (shalom) motif, the incarnation motif, the stewardship motif, creation, the sin motif.<sup>78</sup> Except for the incarnation motif, the rest of the motifs have been used in ecclesiastical texts previously. Thirty years after White Jr. initiated the debate on nature and biblical interpretation in western theology, the LWF discusses hermeneutical principles of Lutheran ecotheology. Santmire worked with ecotheological hermeneutics ten years earlier. In *The Travail of Nature* (1985) he writes:

Another reading of biblical theology is possible. The data of biblical theology in both the Old and the New Testament, allow us – if they do not indubitably require us – to develop an ecological reading of biblical faith.... This could be called an ecological hermeneutic of history.<sup>79</sup>

Santmire discussed the principles of ecotheological hermeneutics: Theology must develop a hermeneutic that emphasis the Bible's "ecological motif" and tones down the "spiritual motif".<sup>80</sup> At this time, in 1997, Santmire is declared an ecotheological pioneer.<sup>81</sup> His books are known to Lutheran theologians who are preoccupied with ecotheology, so it is not unexpected that one finds outlines and approaches from Santmire in texts from the LWF. The focus on ecological hermeneutics is interesting and marks a forewarning of the development of a professional tradition that will be referred to as ecological hermeneutics and ecocritical text analysis.<sup>82</sup>

76 Lutheran World Federation, "Seminar III report."

77 The LWF theologians use the phrase theological themes in roughly the same way as we use motifs in this text.

78 Lutheran World Federation, *In Christ Called to Witness*.

79 H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of the Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1985), 189.

80 *Ibid.*, 216.

81 Roald Kristiansen, *Økoteologi [Ecotheology]* (Fredriksberg: Anis forlag, 1993), 38–40.

82 Tom Sverre Bredal-Tomren, "Sámi ecotheology as a resource for the church of Norway", *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology*, 77, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/0039338X.2023.2194273>.

The next ecotheological statement was adopted at the LWF's 10th General Assembly in Winnipeg in 2003.<sup>83</sup> One section is titled "Healing Creation". This healing motif refers to the Earth as a patient. In other words: The earth is subjectivised. This idea refers to James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis. Lovelock presented his well-known Gaia hypothesis in 1969 at a symposium in Princeton without convincing those who were present.<sup>84</sup> In 1979 he published the book *Gaia: A new look at Life on Earth* which became a bestseller, and in 1988 he followed up with a book on the evolution of terrestrial organisms. In 1991, Lovelock published a book with the title *The Practical Science of Planetary Medicine*, where he refers to the Earth as a patient in need of medicine. In 1987, Lovelock was invited to present his ideas at a conference organized by the Department of Church and Society in the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam. His ideas came to set marks in the theology of the WCC. In the 2003 text, we find the immanence motif, God's compassion for nature, one Christocentric reconciliation motif, man as collaborator, man's remorse, self-understanding and new practice/lifestyle in addition to motifs of healing. Apart from the healing motif, all theological motifs from 2003 had been used in other texts earlier.

The 11th General Assembly of the LWF gathered in Stuttgart in 2010. The main ecological theme was included in the adopted Message: "Give us today our daily bread". The LWF uses the same approach as the UN, where the question of environmentalism is linked to social justice. The main topics in this text include climate change, unfair distribution of resources between rich and poor, and how this creates crisis and conflict for the whole world. The Assembly also adopted a Statement "Daily Bread" Instead of Greed: an LWF Call for Economic and Climate Justice that underlined that the church must turn to the Creator and follow his will.<sup>85</sup> The theological motifs used to justify why the churches should engage with the environment and sustainability are God's continued creation and stewardship.<sup>86</sup>

The 12th General Assembly of the LWF in 2017 included in the Message the section "Creation—not for Sale",<sup>87</sup> and this theme was visible also in the preparations for the Assembly. It addresses overuse and misuse of the earth's

83 Lutheran World Federation, *For the Healing of the World*, 19–22.

84 Brander, *Människan och den ekologiska väven*, 43.

85 Lutheran World Federation, *Give Us Today Our Daily Bread*, 66.

86 Lutheran World Federation, *Assembly Report* (LWF, 2011), 44, <https://worldinterfaithharmonyweek.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/LutheranWorldFederation.pdf>.

87 Lutheran World Federation, "Liberated by God's Grace," 61–62.



ecological systems and climate change. According to the statement, the main cause of the problem is a harmful global economic system based on the pursuit of profit. The solution consists in establishing alternative economic models. In order to achieve this, the General Assembly wants the churches to focus on theological education with an emphasis on environmental protection, promoting environmentally friendly lifestyles, doing advocacy work and to cooperate with partners who work for the same cause. The theological motifs in “Creation—not for sale” are that the earth is God’s creation, God’s continued creation, stewardship, liberating grace and community.

Finally, the 13th General Assembly of the LWF which meet in 2023 in Kraków, Poland placed great emphasis on social justice when they spoke about the environment and climate. This is visible in e.g. the *Resolution on the climate emergency* at the assembly.

To call on the LWF to continue with its efforts to encourage, support and accompany LWF member churches and other people affected by climate change...To call on the LWF Communion Office to strengthen its advocacy for climate justice at all levels, including by encouraging LWF member churches to incorporate climate justice campaigns into their activities.<sup>88</sup>

We return to a summary of this section and of Lutheran ecotheology in the concluding part of the article.

## Anglican Ecotheology

The Anglican church has approximately 80 million members across 160 countries. The global bodies of the Anglican Church are: The Lambeth Conference (LC), the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and the Primates Meeting. The largest of these is the LC. In the LC, all of the archbishops and bishops of the Anglican Church gather, in addition to invited representatives from ecumenical sister churches. The LC has gathered every decade since 1867. The mandate, scope and tradition from this conference can be considered as the most authoritative in terms of the expression of Anglican Ecotheology.

88 Lutheran World Federation, “Resolution on the climate emergency,” 2023, <https://2023.lwf-assembly.org/resolution-climate-emergency>.

## THE STEWARD MOTIVE AS RED THREAD

The first official Anglican statement on the environment came from the LC in 1968 under the heading “Man’s Stewardship of Nature”. The Conference urges all Christians, in obedience to the doctrine of creation, to take all possible action to ensure man’s responsible stewardship over nature, in particular in his relationship with animals, and with regard to the conservation of the soil, and the prevention of the pollution of air, soil, and ocean.<sup>89</sup>

This text was ground-breaking. At this point none of the denominations had made such an environmental statement on the top international, organisational level. In the statement, the LC mention soil conservation, pollution (of air, topsoil and sea) and the relationship between humanity and animals. The first two themes were central in the contemporary environmental debate (for example at the UN’s Stockholm conference in 1972). The last topic received little attention.

The main ecotheological motifs in the LC 1968 conference included the dogma of creation and man’s stewardship: the LC asked every Christian to respect the doctrine of creation and show this by being responsible stewards. This proclamation reflects a systematic theological thinking with an anthropocentric and theocentric focus: God has created nature and human in an order and with a task. In other words: The ethics is based on the will of God, hence being theocentric. The role of humanity is, among other things, to be responsible stewards of God.

The linking of the stewardship motive and environmental ethics was new in ecclesiastical statements when it was adopted in 1968. Both the creation motif and the stewardship motif became central in international ecotheology until present. Even if Brander acknowledges that the term “integrity” was used by the WARC already in 1970, Brander writes that the use of the stewardship metaphor as an environmental motif started with Douglas Hall’s work in the early 1980s.<sup>90</sup> When analysing the 1968 text from the LC, we see that this is not the whole picture. The stewardship motif was in use as an ecotheological motif in LC already in 1968. Also Philip N. Joranson and the Faith-Man-Nature group, which worked in the framework of the American church national council from 1965 to 1974, used the steward motif in the same way.<sup>91</sup> Even a

89 Lambeth Conference, *Resolutions Archive from 1968*, <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/127743/1968.pdf>.

90 Brander, *Människan och den ekologiska väven*, 83–113.

91 Kristiansen, *Økoteologi*, 37.

statement from the WCC General Assembly in Uppsala in 1968 contained a formulation of humanity as steward given the duty “to guard and share the resources of creation”.<sup>92</sup> Robin Attfield, who is one of the ecotheology pioneers, believes that the stewardship approach has its historical roots in a text from Sir Matthew Hale in the 17th century.<sup>93</sup> To conclude, the stewardship motif used as an expression for man’s responsibility for the well-being of nature did not start with Douglas Hall in the 1980s, and the LC used it as early as 1968.

However, ten years later in the 1978 text of the LC, we can observe that the linking of the stewardship motif and environmentalism is tuned down:

The conference calls for continuing emphasis on stewardship teaching and practice:

- We urge all Anglicans, especially in the Western world, to review their value system, so that lifestyles may become related to necessities rather than affluence and consumerism.
- We commend the biblical principle of tithing as a guide for normal Christian living.<sup>94</sup>

In this statement, the Anglicans returned to the traditional use of the expression steward as an economic and anthropocentric concept. The connection to environmentalism which the LC made ten years previously is not visible in this text.

The next LC statement on environmentalism came in 1988. The specific environmental problems mentioned in this text are pollution and hunger. The background was the UN report *Our Common Future*. In the resolution the LC returned to the stewardship as an ecotheological motif, with the advice to: “encourage them to see stewardship of God’s earth for the care of our neighbours as a necessary part of Christian discipleship and a Christian contribution to citizenship.”<sup>95</sup> The title of the resolution seems inspired by the WCC’s contemporaneous programme, titled “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation” (JPIC). The LC recommends that the provinces of the Anglican church get involved in the WCC programme.<sup>96</sup> When the Anglicans use the stewardship motif as an ecotheological approach this time, it seems

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92 Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft*, 42.

93 Ibid.

94 Lambeth Conference, *Resolutions Archive from 1978*, 8 (Resolution 9: Stewardship), <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/127746/1978.pdf>.

95 Lambeth Conference, *Resolutions Archive from 1988*, 22 (Resolution 40: Environment, Militarism, Justice and Peace), <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/127749/1988.pdf>.

96 Ibid., 23.

to be influenced by the WCC. Another ecotheological message in the text from 1988 is that everything is connected – individuals and communities are encouraged to recognise that everything that lives is connected as one whole, in other words, that man should take a holistic perspective in their reflection and practice. Having a holistic perspective encourages humans to live in the correct relationship to God, to one's neighbour and to creation. The text contains anthropocentric, theocentric and biocentric ethical arguments side by side.

In the LC in 1998, it introduced the most comprehensive ecotheological report in the conference's history. The environment was one of the main topics. The conference highlighted themes such as population growth, consumption, water quality, air pollution, deforestation and plant and animal extinction.<sup>97</sup> This conference was organized just one year after the world's nations had agreed on a framework for a global climate agreement during the Kyoto negotiations (1997), and the major environmental topic in media was climate change. In light of the contemporary environmental debate it is surprising that climate change is not among the topics in the final report.

In the 1998 statement, we do however find three main ecotheological motifs: the pact motif, the pneumatic immanence motif and a stewardship motif.<sup>98</sup> The pact motif stems from WCRC and Jürgen Moltmann. The pneumatic motive became well known in the churches through a statement from the general assembly in WCC in 1991. LC uses the motif (as WCC) to express that nature has a God-given value (that is to say that God's immanence gives nature value).<sup>99</sup> The fourth main motif in the 1998 LC report is the stewardship motif. This motif, which has been included in all the LC environmental statements since 1968, is developed further here: steward is replaced by the term "co-partner". The message is nevertheless the same: according to God's will, man has an environmental ethical responsibility. The reason why the LC replaced steward with co-partner is that the steward approach is considered too anthropocentric, as argued in one of the theological reflections prepared for the LC. argued that some find the notion of stewardship as too anthropocentric. The proposal that an incarnation motif could bridge a biocentric and an anthropocentric concept was not explored further at the LC, but the Anglican theologian Edvard Echlin (1999) developed an ecological Christology

97 Lambeth Conference, *Resolutions Archive from 1998*, 7 (Resolution I.8 Creation).

98 *Ibid.*, 7–9 (Resolution I.9 Ecology).

99 Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft*, 43.

based on the incarnation motif, through his book *Earth Spirituality: Jesus at the Centre*.

The LC specified human's mission in Creation:

Human beings are both co-partner with the rest of the creation and living bridges between heaven and earth, with responsibility to make personal and corporate sacrifice for the common god of all Creation.<sup>100</sup>

In this formulation LC used a language that is familiar from Orthodox ecotheology – the human beings seen as “living bridges between heaven and earth”. The difference between the Orthodox and Anglican approaches lies in the fact that where Anglican anthropology is linked to anthropocentric and biocentric ethics, Orthodox anthropology is linked to theocentric teleology. Another difference is that Orthodox ecotheology often links the motif sacrifices to a model in which man is referred to as a priest of creation. We will return to this in the section on Orthodox ecotheology. Other motifs in 1998 include the web of motif, the Sabbath motif – also applied by WARC in 1989 – and the redemption motive – also applied WARC in 1970 and LWF in 1977. LC 1998 concluded by a practical pronouncement: the LC decides to support an international environmental Anglican network.<sup>101</sup> With this decision the foundation for the Anglican Communion Environmental Network was laid. The network became a reality in 2002. At this point the ACC gave it status as the Anglican Church's official environmental network.

The environmental statement from next LC (2008) was titled “Safeguarding the Integrity of Creation”. In this statement the assembly decided that environment, sustainability, and climate should be a main topic for the Anglican churches. The text starts with a list of relevant Bible verses and motifs. In the list we find a creation motif, the stewardship motif, vegetarianism motif, covenant motif, the incarnation motif and the ecological-eschatological motif. The LC underlines that it is a duty for the church, community, and the individual Christian to get involved in the protection of biological diversity and to work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but when quoting Gen 1, it stops before verse 30 on God's gifts to “everything that has the breath of life in it...”, highlighting only the anthropocentric verses in verses 27–29 LC also addresses the question raised by Lynn White Jr. in 1967 and asks if

100 Lambeth Conference, *Resolutions Archive from 1998*, 7.

101 *Ibid.*, 8.

Christianity's theology and worldview might result in "we are exacerbating the problem..."<sup>102</sup> The answer of the 2008 LC is that climate and environmental problems are not primarily about theology, but that they are linked to contemporary political and economic systems.

Finally, the 2022 LC's Call on the environment and sustainable development is clearly theocentric, by affirming: "We are all part of the web of God's creation for 'in God all things in heaven and earth were created...'"<sup>103</sup> It deplores "theologies of domination, which have caused great harm to the earth and injustices to its people..."<sup>104</sup>

In the concluding part, we will summarise the main features of Anglican ecotheology.

## Orthodox Ecotheology

They orthodox churches have about 300 million members. The Orthodox church is less centralised than the Catholic church, and there are two main power centres; one based in present-day Istanbul – the Ecumenical Patriarchate – of which the Patriarch enjoys the status of *primus inter pares* (first among equals) among the self-governing or autocephalic churches; and one based in Moscow, as the Russian Orthodox Church, which is the numerically largest church, and of which seeks to extend its influence to what they perceive as Russian territory, which go beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. In this text, we focus on the Ecumenical Patriarchate, both as this is the Orthodox "mother church" and because of its leading role. In other words: For this presentation we will use proclamations from the Patriarch of Constantinople and selected statements from official inter-orthodox ecotheological conferences.

102 Lambeth Conference, *A Statement from concerned Bishops at the Lambeth Conference August 2008*, Introduction, <https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2008/08/a-statement-from-concerned-bishops-at-the-lambeth-conference-august-2008.aspx>.

103 Colossians 1:16. Lambeth Conference, *Lambeth Calls, 2023*, 8 (para 2.8), <https://www.lambethconferenceresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/The-Lambeth-Calls-English-2023.pdf>.

104 *Ibid.*, 9 (para 4.11).

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM CHALLENGES ORTHODOX CHURCH LEADERS

In 1986, the WWF organised a gathering in Assisi, Italy. During this meeting leaders from the world religions were asked to increase their environmental commitment. This led to WWF being invited to help organise an inter-Orthodox ecotheological consultation in Sofia, with a focus on the WCC programme Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation the following year.<sup>105</sup> In the text from the Sofia consultation in 1987, the topics were that of: pollution of water and air, use of non-renewable resources, genetic manipulation, weakening of the ozone layer, radioactive waste, deforestation, and desertification. The story of the fall of Adam in the garden of Eden is used to explain the cause of the environmental problems: with the fall, humanity lost the ability to live properly in relation to nature.

The first ecumenical patriarch who involved himself in the environmental discourse, Dimitrios, warned in 1989 against loss of biological diversity, pollution and climate change. Dimitrios expressed that the profound cause of environmental destruction is due to contemporary culture and its promotion of the cultivation of rationalism and selfishness. Man has thus “lost the ability to sense the sacred in nature”.<sup>106</sup> As a result, humanity has forgotten that our “God-given” position is that of a trustee role characterised by respect, care and gratitude. In 1993, Bartholomeus, the successor to Dimitrios, follows up by expressing concern for pollution and waste, war, exploitation, and secularism as examples of environmental problems. As with the 1987 conference, Bartholomeus claims that the origin for the environmental problems is the Fall of Adam and Eve in Eden – the original sin. One consequence of the fall is that humans lost its sensitivity of what’s holy, meaning that “the feeling that nature is a sign and a sacrament given by God is gone”.<sup>107</sup> The orthodox texts thus explain the environmental problem primarily in theological categories: The environmental problem is a result of a spiritual crisis, which in turn is a consequence of the fall.

105 Jensen & Rothstein, *Gud og grønne skove*, 15–33.

106 Patriarch Dimitrios, “Message on the Day of Prayer for Creation, 1 September 1989,” in *Orthodoxy and Ecology: Resource Book*, ed. Alexander Belopopsky and Dimitri Oikonomou (Bialystock: Syndesmos, 1996), 52.

107 Patriarch Bartholomeos, “Message on the Day of Prayer for Creation, 1 September 1994,” in *Orthodoxy and Ecology: Resource Book*, ed. Alexander Belopopsky and Dimitri Oikonomou (Bialystock: Syndesmos, 1996), 57.

## A SACRAMENTAL ECOTHEOLOGY EMERGES

In the Sofia text, we find three theological arguments for why nature have value: Firstly, creation reflects God and his will. This motif may be reminiscent of what we will encounter in Catholic systematic theology later in this article. In the Sofia text it is emphasised that the creation motive is trinitarian: The Son fulfils the Father's will with the work of creation, and the Holy Spirit is the giver of life (zoopoion). By studying the mystery of nature through prayer, meditation and knowledge, humans gain insight into God's wisdom and energy (energia) and the "integrity of the creation".<sup>108</sup> The integrity motive that WARC introduced as early as 1970, is now in use in the text from the Sofia Conference in 1987.

The second argument for nature's value in this text is that the creation takes part in the future salvation: "Ultimately, however, the whole of the Creation is destined to become a transfigured world, since the salvation of humankind necessarily involved the salvation of its natural home, the cosmos."<sup>109</sup> This cosmological salvation motifs may be reminiscent of the motifs we found in statements from the Protestant churches, but when we examine the text it is clear that the orthodox leaders use the motif in a slightly different manner than that of Protestant ecotheologians. Indeed, in the Sofia text the salvation of creation is explained as necessary for the sake of humans.<sup>110</sup> The creation is seen as a stage, "a theatre", where humanity shall be transformed into the divine. Here we can sense the Reformed theatre motif, but the motif has an entirely difference function than in Reformed theology. In the WARC texts, for example, the term was used to say that God is present on Earth, while in the Orthodox Sofia text, it is used to express that Earth is important because God needs an arena for his salvation of humanity. In Reformed and Lutheran ecotheological thinking the creation is saved because God loves it, while in the orthodox Sofia text, nature is saved because it is the "home of humans". In

108 World Council of Churches, Inter-orthodox Consultation October 1987, "Orthodox Perspective on Creation: Report of the WCC Inter-orthodox Consultation, Sofia, Bulgaria, October 1987". Extracts reprinted in *Orthodoxy and Ecology: Resource Book*, edited by Alexander Belopopsky and Dimitri Oikonomou (Bialystock: Syndesmos, 1996), 60, para 6, [https://www.goarch.org/society-articles/-/asset\\_publisher/zg5D5ENaCTK9/content/orthodox-perspectives-on-creation/pop\\_up?\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_zg5D5ENaCTK9\\_viewMode=print&\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_zg5D5ENaCTK9\\_languageId=en\\_US](https://www.goarch.org/society-articles/-/asset_publisher/zg5D5ENaCTK9/content/orthodox-perspectives-on-creation/pop_up?_101_INSTANCE_zg5D5ENaCTK9_viewMode=print&_101_INSTANCE_zg5D5ENaCTK9_languageId=en_US).

109 Ibid., 61, para 7.

110 Ibid., 61–63



the Sofia text, nature's value and salvation are linked to God's care for humanity, and is anthropocentrically justified.

The third argument for the value of nature in the Sofia text, is the resident motif. This argument is based on a logic that argues that since nature is the home of humanity and other living beings, it must be valued and protected. In the next chapter, we will see that Pope Paul VI used the residence motif in catholic theology as early as 1972.

To understand why the value of nature in the Sofia text is linked to humanity, one must first understand the anthropology and cosmology in the texts. The anthropological core concept is *microcosm*.<sup>111</sup> This expression means something different than in the biology. In the Sofia text microcosm is used to express that the human being is an integral part of the entire creation, but also that man stands out because of humanity's spiritual dimension: Human is nature, and at the same time, spirit; and "only the human being combines material and spiritual elements."<sup>112</sup> This duality gives humanity a position as intermediary between the creation and God. There is a link between man's relation to God and his relation to creation, and thus to God. When humanity becomes more like God, the entire creation is drawn closer to God. When humanity distances itself from God, humanity consequently distances itself from the entire creation:

If we move in the direction of deification, our human nature, progressing towards God, will somehow carry the created material world with it. If, however, we move to the opposite direction, the created world will suffer with us as well.<sup>113</sup>

The environmental crisis (and its solution) is thus linked to humanity's relationship to God. In this text, we also find a biocentric argument for why humanity is obliged to protect nature, expressed with the formulation of "the world as cosmos, ... a created order with its own integrity, is a positive reality".<sup>114</sup> However, apart from this, the ethical argument as to why the Earth must be protected is that it is the home of the human race (anthropocentrism) and that God wants its survival (theocentrism). The destiny of Earth is decided on by how close humanity is to God. Humanity's ability to approach God, is through Christ's work of salvation. This means that in the Sofia text,

111 Ibid., paras 9–10.

112 Ibid., 61, para 9.

113 Ibid., 62–63, para 11.

114 Ibid., 61, para 6.

the solution for the environmental problem is connected to the person and deeds of Christ. Furthermore, Jesus serves as an ethical and liturgical ideal and mode for how people should behave towards the creation. As Christ “became Incarnate, became man, revealing his Lordship over the whole of the creation, and showing humanity a Lordship in stewardship and service”.<sup>115</sup>

The steward in the Sofia text is adapted to an orthodox theological framework. In this text, the steward (*oikonomos*) shows care, stands in intercession, and draws the creation closer to God by the steward himself being deified (deification). In the Protestant stewardship approach, the emphasis is on action, or ethics, while the Orthodox stewardship revolves around spiritual and liturgical life. The reintegration of the creation into God's sphere involves prayers, liturgy and a renewal of the spiritual-ascetic Christian way of life.<sup>116</sup>

The liturgical aspect of the Orthodox approach becomes even clearer in a text two years later. In 1989, Patriarch Dimitrios of Constantinople introduced a day of prayer for the creation in the liturgical calendars.<sup>117</sup> The idea of one a Sunday to this the purpose came on a meeting in WWF's network for religion and environmental protection the previous year.<sup>118</sup> The Orthodox church embraced the idea, and in 1989 Patriarch Dimitrios made this statement:

We have come to the decision, in common with the Sacred and Holy Synod surrounding us, to declare the first day of September of each year to be the day of the protection of the environment. [...] Therefore, we invite through this our Patriarchal Message the entire Christian world, to sacrifice together with the Great Mother Church of Christ (the Ecumenical Patriarchate) every year on this day prayers and supplications to the Maker of all, both as thanksgiving for the great gift of creation and as petitions for its protection and salvation.<sup>119</sup>

Dimitrios anthropology is the same as the one we see in the Sofia text – as “the prince of the creation”, humans have both a spiritual and materialistic

115 Ibid., 63, para 12.

116 Ibid., 65, para 37.

117 Dimitrios, “Message,” 55.

118 Dimitri Oikonomu, “Orthodox Church Environmental Activities and initiatives,” in *Orthodoxy and Ecology: Resource Book*, ed. Alexander Belopopsky and Dimitri Oikonomou (Bialystock: Syndesmos, 1996), 42.

119 Dimitrios, “Message,” 53.

side. This duality of nature implies that humanity can lead creation back to God.<sup>120</sup> According to Dimitrios the unique role of humanity is shown most clearly in the Eucharistic liturgy – the element of the bread and wine is from the material universe, and through the holy communion, that is through the bread and wine, the church continuously offers the creation back to God.<sup>121</sup> The invitation for each church to introduce a day of prayer for the creation in their liturgical calendar was communicated through the different ecumenical organisations, and that the initiative was accepted across Lutheran, Catholic and Reformed churches. Dimitrios's starting point is that the environmental crisis is a result of a spiritual crisis: In modern times, man has replaced the traditional orthodox spirituality, which was characterised by the holy communion, liturgy and asceticism, with the ideology of the consumer society.<sup>122</sup> Thus, the lack of (Orthodox) spirituality has led to a global environmental crisis. Humanity's conduct thus threatens everything alive – all living beings – and is contrary to God's will. Thus, the orthodox patriarch calls for this special day of prayer for the creation.

One year after this call, Dimitrios came up with a new document titled "Orthodoxy and the Environmental Crisis" (1990). Here he uses a clerical motif when he portrays man's task in the face of the environmental crisis: Just as the priest at the Eucharist offers the fullness of creation and receives it back as the blessings of grace in the form of the consecrated bread and wine, to share with others, so must we be the channel through which God's grace and deliverance is shared in all creation.<sup>123</sup>

Dimitrios introduces *priest* as an image for humanity's tasks as environmentalists. This motif took root in orthodox ecotheology and was imported to statements from the WCC in the JPIC programme of 1991 and in the text from Lambeth conference in 1998. The motif of humans as priest for the creation originates from John Zizioulas, former Orthodox bishop of Pergamon, who used the motif as an anthropological framework for ecotheology in a series of lectures at King's College London in 1989.<sup>124</sup>

120 Ibid., 52.

121 Ibid.

122 Ibid., 53.

123 Martin Palmer, "Christianity and Conservation: An Introduction to Christian Environmental Initiatives," in *Orthodoxy and Ecology: Resource Book*, ed. Alexander Belopopsky and Dimitri Oikonomou (Bialystock: Syndesmos, 1996), 86.

124 John Zizioulas, "Priest of Creation," in *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives – Past and Present*, ed. Robert James Berry (New York: T & T Clark 2006), 273.

In 1991, the Orthodox Church held its second ecotheological inter-Orthodox conference in Crete. In the text from the conference, it was emphasised that the Orthodox Church's response to the environmental challenge should not lie in ethics, but in the liturgical, eucharistic and ascetic ethos, mainly as there is a tendency to seek a renovation of ethics, while the Orthodox church believes the solution is to be found in the liturgical, eucharistic and ascetic ethos of the Orthodox tradition.<sup>125</sup> The term *ethos* refers to something different than *ethics*. *Ethos* includes, among other things, liturgy, prayer, and ethics. Ethos refers to something that grows out of a relationship with God.<sup>126</sup> The approach, and its ethics, is profoundly theocentric.

Dimitrios' successor, Bartholomeus, made environmentalism one of his main topics of concern. In 1993, he stated that the dogma of creation is the most fundamental dogma in orthodox teaching: Creation is an expression of God's will.<sup>127</sup> The patriarch uses the same motif as the Anglican used in Lambeth in 1968, in WARC in 1970, and which the LWF highlighted in 1984. But where the Protestant churches used the motif to encourage ethical engagement and clerical action, the orthodox patriarch proclaimed the doctrine of creation as a way of calming environmental anxiety. Bartholomeus writes that as life is in God's hands, humans need not be afraid of the environmental crisis. Panic and fear are a bad starting point when people have to make choices for tomorrow. The right starting point for good environmental commitment is to find peace with God and to know his will.<sup>128</sup>

In other words: Bartholomew claims that bible study, prayer and liturgical practice will generate respect for the ecological boundaries. According to this logic, the environmental problem can only be solved if humanity engage in a profound relationship with God.

During the more than 30 years since Bartholomew was elected Patriarch of Constantinople in 1991, he and the Orthodox church have taken the initiative to conduct numerous environmental seminars all over the globe. On the homepage of the Orthodox church, we can read that the patriarch, has invited

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125 Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection, "The Orthodox Church and the Environment: Conclusions and Recommendations of the Inter-Orthodox Conference on Environmental Protection, Crete, Greece, November 1991," in *Orthodoxy and Ecology: Resource Book*, ed. Alexander Belopopsky and Dimitri Oikonomou (Bialystock: Syndesmos, 1996), 67.

126 Ibid.

127 Patriarch Bartholomeos, "Message on the Day of Prayer for Creation, 1 September 1993," in *Orthodoxy and Ecology: Resource Book*, ed. Alexander Belopopsky and Dimitri Oikonomou (Bialystock: Syndesmos, 1996), 54.

128 Ibid.

to nine eco-conferences on board ship. The last was on the Mississippi River in 2009. After this, Bartholomeus has focused on ecotheological conferences for academics and activists, and on making joint statements together with politicians and church leaders, including Pope Francis, as will be seen below.

We will return to Orthodox ecotheology at the end of this article. Before moving onto the conclusion, we must first explore the ecotheology from The Holy See.

## Roman-Catholic ecotheology

The Roman-Catholic Church had approximately 1,040 million members worldwide. It therefore contains a great diversity of traditions and sub-institutions which can all be said to follow and embody the Catholic tradition. To limit the amount of text for this study of Catholic statements concerning the environment and ecology, this section will mainly focus on statements from the head of the catholic church: the pope. For most of the period covered by this article, John Paul II was pope. John Paul II is central in this case regardless, given that he worked in the time period when environmental problems became much more known on a global scale. There is therefore reason to believe that his theology will have influenced that of the popes who came after him. Although the main focus here is on John Paul II as well as the pontifical ecotheology from 1967-2013, we will (briefly) review some statements provided by Pope Benedict as well as his successor, Pope Francis. Incidentally, much research has been done on Pope Francis' ecotheology, and those who want a more complete picture of recent trends in Catholic ecotheology should familiarize themselves with this research.<sup>129</sup>

129 Willis Jenkins, "The Mysterious Silence of Mother Earth in *Laudato Si'*," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 46, no. 3 (2018): 441-462; Mary Mills SHCJ, John Arthur Orr and Harry Schnitker, *Reflections on Pope Francis's Encyclical, Laudato si'* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).

## ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION AS THE MAIN MOTIF

The first pope who spoke out about the global ecological crisis was Pope Paul VI.<sup>130</sup> As early as 1972, he made an ecotheological statement to the UN's environmental conference in Stockholm.<sup>131</sup> The pope addressed questions as ecological disturbance and social justice. Paul VI reminded the UN assembly that the Earth should be a "friendly Earth for future generations".<sup>132</sup> The pope proclaimed that pollution threatens people's homes, and this new global challenge could only be tackled if humanity radically change its mentality. The theological motif in his 1972 speech is that of the stewardship motif and the residential motif. Action is needed for the sake of humanity, of which Pope Paul VI emphasised *ethical* action. His message is characterised by anthropocentric arguments.

The next pope, Pope John Paul II, made the ecological crisis one of his main concerns. According to John Paul II the root cause of the ecological crisis is that humanity has failed its divine vocation.<sup>133</sup> This failure is linked to the Fall. The Pope's opinions thus align with the Orthodox Church (in addition to, among others, LC 1968, WARC 1970 and LWF 1984) when it comes to causal theological explanation of the environmental crisis. The theological motifs he uses to explain why the church's involvement in the environmental question are needed are nevertheless slightly different from those we saw in the other denominations: John Paul II mainly uses a motif of the natural order to explain why the environmental theme is a theme important to the church. In essence this means that the environment and nature must be protected because nature itself is an expression of God's will. When the natural

130 Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft*, 50; Theodore Lai and Cecilia Tortajada, "The Holy See and the Global Environmental Movements," *Frontiers in Communication* 6 (2021), <http://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2021.715900>.

131 It has to be mentioned this was not the first time Pope Paul VI warned against ecological crises. Even as far back as 1965, during the UN General Assembly in New York, he responded to the fact that technological development brought with it great dangers for humanity: "the danger comes neither from progress nor from science, which, if well used, can, on the on the contrary, solve many of the serious problems that afflict humanity. The real danger is in man, who has increasingly powerful instruments, capable of leading both to ruin and to the highest conquests." (Paul VI, "Address of the holy father Paul VI to the United Nations Organization," 1965, 6, [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_spe\\_19651004\\_united-nations.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651004_united-nations.html)).

132 Paul VI, "Message of His Holiness Paul VI to Mr. Maurice F. Strong, Secretary-General of the Conference on the Environment," 1972, [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/pont-messages/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_mess\\_19720605\\_conferenza-ambiente.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/messages/pont-messages/documents/hf_p-vi_mess_19720605_conferenza-ambiente.html).

133 John Paul II, "General audience," Wednesday, 17 January 2001, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/2001/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_aud\\_20010117.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_20010117.html).

order within nature (and God's will) is not respected, humans violate the deity. Environmental destruction therefore expresses a lack of respect for a God-given order and is thus a sin.<sup>134</sup>

However, John Paul II and the Roman Catholic Church did not only use theocentric arguments when they explained why humanity should pursue and adhere to environmentalism, as for example, in the catechism of the Catholic Church he states: "Animals, and also plants and beings without souls, are after the order of nature determined for the common good of the past, the present and the humanity of the future."<sup>135</sup> The ethical rationale here is clearly anthropocentric. Ecotheologian Michael Northcott further categorises John Paul II's environmental ethics as "humanocentric."<sup>136</sup>

When John Paul II describes humanity's place and role in the creation, he focuses on two things: On the one hand, he emphasises how humanity is an integral part of the creation. Indeed, the Pope refers to nature with metaphors such as "human's sister"<sup>137</sup> and "mother".<sup>138</sup> This expression can be traced back to Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) and his theology, having used metaphors such as: "mother" in reference to Earth, "brother" in reference to the wind, fire and sun, and "sister" in reference to the stars, moon, and water. In addition, while Lynn White Jr. highlighted Francis of Assisi's theology as a possible corrective to an environmentally destructive theology as early as 1967, such motifs are of little use in official statements from denominations other than the Catholic Church.

On the other hand, however, John Paul II often emphasises that humanity has a unique position in creation: Humans is the only creature created in God's image and the only being in the creation that is of both flesh and spirit.<sup>139</sup> This two-sided anthropology has a lot in common with orthodox

134 John Paul II, "Address of John Paul II to the Participants in a Study Week Organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences," Friday, 12 March 1999, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1999/march/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19990312\\_acd-sciences.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1999/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19990312_acd-sciences.html).

135 Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1997, § 2415, [https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo015/\\_INDEX.HTM](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo015/_INDEX.HTM).

136 Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 135.

137 John Paul II, "Trinity Is Mysteriously Present in Creation," January 26, 2000, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?id=1461>.

138 John Paul II, "Evangelium Vitae," 1995, para 22, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html).

139 John Paul II, "Tale ved aftengudstjensten i Trømsø," in *Johannes Paul II: Gå ut og forkynn det glade budskap [John Paul II: Go forth and preach the good news. Speech at the evening service in Trømsø]* (Oslo: St. Olav Forlag, 1989), 76.

ecothology, but in the Catholic version, this anthropology has more of an ethical emphasis: The two-sidedness means that man is the only being in nature that has an ability to reflect on his own and the rest of the creation's existence, which thus involves an ethical responsibility.<sup>140</sup> In the Catholic Catechism, this is described as follows:<sup>141</sup>

The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity. Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbour, including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.

Here we can see that the Catholic Church uses the expression "the integrity of creation", also used by WARC in 1970. The motif was made known to the churches of the world through the JPIC process in WCC. In other words: through this, we have an example of how ecotheology from other denominations influenced authoritative statements from the Catholic Church and those made by Pope John Paul II.

John Paul II also used Christological arguments in his ecotheology. Through the work of salvation, Christ calls upon humanity to be assistants of God. The human being is called to be a "steward"<sup>142</sup> for the creation, regretting in a joint message that we are "betraying the mandate God has given us: to be stewards..."<sup>143</sup> Only by being united with Christ, can humanity rediscover its intended position in the creation.

Pope John Paul II links environmentalism to being "united to Christ" but this does not mean that he is claiming that individuals must be Christian in order to contemplate and act ecologically towards nature – as is the case in orthodox ecotheological thinking. The Pope's argument is here, instead, not

140 John Paul II, "Tale ved," 74.

141 Catholic Church, *Catechism*, § 2415 (two notes deleted from quote).

142 John Paul II, "Tale ved," 112.

143 John Paul II and Patriarch Bartholomew I, "Common declaration on environmental ethics. Common declaration of John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch His Holiness Bartholomew I", Monday, 10 June 2002, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/june/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_20020610\\_venice-declaration.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2002/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20020610_venice-declaration.html).



that Christians have a special ethical insight, or that they have better basics for solving environmental problems than others. Rather, in several texts he underlines that the demands for “ecological conversion” is something for all of humanity.<sup>144</sup> The “call/vocation” in this instance, even if it is founded on the work of Christ, is directed at non-Christians just as much as it is at Christians. The motif of ecological conversion was used in a statement from The European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA) the same year (in 1989).<sup>145</sup> In other words: we are yet to see an example of how theological motifs cross denominational boundaries.

To understand why the pope address both non-Christians and Christians alike in his call for ecological conversion, we need some insight into Catholic theology. According to the dominant Roman Catholic theology, and through the perspective of John Paul II, the Holy Spirit works and is active both in the work of creation and in the history of salvation. The Spirit has the power to change social relationships both inside and outside the church. The Spirit can affect humans and create dialogue between all humans of good will. As a consequence of this reasoning, the Pope can appeal to all people. Another explanation for this is the idea of autonomous morality, which is often assigned to Thomas Aquinas, and is also commonly accepted in Roman Catholic ethics. Since the 15th century it has been an official doctrine of the Holy See that God’s will can be recognised in the created world. This means that every human can have some insight in God’s will (and through this, insight into who God is) by the study of nature, even if they do not know scripture or such religious tradition. The 2nd Vatican Council confirmed this dogma and concluded that nature has a certain degree of independence, otherwise known as nature’s autonomy.<sup>146</sup> Right and wrong are imprinted in nature. In line with this thinking, Alfons Auer further developed the idea of nature as bearer of “autonomous morality” in 1971.<sup>147</sup> Michael Rosenberger and Günter Virt claim that the concept is now widely accepted by Catholic theologians, and that environmental ethics, according to Catholic theology, are accessible for all humans regardless of religion.<sup>148</sup>

144 John Paul II, “Tale ved,” 112.

145 Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft*, 55–68.

146 Michael Rosenberger and Günter Virt, “Rediscovering the Sign of Creation, Contemporary Creation Theology in Catholic Perspective,” in *Listening to Creation Groaning*, ed. Lukas Vischer (Geneva: Centre International Réformé John Knox, 2004), 110.

147 Martin Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomist View of Moral Autonomy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 181–185.

148 Rosenberger and Virt, “Rediscovering,” 110.

After the death of John Paul II in 2005, Joseph Alois Ratzinger succeeded him, and took the name Benedict XVI. He served as Pope until 2013 when he resigned. As with Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI emphasised the importance of environmentalism, but less so than his predecessor. Benedict did nevertheless underline that environmentalism was an occupation for the Catholic Church. An example of this is that under his papacy, pollution and six other interferences with nature was specified as additional cardinal sins.<sup>149</sup> Another example is that during his reign, the Vatican made a major investment in solar panels that enabled the Holy See to become the first climate neutral state in world.

In March 2013, Jorge Mario Bergoglio became Pope Francis named after St. Francis of Assisi (1181–1226) the patron of animals, merchants and ecology. The choice of name specifically indicates an awareness and dedication to environmental issues and social justice. Francis was quick to make clear that environmentalism stood high on his agenda. In 2015, he published the first papal encyclical on the environmental crisis. A papal encyclical is the most solemn expression of the pope's official teaching. The title *Laudato si'* is taken from Francis of Assisi's famous 1224 composition – Canticum of the Sun. The document is extensive and contains a great variety of ecotheological motifs and arguments. The text covers a range of ecological reflections, criticism on consumer culture and market liberalism, criticism of technological optimism and a message about social and economic justice. The English version of the text spans 184 pages that covers so large extent of topics that it falls outside the scope and time horizon of this article. In this document Pope Francis includes statements and theology from previous popes and he draws on theology from other denominations. In short: *Laudato si'* contained a multitude of theological motifs and is heavily based on the ecotheology that had been developed in churches of all dominations since the 1960s. Since *Laudato si'* holds the status of a papal encyclical, it meant that the environmental issue was kept high up on the Catholic Church's agenda across the globe, something that was noticed far beyond the Catholic Church.<sup>150</sup>

149 Newspaper *Vårt Land* 11.03.2008.

150 For readers who want to analyse this document, the anthology *Reflections on Pope Francis's Encyclical, Laudato si'* (2017) edited by Mills, Orr and Schnitker, offers a rich variety of reflection.

## Conclusion

Through our exploration and analysis of statements and texts published by global representatives of the Christian denominations, we have established that all the denominations have adopted numerous ecotheological declarations on it top global summits or have made ecotheology statements through their top global leaders in the period 1968–2022. The declarations are, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by the focus of the international environmental debate, and the UN in particular. Through this analysis, it has also been established that the various denominations, have their own peculiarities.

In the Reformed *tradition we have observed four characteristic features in the* ecotheology of the World Communion of Reformed Churches:

First: WARC has developed a distinctive ecotheology built on traditional reformed motifs. The starting point for this ecotheology was Christocentric, and the main motifs consisted of classic Reformed motifs such as reconciliation, justice, Christ's rule, the world as a dwelling place for God, the covenant, and the Sabbath. Gradually, the use of motifs became wider, incorporating motifs from other denominations. The covenant motif, however, have be expressed to be the main motif in the Reformed ecotheology. It was introduced in WARC back in 1977, and since then has followed the organisation. We also find the stewardship motif to have significant placement in the Reformed ecotheology, but this not as much seen in the foreground.

Second: WARC has created new ecotheology and exported new motifs into the international ecclesiastical ecotheology discourse.

Third: The stated ethical arguments, at least from 1982 onwards, are both anthropocentric, theocentric and biocentric.

As the last and fourth point, the environmental cases reflected in WARC's statement mirrors the current environmental debate in the UN. Among other things, the environment and economic justice are seen as two sides of same coin. When WARC relates to problems of social justice and environmental degradation they omit any discussion on whether or not the goal of protection of nature and the needs for economic growth for the poor stand in a tension to each other. WARC's ecotheology is influenced by Cobb jr., Santmire, Moltmann and by the ecotheology of the other denominations.

Our review of ecotheology in the *Lutheran* World Federation showed that LWF started later with statements about the environment and ecology than WARC and LC. LWF also has less new innovative ecotheology in its text than in the WARC texts. The focus on the environmental topics in LWF

follows or is inspired by the topics in the statements from the UN. The texts from the LWFs general assembly nevertheless show that the general assemblies are still critical of the UN statements. The LWF problematise the dogma of sustainable growth by stating that there is a tension between economic growth and environmental care. In addition to classic Lutheran motifs such as biblical interpretation, the effect of sin, Christology, reconciliation, and doctrine of the two kingdoms, the LWF nonetheless draws on motifs used by other denominations and by ecumenical organisations. Simply put, in their earliest ecotheological discussions, the LWF used traditional Lutheran motifs, while the ecotheology from 1990 onwards used motifs taken from other traditions to a greater extent. Among many different motifs, the stewardship motif stands out as the most used motif. The stated ethical arguments are theocentric and anthropocentric, but we also identified some biocentric ethical arguments in the LWF statement.

*The Anglican* statements from the Lambeth Conference (LC) were among the earliest religious global ecotheological declaration. The steward motif, which has been one of the main motifs in international ecotheology, was introduced by the LC in 1968, and has since been one of the central motifs in ecotheological statements published by the LC. The strong position of this motif has given Anglican ecotheology an ethical focus. Another characteristic of the motifs used by the Anglican church is the ability to incorporate motifs with origins in both Reformed, Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox ecotheology. Although the Steward motif is prioritised, Anglican ecotheology is not locked in one pattern and the LC appears to be open to new theological input. In other words, Anglican ecotheology is innovative and ecumenical. An interesting feature is that the incarnation motif has a more central position than we found in other Protestant churches. When it comes to environmental topics, the Anglican church is influenced by the UN agenda, but is not entirely dependent on it. We have seen that the LC sometimes discusses environmental issues that are not in the current debate. Considering the ethical argument, the LC uses a threefold basis for environmental ethics.

*The (Greek) Orthodox Church* has developed an ecotheology with its own characteristics, of which differs significantly from the ecotheology that exists in the Protestant churches. On the one side, the Orthodox leaders use ecotheological terms and motifs that originate from other traditions, but the metaphors are interpreted and inserted into an Orthodox framework of what we can refer to as an ethos theology. In this framework the essential aspect here is the relationship between man and God. The emphasis is on spiritual

renewal and liturgy. Several orthodox leaders refer to orthodox ecotheology as “a sacramental ecotheology”.<sup>151</sup> As a consequence of its theology, Orthodox leaders put less weight on ethics and actions and more weight on man’s relationship to God than the Protestant leaders do. When studying the arguments given for environmental ethics in the orthodox texts, a threefold argument (environmentalism for the sake of creation, for other humans and because it is God’s will) arose, but the emphasis was nonetheless that of God’s plan for humanity. Another distinctive feature is that the Orthodox church had a stricter focus on environmental topics than found in the texts from the Protestants.

The review of proclamations and writings from the popes from 1967 has shown that the *Roman Catholic pontifical ecotheology* underlines that nature has his God-given order that human being can learn from and that we have to respect. The ecology has thus a normative dimension. In other words: Roman-Catholic environmental ethics with its roots in Thomistic traditions underline the nature’s ethical character. The ecotheology is thus seen as universally valid. This is an aspect that is stronger in the ecotheology from the popes than in text from the Protestants’ summits and the Orthodox patriarch. In this survey we have established that most of the ecotheological motif that the popes used had been used in others Christian’s denominations before the popes use it. The motifs that stand out as strong in pontifical ecotheology, especially in texts from John Paul II, is the demand of ecological conversion, and a tradition of referring to other species as human siblings. In Pope Francis’ text *Laudato si’* he draws on a large variety of ecotheological motifs that are known from text from other denominations. In *Laudato si’*, great emphasis is placed on the connection between environmental problems, equality and justice. What we can refer to as ecological justice is underlined. Even if one finds a three-fold argument in their environmental ethics the pontifical statements is dominated by argument with weight on reviewed to the human being (anthropocentrism) and to God’s will (theocentrism).

In conclusion, it must also be emphasized that even if the official ecotheology from the different denomination’s global summits or from their global leaders have their own peculiarities, all of them draws on, exchange

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151 Both the report from the Sofia consultation and the Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas use the term “sacramental ecotheology” to describe the peculiarity of orthodox ecotheology (Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft*, 50).

and share theological interpretations, motifs and ethical reflections with the other branches of the worldwide church.<sup>152</sup>

In our examination we saw how motifs such as stewardship, the integrity of creation, the presence of God in the creation, ecological conversion and a few other motifs are used in most denominations. Even if many of the motifs took on a slightly different value when they enter a different theological framework. It is striking to what extent the various denominations learn from each other. The session theological discourse is obviously worldwide, global and open to new innovative theology. How this process takes place and what role the ecumenical movement and not least the WCC play in it should be explored further.

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 152 In the study *Church environment and sustainability: a study of environmental statements in the major denominations in the period 1969-2019 and a detailed analysis of how the Norwegian church has worked with the green shift over the last 50 years* (Tomren, *Kyrkje miljø og bærekraft*), I have shown how the World Council of Churches (WCC), the European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA) and the Conference of European Churches (CEC) have been important for the exchange of theological ideas between the various denominations.

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LOUK AOURELIEN ANDRIANOS

# Ecological Sin, Metanoia (Repentance), and Eco-Conversion: Prerequisite Ecumenical Concepts Towards Reconciliation and Eco-Justice

## Introduction

A few days ago, the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches<sup>1</sup> (WCC) took place in Karlsruhe, Germany from 31 August to 8 September 2022 and I was fortunate to share the various WCC initiatives to promote creation care and, in particular, the work of the WCC's Ecological and Economic Justice (EEJ) programme on public witness and diakonia.

After the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 30 October to 8 November 2013, we commit ourselves to analyse the mechanism of structural greed which seems to be the root cause of the global ecological crisis and poverty.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> World Council of Churches, <http://www.oikoumene.org>.

<sup>2</sup> Louk Andrianos, "Structural Greed and Creation: A Theological Reflection," in *The Ecumenical Review* 63 (2011): 312–329.

On the occasion of the 7th International Conference on Ecological Theology and Environmental Ethics (ECOTHEE) with the theme: “Reconciliation and Solidarity to Avert Ecological Crises” this year, this article aims at elucidating the definition of ecological sin to bring it back to the table of theological discourse and to face the serious ecological and socio-economic problems of our times. The results of ecological sin are numerous, including the effects of climate change (floods, droughts, natural disasters, rises of sea levels, species extinction, etc.) as well as the devastating crises of pandemics (Cholera, Spanish flu, HIV, Ebola and finally the Covid-19) and wars between countries (WW1 and WW2, Syria, Russia, Palestine, Israel, Gaza, Tigray and Ukrainian wars etc.).

Structural greed is characterized as one of the seven major sins according to the confirmation of the churches.<sup>3</sup> The deadly sins are the seven sins or “vices” that can lead to all other sins. According to the thesis of Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, the seven deadly sins are: avarice (or greed), pride, gluttony (or addiction), sloth (or spiritual neglect), lust, anger and envy. If the seven deadly sins are at the root of all crimes, it is worthwhile to make a deeper study of these sins by analysing the functioning system of the human body in the light of the teachings of the Bible. The aim is to minimize the spread of disasters, especially ecological ones.

In this article we will try to answer critical questions such as: What is the concept of sin and how can ecological sin be defined. Then we will explain the concept of ‘metanoia’ or repentance in relation to the notion of ‘ecological conversion’. Also, we offer an overview of our system of evaluating greed with the fuzzy logic that was developed within the WCC under the name of the “Economy of Life Index” (ECOLIFE) to illustrate contemporary ecological sins. In conclusion, we will present how important it is to understand the notion of ecological sin so as to transform our lifestyle from a “business as usual” to a “business as emergency”, for the sustainability of all God’s Creation.

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3 Gilles Jeanguenin, “Les sept péchés capitaux : L’avarice par Gilles Jeanguenin,” 8 March, 2017, <https://www.lavie.fr/ma-vie/spiritualite/les-sept-peches-capitaux-nbsplavarice-par-gilles-jeanguenin-10820.php>.

## Concept of sin

The first mention of the term “sin” is found in the book of Genesis when the Creator God was talking with the son of the first man, Cain.<sup>4</sup> The conversation between God and Cain was a result of Cain’s sin in killing his only brother Abel. It is important to note that the notion of sin was directly related to the destruction of God’s creation which is the human body (Abel).

Etymologically the word “sin” means “miss the goal or the mark”. In Ancient Greek, to practice sin is said “Αμαρτάνω” or otherwise “αστοχώ, αποτυγχάνω”. Sin or “αμαρτία”, is defined as missing the goal of doing good “Η του αγαθού αποτυχία” (=η αποτυχία να πράξουμε το σωστό -Λεξικό Σούδα). The goal of the human being is to achieve deification and perfection, as it is a creation made in the image of God. From the beginning of human history, Adam, Eve and Cain have already missed their goal and have chosen “death” instead of eternal “life”.

The concept of sin is linked with the notion of death or the destruction of creation.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the act of obedience to God and belief in Jesus Christ ensures life and restoration.<sup>6</sup>

Some Orthodox Church fathers see sin as a disease that needs to be cured, not as an ethical concept to build a better society with disciplined human beings.<sup>7</sup>

### TYPES OF SINS

Human being was created by the image of the triune God: the Father God (Mind/Πνεύμα), the Son God (body/Σώμα) and the Holy Ghost God (Spirit/Ψυχή). Furthermore, every human is also seen as a being with three dimensions: Mind (knowing/ Πνεύμα), body (having/Σώμα), and soul (wanting/ Ψυχή).

The body is the visual physical component of the human being and in the body resides the “mind” (brain) and the “spirit” (soul). Depending on the dimension to which the violation of God’s law refers, one can distinguish

4 Gen. 4:6.

5 James 1:15.

6 Romans 6:22-23.

7 Σοφία Χασιώτη, Για τις «Ορθόδοξες Απαντήσεις», Ιερός Ναός Κοιμήσεως Θεοτόκου Άνω Καλαμακίου (Θεομήτορας), 2010.

three types of sins: ecological sin (committed by the body and affecting God's physical creation, such as a murdering or injuring), intellectual sin (committed by the mind and affecting the mentality of other creations, such as lying and betraying), and spiritual sin (committed by the soul and affecting the spirit of creation or the Holy Ghost of God, such as blasphemy and idolatry). Jesus Christ mentioned that "The sin against the Spirit is the only one that will not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the next."<sup>8</sup>

The human body can be defined as a microcosm with three dimensions; physical, mental and spiritual, created in the image of the triune God who also created the macrocosm or the whole global creation. The global creation can have many scales of magnitude, for example from regional to national and from planetary to galactic. At the planetary level, the macrocosm is composed of elements of three kinds, like the human being, i.e. ecological or physical, intellectual or economic and socio-cultural or spiritual components.

#### ECOLOGICAL SIN

Ecological sin can be defined as the violation of creation's survival limit or God's law for nature. When someone kills a living being or destroys a creation of God, he or she commits ecological sin. The first ecological sin was the murder of Abel and the result was extended to the curse of the rest of creation because of the sin of the human body.

For animal and plant living species, the sin limit could be described explicitly by science as the minimum number of individuals of the species to avoid its extinction. For the other elements of creation, this limit could be their optimal composition in nature to ensure the stability of the planet. An example is the carbon dioxide composition of the atmosphere on which climate stability is directly dependent. Therefore, the climate change phenomenon should be seen as the result of ecological sin on the whole of creation (on the atmosphere, the forest, the ocean, biodiversity etc.).

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30 and Luke 12:8.



## ORIGINAL SIN

The concept of sin is generally based on the violation of God's will. God's will for Cain was to love and care for his brother. Instead, Cain was jealous of his brother and killed him. If sin is defined as the violation of God's will, Cain's sin was not the first sin committed by human beings but it was the sin of Adam and Eve. This moment was described as their fall in disobeying God's commandment concerning the fruit of the tree of knowledge in the middle of the Garden of Eden. This sin of Adam is recognized as original sin by past theologians.<sup>9</sup>

The term original sin was coined by St. Augustine, probably in 397, to designate the sinful state in which all humankind find themselves because of their origin from a sinful race. The doctrine of original sin is based on the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the first human beings created by God.<sup>10</sup>

In studying Genesis chapter 3 on original sin, we see that the primary cause of sin was temptation by the evil spirit or Satan. Satan is the spirit of evil desire that works against God and against the Holy Spirit. Without temptation, sin cannot be born. Temptation comes when human allows his heart to be open to the speech of the evil spirit. After the talk with Satan, Eve began to have doubts about the character of God. By continuing on the path of disobedience, she committed original sin with Adam.

When sin is born, it grows and evolves until it reaches its final goal which is "death" or the destruction of the life of creation. Similarly, ecological sin is the consequence of the development of human's unlimited greed. Structural greed is deliberately supported by the capitalist economic system for the purpose of accumulating physical wealth.

The desire to consume or accumulate the elements of creation, called natural resources by modern humanity, is the cause of ecological sin, which ultimately results in the destruction of creation. Ecological sin takes place when the survival limit of creation is exceeded. The end result of ecological sin is the total destruction of creation. This is what science calls the "sixth mass extinction". According to a study published in Science, since the beginning of the 16th century, more than 320 species of terrestrial vertebrates have

9 Encyclopædia Universalis France, "Péché originel," <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/peche-origine/>.

10 Gen 1:27.

become extinct, and those that remain – excluding the human species – are estimated to have seen their populations decline by 25%.<sup>11</sup>

#### ECUMENICAL SOLUTION TO ECOLOGICAL SIN

Ecological sin is not instantaneous or static, but dynamic and continuously evolving. The book of James 1:13-15 explains well the origin and terminal of sin. “Let no human say in the face of temptation, ‘It is God who tempts me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. When we are tempted, it is the evil desires we carry within us that draw us in and seduce us, and then the evil desire conceives and gives birth to sin. Now sin, when it has reached its full development, brings forth death.”

Theologically, the origin of sin is the same: it is the disobedience or violation of the limit that God set for his creation in order to keep life for eternity. Everything was good and God loved what he created.<sup>12</sup> A narrative approach to Genesis chapter 3 presents the process of evaluating original sin as follows: temptation was the beginning,<sup>13</sup> then it led to sin against God<sup>14</sup> and to God’s judgment<sup>15</sup> on all creation:<sup>16</sup> the curse of the human being and the whole creation.

#### THE DYNAMICS OF SIN IN THE BODY (INPUT-OUTPUT)

The body is a living system that communicates with its external environment by receiving (input) and giving (output) materials (physical, mental and spiritual). Sin occurs when the flow of materials to the body exceeds the body’s survival limit. Jesus Christ defines this limit as “daily bread” with regard to the consumption of materials from creation. Similarly, ecological sin

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11 Marie-Céline Ray, “Sixième extinction de masse : qu’est-ce que c’est ?,” *Futura*, September 2, 2018, <https://www.futura-sciences.com/planete/definitions/rechauffement-climatique-sixieme-extinction-masse-16134/>.

12 Genesis 3:1-24.

13 Gen. 3:1-7.

14 Gen. 3:8-13.

15 Gen. 3:14-19.

16 Gen. 3:20-24.

takes place when the flow of matter from the body affects the stability of the environment by exceeding the capacity or stability limit of creation.

As stated earlier, the body can harbour the Holy Spirit (the body as a temple of God) or the spirit of evil (the reign of Satan). Sin can destroy the body when the evil spirit resides in the body. Likewise, the body can be healthy if the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the body. The evil spirit is always waiting to invade the body. Genesis 4:6-7 illustrates this dynamic between evil and good in governing the body of Cain: "And if thou doest evil, sin shall lie down at the door, and its lusts shall be upon thee: but thou shall rule over it.

The Pauline teachings also show the need to struggle to avoid the sin of ruling the body. In Romans 6:12 it is written: "Therefore let not sin reign in your mortal body, neither obey its lusts."

#### THE DYNAMICS OF SIN UPON CENTURIES

Sin is an underestimated concept in contemporary society. There were some decades when sin was the main focus of Sunday school in churches or in the everyday vocabulary of the world. Sin was defined as what one does or thinks that does not respect the will of God or the law of the Ten Commandments.<sup>17</sup> People were taught a simplistic definition of sin, but it provided a clear understanding of the nature and result of sin.

As a result of the industrial revolution and modern civilisation in the 20th century, the secular teaching on human justice and technological performance weakened the spiritual teachings on sin and human actions became justified simply by their economic and social purposes.

The notion of sin – especially the sin of the body – has become outdated or unfashionable. Unfortunately, the results of sin are increasingly numerous – and serious – which points to the need to take the conversation about sin seriously again. Sin remains dangerous and still lies at the door of everybody, as it has since Cain killed his brother Abel. The notion of sin – especially ecological sin – should not be underestimated.

Patriarch Barthelemy II was the first religious leader to use the notion of ecological sin in 1997 in his speech on environmental protection.<sup>18</sup> He

17 Exodus 20:1-17.

18 Chris Durante, "Ecological Sin: Ethics, Economics, and Social Repentance," *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies* 3, no. 2 (2020): 195-214, <https://doi.org/10.1353/joc.2020.0016>.

claimed, “When humans cause the extinction of species and destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation.... When humans degrade the integrity of the Earth by causing changes in its climate, stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands.... When humans injure other humans with diseases and humans contaminate the Earth’s waters, air, and life with toxic substances.... These are sins.”

#### SOLUTION TO ECOLOGICAL SIN

Since the word sin means to miss the goal - to do good or to obey God’s limit - the definition of the concept of ecological sin must indicate three components: First, there is a goal we want to achieve. Second, there is our intention to achieve the goal. And third, there is the impossibility of complete achievement of the goal without divine help – through Jesus Christ. Romans 3:23 says: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” and 1 John 1:9 describes: “If we claim to be without sin, we are deceived and the truth is not in us”.

Ecological sin is both an ethical and theological concept. The fundamental step in solving the problem of ecological sin is the recognition of the goal: “to till and keep God’s creation”.<sup>19</sup> Once the goal is clear, we can choose to achieve it or miss it. The goal is to obey or miss the will of God. If we know what we are to do and choose not to do it, then we are committing ecological sin.

The Bible talks a lot about sin, and we need to recognize that environmental disasters are the results of our ecological sin. There are over 600 references to the word sin in the Old Testament.<sup>20</sup> The solution to sin is mentioned in Proverbs 28:13: “He who hides his sins will not prosper, but he who confesses them and renounces them will obtain mercy”. Similarly, St. Paul explains how Jesus Christ offers the solution to original sin and ecological sin through Him reconciliation between God and His creation is possible.<sup>21</sup>

19 Gen. 2.15.

20 Alliance biblique française, “Péché, pécheur,” <https://lire.la-bible.net/glossaire/peche-pecheur-2>.

21 1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

## Ecumenical concepts of repentance, metanoia and eco-conversion

### WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is the feeling and act in which one recognizes and tries to right a wrong, or gain forgiveness from someone whom he wronged. In religious contexts it usually refers to repenting for a sin against God. It always includes an admission of guilt, and includes at least one of the following:

- a solemn promise or resolve not to repeat the offence,
- an attempt to make restitution for the wrong,
- or in some way to reverse the harmful effects of the wrong where possible.

In Biblical Hebrew, the idea of repentance is represented by two verbs: *shuv* (to return) and *nicham* (to feel sorrow).

Repentance is reviewing one's actions and feeling contrition or regret for past wrongs, which is accompanied by commitment to and actual actions that show and prove a change for the better.<sup>22</sup>

The modern definition of "to repent," according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is "to review one's actions and feel contrition or regret for something one has done or omitted to do; (esp. in religious contexts) to acknowledge the sinfulness of one's past action or conduct by showing sincere remorse and undertaking to reform in the future."

### WHAT IS "METANOIA"?

The word "Metanoia" is often understood as the eastern orthodox word for "repentance". Metanoia has deeper meaning than repentance. Metanoia comes from the Greek term *μετάνοια*, which means a "change of heart," (*καρδιά*) or, change of "mind" (*νοῦ*), or more literally, "after perception," tying it closely to the idea of repentance.<sup>23</sup>

Metanoia is also another name for a prostration, with the idea that the physical movement of prostration, which is an indication of an internal reorientation to follow Christ.

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22 Jeremiah Unterman, *Justice for All: How the Jewish Bible Revolutionized Ethics* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 109.

23 Orthodox Wiki, "Metanoia," <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Metanoia>.

Metanoia involves, not only mere regret of past evil, commonly understood as repentance, but foremost a recognition by someone of a darkened vision of his/her own condition, in which sin, by separating him/her from God, has reduced him/her to a divided, autonomous existence, depriving him of both his natural glory and freedom.<sup>24</sup>

Metanoia must start with the admission of guilt, and end with all the three following acts:

1. Commitment not to repeat the offence;
2. Engagement to make restitution for the wrong,
3. Action to reverse the harmful effects of the wrong where possible.

In the New Testament, the word translated as “repentance” is the Greek word *μετάνοια* (*metanoia*), “after/behind one’s mind,” which is a compound word of the preposition *meta* (after, with), and the verb *noeo* (to perceive, to think, the result of perceiving or observing). In this compound word the preposition combines the two meanings of time and internal change.

The results of metanoia should be denoted by “after” and “different”; so that the whole compound means: “to think differently after”.

Metanoia is therefore primarily an after-thought, different from the former thought; a change of mind accompanied by regret and change of conduct, “change of mind and heart”, or “change of consciousness”.<sup>25</sup>

## WHAT IS ECO-CONVERSION?

Laudato Si’ Movement defines ecological conversion as the “transformation of hearts and minds toward greater love of God, each other, and creation. It is a process of acknowledging our contribution to the social and ecological crisis and acting in ways that nurture communion: healing and renewing our common home”.<sup>26</sup>

Ecological conversion was first used in the Catholic Church by St. John Paul II during his papacy on 17 January 2001. St. John Paul II noted that man and woman were made in the “image of God” and were told by God, “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 heavens and over every living

24 Orthodox Wiki, “Repentance,” <https://orthodoxwiki.org/Repentance>.

25 Ibid.

26 Jonathon Braden, “What is an ecological conversion?,” 24 June 2021, <https://laudatosimovement.org/news/what-is-an-ecological-conversion-en-news/>.

thing that moves on the earth”.<sup>27</sup> But he pointed out that the relationship is not “absolute, but ministerial”. He highlighted how “humanity has disappointed God’s expectations” by devastating plains and valleys, polluting water and air, and disfiguring the Earth’s habitat. “We must therefore encourage and support the ‘ecological conversion’ which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading,” St. John Paul II said. Furthermore, he highlighted the goals of such a conversion, including returning to the right relationships between humans, God and the world, and living by them.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis also identifies our current ecological crisis as a “summons to profound interior conversion”. What everyone needs, he writes, is an ‘ecological conversion,’ whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them”.<sup>28</sup>

In his book *The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si'*, Fr. Joshtrom Kureethadam, Head of the Vatican’s Ecological and Creation Office, writes that an “ecological conversion calls for a return to the Creator”, a turning to God in the humble and genuine spirit of repentance, acknowledging God as the Creator and source of all things, and repairing the broken relationship with God and each other. Fr. Kureethadam also writes that an “ecological conversion calls for a ‘turning’ to the creation itself” as caring and responsible stewards.

In *Laudato Si'*,<sup>29</sup> Pope Francis shares the attitudes and changes within us that can result from undergoing an ecological conversion:

1. gratitude and gratuitousness (recognition that the world is God’s loving gift),
2. generosity in self-sacrifice and good works,
3. a loving awareness of a universal communion with the rest of creation,
4. greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world’s problems,
5. a feeling of responsibility based on faith.

We recognize that conversion is a grace of the Holy Spirit that is not fully dependent on our own actions. We know, however, that we can open ourselves to be available to receive the grace through prayer and commitment and enter a way of life that is in more line with Gospel values. That is why the

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<sup>27</sup> Genesis 1:28.

<sup>28</sup> LS 217.

<sup>29</sup> LS 220.

“season of creation”<sup>30</sup> is calling every Christian to pray together for the common home from September 1st to October 4th every year.

### SIGNS AND IMPLICATIONS OF ECO-CONVERSION

Ecological conversion involves at least four visible actions:

1. Recognition of our harmful ecological sin to creation by believing the prophetic voice of the churches, the WCC and by reading scientific reports, such as a Living Planet Report, IPCC Reports on Climate Change; We can also examine our life style by checking our own carbon footprint, or conducting an energy audit of our church or home and, reviewing our consumption, distribution and production habits, looking for food/water/energy waste. (LS 218) says “We must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God’s creation through our actions and our failure to act”.

2. Repentance and turning to the Creator by praying, reading and meditating on the Holy Scripture. “If the relationship between human, creatures, and the Creator is forgotten, matter is reduced to a selfish possession, human becomes the ‘last word’, and the purpose of human existence is reduced to a scramble for the maximum number of possessions possible” (Pope Benedict XVI, General Audience 26 August 2009). “The conversion to the Creator in a humble and genuine spirit of repentance is fundamental, if we are to heal our land and ourselves,” writes Fr. Kureethadam in *The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si’*.

3. Commitment to personal change and becoming good steward of creation by adopting eco-friendly lifestyles, cultivating God fearing virtues, and attitudes to the common care and solidarity. An ecological conversion “must translate into concrete ways of thinking and acting that are more respectful of creation” (Pope Francis, 1 September 2016 message and Laudato Si’ 220).

4. Commitment to community conversion and accountability by bringing changes in the local and global community of our reach. Ecological conversion takes place at the personal level, but as Pope Francis notes, a community conversion is equally important: “Social problems must be addressed by community networks and not simply by the sum of individual good deeds...”

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30 Season of Creation, “Season of Creation 2024, To hope and act with Creation,” [www.seasonof-creation.org](http://www.seasonof-creation.org).



The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion”<sup>31</sup>

### BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF METANOIA AND IMPLICATION TO THE MODERN SOCIETIES.

A vivid description of metanoia and eco-conversion on personal level is in the New Testament, known as the parable of the prodigal son found in Luke 15:11. When the “lost” son recognized his ecological sin towards his physical father/community and spiritual sin toward the heavenly father/God the creator, the process of metanoia started. It began with his sorrow and decisive return to the house of his father. If his feeling was a simple repentance, he would not dare to come back home but would try to find solution by himself. Metanoia obliged him to surrender to God and restore his broken relations with God and his community.

Another striking example of metanoia and eco-conversion on communal level in the Old Testament is what did the people of Nineveh at Jonah’s preaching for repentance, found in Jonah 3:5-8. They recognized they had been doing wrong between themselves, to their environment and to God. After they prayed for forgiveness to God, they turned away from their evil practices. The life of the community of Nineveh after “metanoia” has changed and became totally different from the past, before “eco-conversion”.

The same situation occurs with our contemporary societies in which sins prevail and the preaching for repentance and metanoia is not heard. At the WCC, we advocate for a decade of eco-conversion as a result of our metanoia, if we want to survive, physically and spiritually. Like Jesus compared himself to Jonah when preaching repentance to his Jewish compatriots, we proclaim a similar call for metanoia as an ultimate warning for immediate eco-conversion to our generation. Jesus said we have no excuse and “The men of Nineveh shall rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. You have no excuse.”<sup>32</sup>

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31 LS 219.

32 Matthew 12:41. Ephraim Urbach, *The Repentance of the People of Nineveh and the Jewish-Christian Polemic* (Tarbiz 20, 1950), 118–22.

## EVALUATING STRUCTURAL GREED: THE ROOT CAUSE OF ECOLOGICAL SIN

Greed is examined from the perspective of Christian belief and theological understanding of three-dimensional human needs and the whole of creation. The conceptual description of structural greed is presented in correlation with the findings of the WCC's Greed Line Study Group on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology.<sup>33</sup>

As stated later the definition of sin, greed is defined as a sin when it crosses the "red line" defined by the law of nature or God's justice towards creation.

In practice, human beings seem to forget or remain indifferent to the limit or "red lines" of creation's survival. For this reason, it is advisable to develop a measuring tool to monitor the limits of greed.<sup>34</sup>

Below we give examples of the evaluation of greed through the methodology of the "life economy index" with which one can track the performance of the human being regarding the respect of the limit of sin. In this way we can account for whether our body is a slave to sin or a temple of God.

### DESCRIPTIONS OF HUMAN GREED

There are many descriptions of human greed depending on the subject: individual, institutional, national, corporate and global.

One of the characteristics of human behaviour is greed. In Greek, the word "greedy" is ἀπληστος (*a-plistos*). *Aplistos* is derived from the privative "a" and *plistos* which means "complete" or "full" (πλήρος). Therefore, "greed" is the insatiable desire to have more materials or power for oneself. The opposite of greed is *plistos* which means "fully integrated" or theoretically defined as a standard value, as supposedly doing well with one's situation.

The fullness of the human being consists in the satisfaction of a triple balanced need: material, mental and spiritual.<sup>35</sup> According to the ancient Greek

33 Rogate Mshana, *Poverty, Wealth and Ecology: The Impact of Economic Globalization* (World Council of Churches publication, 2007), [http://www.wcc2006.info/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/2007pdfs/PWEstudy\\_process\\_background.pdf](http://www.wcc2006.info/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/2007pdfs/PWEstudy_process_background.pdf).

34 Luke 12:15.

35 Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3.

philosophers, happiness could be achieved if all needs were satisfied in moderation, avoiding extremes.

### HUMAN GREED AND ITS MEASUREMENT

In today's complex economy where people often fail to recognize the structural links between their desire to improve their standard of living (greed) and the destructive effects suffered by others, Christian churches and ecumenical organizations have the task of making visible - and raising the voices of - those on the socio-economic margins.<sup>36</sup> The systematic approach to greed focusing on the holistic interconnections between its potential causes and effects on human society is attributed to structural greed.<sup>37</sup>

Pauline teachings reveal that human greed is a sin that has adverse consequences not only on neighbours (natural ecosystem and human body), but also on Creation as a whole. On an individual level, structural greed should consider the effects of greed on the balance of human need with its three dimensions: material, mental and spiritual.<sup>38</sup>

### CONCEPT OF GREED LINES AND ECOLOGICAL SIN

Greed lines are the levels of material consumption, money accumulation or power grabbing over which societal or individual behaviour can harm human well-being and the integrity of Creation. These negative effects of behaviour across greed lines could be expressed in terms of relative poverty, socio-economic injustice, political instability, biodiversity loss, climate change, etc. In spiritual terminology, the impact of human greed on natural environments could be described as ecological sins as recommended by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew II. We must admit as "ecological sins"

36 Konrad Raiser, "Theological and Ethical Considerations regarding Wealth and the Call for Establishing a Greed Line," in *Ecumenical Review* 63, no. 3 (2011): 278-294, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2011.00121.x>.

37 Andrianos, "Structural Greed," 312-329.

38 Louk Andrianos, *Setting the greed line using biblical insights and sustainability ethics in order to avert ecological crisis*, Ecological Theology and Environmental Ethics, Vol. 2 (Orthodox Academy of Crete Publications, 2012), 190-202; Carlos Larrea, "Inequality, Sustainability and the Greed Line: A Conceptual and Empirical Approach," in *Ecumenical Review* 63, no. 3 (2011): 263-277, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2011.00120.x>.

any activity or “crime” that brings nature to a state beyond its natural capacity to regenerate. The earth is a common home for all human and non-human life whose survival is interconnected.

While the poverty line is drawn at the point of personal consumption allowing for the satisfaction of basic needs, the greed line could be drawn at the “highest point of personal consumption that can be achieved without negatively affecting the integrity of nature, the well-being of society and that of future generations.”<sup>39</sup>

### ASSESSING STRUCTURAL GREED THROUGH THE ECONOMY OF LIFE INDEX (ECOLIFE)

The WCC’s Ecological and Economic Justice Group has begun to explore the possibility of identifying multidimensional indicators of greed at the structural level that could be developed into a “structural greed index” as opposed to the «economy of life index”. These indicators could be based on the ecological, economic, social and cultural rights of people enshrined in the UN human rights conventions, which essentially define the limits of the use of nature for sustaining life on earth and promoting human development.

Like the indices proposed by Michael Taylor,<sup>40</sup> the indicators need to be simple and manageable enough (perhaps no more than 15) to effectively communicate a message to a targeted audience of churches, policy makers, businesses and citizens. In addition to raising awareness among the general public, the indicators are expected to eventually lead to the development and implementation of policies and measures (decision making) to promote a life economy by avoiding structural greed.

An economy of life is by definition an economy where greed limits and poverty lines are carefully respected. A life economy is optimal when the values of greed indicators are moderate relative to the maximum currently achievable (greediest human performance) and minimum (human poverty status) statistically available. This assessment of greed is based on Christian teaching, which highlights the Trinitarian nature of the human being.<sup>41</sup>

39 Andrianos, *Setting the greed line*, 190–202; Larrea, “Inequality.”

40 Michael Taylor, “On Greed: Toward Concrete and Contemporary Guidance for Christians,” in *Ecumenical Review* 63, no. 3 (2011): 295–305, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.2011.00122.x>.

41 Andrianos, “Structural Greed,” 312–329.

The Economy of Life Index (ECOLIFE) or the Multidimensional Structural Greed Index (MSGI) of an individual is assessed from the mathematical combination of three main components of greed: the Environmental Component (ENV-GI), referred to as the Ecological Sustainability Greed Index, the Monetary Component (MON-GI), measured as the combination of the Economic Greed Index (ECON-GI) and the Financial Greed Index (FIN-GI), and the Mental Component (POW-GI) which is the combination of the Social Greed Index (SOCI-GI) and the Political Greed Index (POLI-GI).

The variables for the assessment of structural greed are called “greed indicators”. Our ECOLIFE model uses the following nine structural greed variables: (1) The individual global ecological footprint,<sup>42</sup> which encompasses the assessment of both the state and desired aspects of resource use, including “land use”, “biodiversity use”, “water use”, “energy use” and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; (2) Personal financial asset ratio as an indicator of the status of monetary accumulation; (3) Individual financial interest rate as an indicator of desire for monetary speculation; (4) Individual annual income as a status indicator for monetary wealth; (5) Household debt as an indicator of trends in wealth accumulation relative to income; (6) Poverty rate or individual standard of living as an indicator of the state of social greed with respect to human rights<sup>43</sup>; (7) Individual social class as an indicator of desire for socio-economic inequality; (8) Index of corruption or individual morality<sup>44</sup> as an indicator of global ethics; and (9) Indicator of individual freedoms as an indicator of trends in seizing more power.

The quantitative values of the greed indicators, whose statistical data can be obtained from many sources such as the United Nations University<sup>45</sup> (WIDER) and related organizations, constitute the statistical domains of the greed variables. The practical implementation of the ECOLIFE index assessment cases can be found in the publication “Kairos for Creation - Confessing Hope for the Earth”.<sup>46</sup>

42 Alessandro Galli, Debora Barioni, and Maria Serena Mancini, “Ecological Footprint and Tourism,” 25 August 2022, <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/>.

43 UNDP, Human Development Report, 2011, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>.

44 Carl Drews, “The Morality Index,” last updated 23 March 2015, <http://www.moralityindex.com/>.

45 UNU-WIDER, [www.wider.unu.edu](http://www.wider.unu.edu).

46 Louk Andrianos et al., eds., *Kairos for Creation - Confessing Hope for the Earth* (Wuppertal, 2019).

## Conclusions

The evaluation of the economy life index is used to better define the concept of ecological sin and to understand the harmful effects of human greed. In this article, we have analysed the dynamics of sin and the notion of the human body as the microcosm with three dimensions: physical, mental and spiritual, created in the image of God the creator of the macrocosm or the whole creation which is composed of ecological, economic and socio-cultural elements. Therefore, three types of sin are distinguished according to the nature of the object of sin.

The clarification of the ill-defined ecumenical concepts of ecological sin, metanoia and eco-conversion reveals the need for an ecological conversion and an urgent restoration of the relationship between human beings, creation and God the Creator. The regenerative limit of creation has been largely exceeded because of the alienation of human beings through the deliberate promotion of structural greed in modern societies.

The results of sin are “death” or life destruction of Creation. The symptoms of the morbidity of the contemporary ecological situation are alarming and an urgent solution to safeguard creation is advisable.

Human greed must be moderated and the problems of ecological sin must be solved by economic, technological and especially theological or spiritual means.

The concept of ecological sin and metanoia should be central to theological discourses and in the development of contemporary sustainability policies to limit greed and prevent any form of irreversible destruction of creation. Such approaches must be prioritized and implemented urgently if we are to address climate justice, peace and the global health crisis. Furthermore, it is imperative that we transform our “ordinary” lifestyle into an “emergency” lifestyle for the survival of all creation.

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CLAIRE E. WOLFTEICH

# Sabbath Theology and Practice: Implications for Ecological Spirituality and Ethics

*Chaim, what's the good of your rushing if you don't even have time to look at the sky?*<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In an era of ecological crisis, how can we mine the wisdom of religious traditions for formative practices that can be shared across traditions? What theological visions and principles inform ecologically responsible ways of living? Environmental justice is increasingly an important area of study within theology. While religious traditions must be examined carefully and critically, as some biblical interpretation and theology have promoted anthropocentric worldviews with negative environmental repercussions, religious traditions also carry powerful intellectual, spiritual, and practical resources for

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<sup>1</sup> This question is part of a Hasidic story, recounted in Mark Dov Shapiro, *Gates of Shabbat: A Guide for Observing Shabbat* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1996), 1–2.

ecological justice and spirituality.<sup>2</sup> This article focuses on the ancient religious practice of Sabbath keeping. Theologies and practices of Sabbath keeping are diverse; here I will focus on some major aspects of Sabbath in Jewish and Christian traditions. Three interrelated aspects of Sabbath are particularly relevant for ecological spirituality and ethics: affirmation of the goodness of creation; just rhythms for release and restoration; and a theology of dignified work and liberative rest. Especially given realities of ecological crisis, time poverty, and the burnout and trauma of the pandemic years, this ancient religious practice garners a fresh look.<sup>3</sup> Some examples of contemporary movements for liberative rest and ecological repair are discussed.

## Sabbath and Creation

As described in the first creation story in Genesis, God creates the “vast” and “very good” world in six days, and then rests on the seventh day: “So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation” (Gen. 1-2:3). Sabbath is not incidental to the creation account; it is the culmination of creation. As Judaic scholar Elliot Ginsburg writes: “The sabbath is both the crown of God’s creation and the climax of each mundane week...”<sup>4</sup> Jewish prayer brings to mind the divine creation, for example, in the Kiddush prayer recited at the beginning of Shabbat: “Blessed are You, Adonai our God, ruler of the world, creator of the fruit of the vine...Blessed are You...who sanctified us with his commandments and adored us, lovingly and adoringly granting us his holy Shabbat... in memory

2 Here I concur with Ariel Evan Mayse and Alexander M. Weisberg: “we ought to look to alternative bodies of knowledge and wisdom to address climate change. We need new tools, but we also need new eyes. Religious traditions can, in our estimation, offer us a critical set of values...” See their “Introduction: New Approaches to Jewish Environmental Ethics,” *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 26, no. 1-2 (2021): 1-4, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685357-02601004>.

3 Interest in Sabbath is reflected in the publication of books in the past two decades, for example, see Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1989); Dorothy C. Bass, *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000); Judith Shulevitz, *The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time* (New York: Random House, 2011); Norman Wirzba, *Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2006); Bryan P. Stone and Claire E. Wolfeich, *Sabbath in the City: Sustaining Urban Pastoral Excellence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

4 Elliot K. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in Classical Kabbalah* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 60.

of acts of creation.”<sup>5</sup> This weekly remembrance of the divine act of creation invites both praise of God and a posture of humility; the human being is not master of the universe but rather part of a larger created order. The world is gift. As Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, in observing Shabbat, setting aside toil, “clattering commerce” and the “fury of acquisitiveness”, we “learn to understand that the world has already been created” and depends ultimately on God, not us.<sup>6</sup> Or as Jewish theologian Michael Fishbane writes, the “sacred stasis” of Sabbath “enforces the value that the earth is a gift of divine creativity, given to humankind in sacred trust.”<sup>7</sup>

Christian writers echo this deep connection between Sabbath and creation, underscoring the embodied theological knowledge that comes from the practice of keeping Sabbath in one form or another. Dorothy Bass, for example, writes: “Christians who keep holy a weekly day of rest and worship acquire through the Christian practice of sabbath-keeping an embodied knowledge that the world does not depend on our own capacity for ceaseless work... Keeping Sabbath, Christian practitioners come to know in their bones that creation is God’s gift...”<sup>8</sup> There is much continuity here between these Jewish and Christian authors: Sabbath practice builds a certain grateful and receptive perception of the created world. Protestant theologian Jürgen Moltmann roots this stance towards creation in God’s own receptivity. Moltmann describes the seventh day as an expression of God’s compassionate relationship with all of creation. In resting on the seventh day, God “makes himself wholly receptive for the happiness, the suffering and the praise of his creatures.... The God who rests in face of his creation does not dominate the world on this day: he ‘feels’ the world; he allows himself to be affected, to be touched by each of his creatures.”<sup>9</sup> In keeping Sabbath, human beings ideally imitate this divine com-*passion*; they pause their own creative work in order to experience, not control, the created world of which they are a part.

5 Kiddush (“Sanctification”), in *Shabbat At Home*, ed. Lawrence A. Hoffman (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013), 91. See too Robert Goldenberg, “The Place of the Sabbath in Rabbinic Judaism,” in *The Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, eds. Eskanazi, Tamara C., et al. (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 38.

6 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 13.

7 Michael Fishbane, *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 125–126.

8 Dorothy C. Bass, “Christian Formation for Sabbath Rest,” *Interpretation* 59, no. 1 (2006):36, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430505900104>.

9 Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, 1st U.S. ed. Gifford Lectures; 1984–1985 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 279.

This is not only a cerebral process but an embodied, affective, and relational experience.<sup>10</sup>

For both Jewish and Christian traditions, Sabbath theology and practice is deeply linked to an understanding of God as Creator and a posture of humility and receptivity to the gift of creation. While we do not have empirical studies of how Sabbath keeping shapes environmental ethics, this worldview, with its attentive and receptive impulse towards the natural world, could be a valuable resource for movements to cultivate ecological spirituality and justice.

## Sabbath: Dignified Work and Liberative Rest

Sabbath not only remembers and imitates divine creativity; it also recalls God's liberative power. The Sabbath command is linked in biblical texts to Yahweh's liberation of the Jewish people from slavery: "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day."<sup>11</sup> The Sabbath commandment extends to the entire household, including slaves and animals, as well as to foreigners.<sup>12</sup> Sabbath can be understood as a kind of liberation theology. As Heschel writes in his poetic classic *The Sabbath*: "Six days a week we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth," but the seventh day is "the exodus from tension, the liberation of man from his own muddiness."<sup>13</sup>

Sabbath implies a just rhythm of renewal for all creatures and for the land, expressed in weekly Sabbath keeping and in the ideal of the sabbatical year: "Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in their yield, but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest for the land, a Sabbath for the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard."<sup>14</sup> The seventh year is a time of rest for the land. Judaism scholar Hava Tirosh-Samuelson explains: "The principles

10 For exploration of Sabbath as contemplative practice, see Claire E. Wolfeich, "Sabbath Stillness: Thoughts of a Lingering God," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 24, no. 1 (Spring, 2024): 146–159, <https://doi.org/10.1353/scs.2024.a924578>.

11 Deut. 5:12–15.

12 Ex. 20:10.

13 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 29.

14 Lev. 25: 3–4.

of the Sabbath were extended to the Land of Israel every seventh year, during which it is forbidden to plant, cultivate, or harvest grain, fruit, or vegetables; in the sixth year, it is forbidden to plant in order to harvest during the seventh year.” Not only does the land rest, but its fruits are made available to all: “Crops that grow untended are not to be harvested by the land-lord but are to be left ownerless (*hefker*) for all to share, including the poor and animals. The rest imposed during the sabbatical year facilitates the restoration of nutrients and the replenishment of the soil, promotes diversity in plant life, and helps maintain vigorous cultivars.” The sabbatical year thus integrates restoration for the land and relief for the poor, a visible expression of the tenet that the land and its fruits belong ultimately to the creator (Lev. 25:23: “the land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine...”) and are to be shared with both human and non-human species.<sup>15</sup> Moltmann argues that Lev. 25: 1-7 provides “an ecological justification” for the sabbath year, which is “the feast of the whole creation. In the seventh year *the land* ‘celebrates.’”<sup>16</sup>

The liberative impulse of Sabbath also can be seen in the idea of the Jubilee year, the fiftieth year, after seven cycles of seven years, when the trumpet will sound: “And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you....”<sup>17</sup> In this year the land lies fallow – without sowing or reaping or harvesting. Renewal for the land is linked with release of debts and servants.<sup>18</sup> Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’* – a key religious argument for environmental justice – highlights the importance of the seventh year and the Jubilee, “an attempt to ensure balance and fairness in their relationships with others and with the land on which they lived and worked.”<sup>19</sup>

How do we shift engrained habits of economism and environmental destruction? This is a tall order, and translating theological ideals into transformative action is not a simple process. The sabbatical year has a complex history in practice: “The rabbis interpreted the biblical texts on *shmita* but

15 Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan, “Jewish Environmental Ethics: The Imperative of Responsibility,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*, ed. John Hart, John Wiley & Sons (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2017), 185, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118465523.ch14>.

16 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, 289.

17 Lev. 25:10.

18 Lev. 25:39–41. Tirosh-Samuelsan, “Jewish Environmental Ethics,” 185.

19 Ex. 23: 10–11, Lev. 25:1–7. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, no. 71, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).

after the destruction of the Second Temple the sabbatical cycle was often discussed but rarely enforced.”<sup>20</sup>

Still, the idea of the sabbatical year and the Jubilee nurture imagination about alternative possibilities while the practice of Sabbath keeping can act as a kind of training for a new order. Jewish environmental scholar David Mevorach Seidenberg suggests that weekly Shabbat observance can be practice for a larger social system of rest, release, and liberation. The sabbatical year and the Jubilee “fulfilled on a grand social scale the ideal of Shabbat. (One might even say that the purpose of Shabbat is to practice for Sh'mitah)... There is no more radical teaching in the Torah.”<sup>21</sup> For Seidenberg, Shabbat is a “rehearsal for living sustainably and justly in relation to the Earth and all her species.”<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi in Britain from 1991-2013, also sees Sabbath as a kind of spiritual-ethical disciplining or teaching. He describes the Sabbath as “the most compelling tutorial in human dignity, environmental consciousness and the principle that there are moral limits to economic exchange and commercial exploitation.”<sup>23</sup>

Some environmental movements seek to revive and adapt the idea of the sabbatical year in contemporary contexts. David Krantz describes the development of the modern Jewish environmental movement and highlights the renewal of the sabbatical year, what he terms the “shmita revolution”: “the Jewish environmental movement at large adopted and developed shmita as a paramount Jewish environmental concept as well as an organizing principle.”<sup>24</sup> According to Tirosh-Samuels, the sabbatical year has seen a revival in modern Israel as religious Jews returned to land cultivation.<sup>25</sup> In the United States, Jewish environmental groups developed the Shmita Project to coincide with the 2014 shmita year in the Jewish calendar, seeking to reimagine sabbatical year ideals in a pluralistic American context: “The Shmita Project encapsulates a multivalent environmentalist strain of American Judaism

20 Adrienne Krone, “A Shmita Manifesto: A Radical Sabbatical Approach to Jewish Food Reform in the United States,” *Religion and Food*, Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, 26 (2015): 307, <https://doi.org/10.30674/scripta.67459>.

21 David Mevorach Seidenberg, *Kabbalah and Ecology: God's Image in the More-Than-Human World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 13.

22 Seidenberg, *Kabbalah and Ecology*, 322 (footnote 1039).

23 Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World: The Ethics of Responsibility* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005), 169, cited in Tirosh-Samuels, “Jewish Environmental Ethics,” 185.

24 David Krantz, “Shmita Revolution: The Reclamation and Reinvention of the Sabbatical Year,” *Religions* (Basel, Switzerland) 7, no. 8 (2016): 17, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7080100>.

25 Tirosh-Samuels, “Jewish Environmental Ethics,” 185.

that is deeply concerned with climate change, industrial agriculture and food insecurity and often expresses itself through food reform.”<sup>26</sup> Such projects illustrate a creative mining of religious traditions for fresh lenses, theological imagination, and formative practices for ecological renewal.

## Sabbath Spirituality and Ethics

Ecological issues are interrelated with global structural inequities, as Pope Francis reiterates in his most recent statement on climate change, *Laudate Deum* (2023): “effects of climate change are borne by the most vulnerable people... increasing floods, droughts, food and water insecurity, and conflict over declining resources. All these are making the lives of the world’s poorest people even more precarious.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, as argued by the conference of African bishops: climate change is “moral outrage” and “a tragic and striking example of structural sin.”<sup>28</sup> Pope Francis has consistently argued that one aspect of the environmental question cannot be seen apart from other, related ethical concerns for justice: “everything is connected,” he writes, arguing for an “integral ecology.”<sup>29</sup> Sabbath keeping seems a vital practice in the cultivation of an “integral ecology” – particularly as it connects restoration for the land with rest, dignified work, and resource sharing with the poor.

While Sabbath holds out promise of relief and renewal, however, not all can access rest equally. For example, gender impacts access to leisure time, as women carry disproportionate responsibility for child and elder care. Women suffer economic, political, and spiritual effects of “time poverty.”<sup>30</sup> How do differential experiences of time and the realities of labor (both market and domestic) in various contexts impact the possibilities of Sabbath for

26 Krone, “A Shmita Manifesto”, 310. For more information about American Jewish environmental movements, see website of Adamah (founded in 2023 as merger of Hazon and Pearlstone): [www.adamah.org](http://www.adamah.org).

27 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Global Climate Change Background, 2016, [www.usccb.org/resources/global-climate-change-background](http://www.usccb.org/resources/global-climate-change-background), cited in part in *Laudate Deum*, no. 3.

28 Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), *African Climate Dialogues Communiqué*, p. 2, [www.cidse.org/2022/10/17/african-climate-dialogues-communique/](http://www.cidse.org/2022/10/17/african-climate-dialogues-communique/).

29 *Laudate Si*, no. 91.

30 For further discussion of women and time poverty, see Claire Wolfeich, “Time Poverty, Women’s Labor, and Catholic Social Teaching: A Practical Theological Exploration.” *Journal of Moral Theology* 2, no. 2 (June 2013): 4059, and Claire Wolfeich, *Motherwork, Public Leadership, and Women’s Life Writing: Explorations in Spirituality Studies and Practical Theology* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill Publishers, 2017).

women? Such contextual questions need further exploration if the theological principles of Sabbath are to become a reality. So too, movements have emerged to reclaim rest as anti-racist “resistance.” African American author Tricia Hersey, for example, seeks to “create sacred spaces where the liberatory, restorative, and disruptive power of rest can take hold. Our work is seeded within the soils of Black radical thought, somatics, Afrofuturism, womanism, and liberation theology, and is a guide for how to collectively deprogram, decolonize, and unravel ourselves from the wreckage of capitalism and white supremacy.”<sup>31</sup> Any consideration of Sabbath and ecological spirituality/justice needs to address these significant issues of race and gender, as well as disparities across global contexts.

There also is the question of whether Sabbath theology and practice has potential to speak to pluralistic societies where many do not subscribe to the core theological beliefs imbedded in Sabbath practice. Some groups attempt to restyle traditional Sabbath keeping for a pluralistic public. For example, the “Sabbath Manifesto” draws upon some of the principles and practices of Jewish Shabbat with the aim though of reaching a broad audience: “The Sabbath Manifesto was developed in the same spirit as the Slow Movement, slow food, slow living, by a small group of artists, writers, filmmakers and media professionals who, while not particularly religious, felt a collective need to fight back against our increasingly fast-paced way of living... we’ve adapted our ancestors’ rituals by carving out one day per week to unwind, unplug, relax, reflect, get outdoors, and get with loved ones.”<sup>32</sup> The group supports the Global Day of Unplugging, a yearly event to promote time apart from digital devices.<sup>33</sup> Some contemporary ecological proponents have claimed the environmental fruits of Sabbath while secularizing the practice, or at least extending it beyond a religious framework. Jonathan Schorsch proposes “Green Sabbath” – an ecologically minded renewal of a weekly day of rest that need not contain theological/religious connotations: “I believe that the traditional Jewish framework of the kinds of activity forbidden on Shabbat makes an excellent guideline for us today for environmental reasons, whether or not one believes in God or cares for organized religion.” Schorsch describes the Green Sabbath as a “recurring greenhouse for incubating the required collective

31 The Nap Ministry, <https://thenapministry.com/>, accessed July 3, 2023.

32 Sabbath Manifesto, A Provisional Guide for Observing a Weekly Day of Rest, accessed July 1, 2023, <http://www.sabbathmanifesto.org/about>.

33 Global Day of Unplugging, <https://www.unplugcollaborative.org/celebrate-gdu-2023>, accessed July 1, 2023.



consciousness and willpower—the ultimate renewable energies – to make the solutions reality. Green Sabbath will constitute both a model of the ecologically sane world to come and an actual foretaste of it.”<sup>34</sup>

The ancient religious practice of Sabbath keeping has always carried implications for public life – particularly in its vision of work, economy, the land. As Brueggemann asserts, “the celebration of Sabbath is an act of both resistance and alternative.”<sup>35</sup> From a Jewish or Christian perspective, the meaning of Sabbath cannot be reduced to a non-theological framework, as it depends on an understanding of God as Creator and Liberator. We should thus avoid an easy equating of movements to reclaim rest and the practice of Sabbath keeping. Still, movements such as “unplugging” and “Green Sabbaths” can provide a way of partnering traditional practitioners and secular seekers – finding common ground in movements to limit environmental destruction and restore the natural world, to share resources with the vulnerable, and to claim liberative rest.

## Conclusion

Theologies and practices of Sabbath are significant for ecological spirituality and ethics. Sabbath ideally expresses and cultivates a receptive relationship with the created world as gift rather than object to be manipulated. Sabbath keeping enacts a theology of dignified work – as good and creative, but not ceaseless. Sabbath carries a liberative impulse, with just rhythms of renewal and restoration for the land, the poor, the foreigner, and other created beings. Sabbath keeping can be understood as a kind of spiritual and social training. At the same time, to embody these ideals and theological principles in practice requires not only individual commitment but also attention to cultural, economic, and political inequities and constructive action to open up Sabbath as lived possibility across diverse communities.

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 34 Jonathan Schorsch, “The Sabbath in an Era of Climate Change,” *Tablet* (February 4, 2020), accessed May 9, 2023, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/belief/articles/the-sabbath-in-an-era-of-climate-change>.

35 Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), xiii.

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TATIANA DENISOVA

## On Heraclitus' Ecological Monism

Listening not to mine but to this logos, one must agree: wisdom consists in knowing all things as one.

Heraclitus

But only he who has comprehended the Way understands how things come together in Unity and sees the common and ordinary in them without using them for his own self.

Chuang Tzu

### Introduction

The problem of man's relationship with the world, man's place in the world, and his role in the existence of the world have been the focus of philosophy throughout its history. What is the man for the world? Is man the "crown of creation" or "Nature's stepchild" (or even "a mistake of the Creator")? Is man a necessary accomplice to its processes or a random fluctuation of matter? What is the world for man? Is it a storehouse, a workshop, a battlefield, or a home?

In the Western philosophical tradition, the position formulated in the Early Modern period about man as a conqueror of nature, rightfully possessing all its riches and disposing of them at his discretion, has taken hold. Francis Bacon considered man's ambition to extend his power over all nature to be the purest, noblest and most unselfish ambition of man:

But if anyone attempts to renew and extend the power and empire of the human race itself over the universe of things, his ambition (if it should so be called) is without a doubt both more sensible and more majestic than the others.<sup>1</sup>

Until the middle of the twentieth century, the idea of the human conqueror of nature, the master of its resources, and even its new architect undoubtedly dominated other conceptions of the relationship between nature and man. However, the severe ecological threats that have made themselves evident in the last seventy years have forced a thorough reconsideration. Under the new circumstances, man cannot be indifferent to such questions as whether the world can be saved, by whom and how. What does it depend on the individual man? How can man live in harmony with the world? What is human destiny and place in the world?

Searching for answers, we look back deep into the ages, the origins of European thought, and antiquity. Paying tribute to the Greek heritage, Bacon declared:

Nearly all the sciences we have come from the Greeks,<sup>2</sup>

noting the importance of the early Greek philosophers Heraclitus, Democritus, and Parmenides.

The early Greek idea of the world as Cosmos, i.e., as a harmoniously arranged whole, as a shared home for all things, including man, seems as adequate as possible today to the current alarming situation. Especially fruitful in this respect is the monistic worldview concept of Heraclitus of Ephesus, which combines cosmology, anthropology, and ethics, which we propose to call ecological monism.

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<sup>1</sup> Bacon, Francis, *The New Organon*, Book I, ed. Lisa Jardine and Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 100.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

## WHAT IS “ECOLOGICAL MONISM”?

Since the concept of “ecological monism” has not been introduced into the scholarly literature, it is essential to exclude the possibility of ambiguity in its interpretation from the very outset. Therefore, to clarify its meaning, we begin with its etymology.

**Monism** (from the Greek word *μόνος*, which means ‘one’, ‘only’) is a philosophical view according to which the diversity of objects ultimately comes down to a single principle or a single substance. Among the many types of monism, two main ones can be distinguished: *substantial (naturalistic)* and *ontological*. Other types of monism somehow show the features of the first or the second.

**Substantial (naturalistic) monism** proceeds from the assumption that all things have a common nature, source, a single substance, and substrate similarity.

**Ontological monism** affirms the Unity of all things, their universal connectivity and interdependence, and belonging to a single and unique world.

**Ecological philosophy** is a relatively new branch of philosophy that focuses on questions of harmony and balance in human-nature relations. We call *ecological monism* the philosophical position based on the idea of the uniqueness and unity of the world, in which man necessarily participates. Thus, ecological monism bears the features of both ontological and naturalistic monism.

Ecological monism has a long history as a philosophical concept of the Unity of nature and man. In particular, it has firmly entered the tradition of the Eastern philosophical schools of China and India and is associated primarily with Eastern thought.

According to Eastern thinkers, the world is one, and true knowledge of the world is knowledge of it in its Unity. As stated by the great Chinese philosopher Chuang Tzu (or Zhuang Zhou, commonly known as Zhuangzi; literally “Master Zhuang”; romanised as Chuang Tzu), the pivotal figure in Classical Philosophical Daoism (late 4<sup>th</sup> century BC),

Great knowledge sees all in one. Small knowledge breaks down into the many.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Thomas Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (Canada: McClelland & Stewart LTD, 1969), 40.

The wise man, included in this one world and knowing its Unity, its common path, is not afraid of death and does not want anything beyond what is given to him. He loves life but does not crave to prolong it at any cost; he enjoys things and appreciates them but does not possess them at any cost. He lives in harmony with nature and its rhythms:

The true men of old / Knew no lust for life, / No dread of death. / Their entrance was without gladness, / Their exit, yonder, / Without resistance. / Easy come, easy go.<sup>4</sup>

The true men of the past  
had no mind to fight Tao,<sup>5</sup>

because

All man needs is to get lost -In Tao.<sup>6</sup>

Western thought, as is commonly believed, tends to perceive the world as an object (of knowledge, conquest, transformation) and man as the subject of these actions.

Therefore, the two opposing worldviews become culturally and geographically localized: Eastern thought's eco-consciousness is opposed to Western thought's ego-consciousness.

However, in the history of Western philosophy, there is also an example of a strikingly original thinker whose position can be characterised by the term "ecological monism", namely the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus (535-483 BC). Heraclitus views nature not only as the environment and source of man's physical life but also as the model of his social life, the source of its measures and rules. The key idea of Heraclitus' cosmology, ontology and ethics about the Unity of the world and man's inclusion in this Unity is surprisingly consonant with the Buddhist and Taoist philosophical traditions. Moreover, these ideas were articulated by him 200 years earlier than by Chinese thinkers.

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4 Ibid., 61.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 65.



It is no coincidence that the Indian thinker Rajneesh (born Chandra Mohan Jain, 1931-1990), also known as Osho, called Heraclitus an outsider in the history of Western philosophy:

Had he been born in India, or in the East, he would have been known as a buddha. But in Greek history, Greek philosophy, he was a stranger, an outsider.<sup>7</sup>

### HERACLITUS AND HIS TREATISE *ON NATURE*

The only source for the reconstruction of Heraclitus's philosophical concept is his treatise *On Nature* (Περὶ Φύσεως). However, there are disputes about at least two questions:

First, whether his writings were a single treatise is being debated because just a few more than a hundred fragments survived from his work. This led to the widespread view that no single treatise existed, and Heraclitus left behind only a collection of aphorisms, observations and individual notes, devoid of plan and system. This view was shared, in particular, by Hermann Diels and his numerous students and followers.

However, Andrey Lebedev's reconstruction of Heraclitus' work gives grounds to assert that Heraclitus's book had been an integral philosophical treatise, the fundamental principle of which was the idea of the Unity of the World. All of Heraclitus's arguments in cosmology, politics, ethics, and theology are essentially united by this general idea. According to Heraclitus, the world is harmoniously arranged and reasonably governed by the common cosmos-organizing and structure-forming principle, the condition and guarantor of its Unity and indestructibility.

The second problem concerns the content and the title of his treatise. The Aristotelian interpretation of Heraclitus as a natural philosopher, like the other early Greek naturalists, which Aristotle labels "*the physikoi*", has been debated since ancient times.

Diogenes Laertius reports that already in antiquity, the work of Heraclitus was perceived not only as a description of the structure of the cosmos

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<sup>7</sup> Osho (Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh), *The Hidden Harmony. Talks on the Fragments of Heraclitus* (Rebel Pub. House 1991. First published by the Rajneesh Foundation in 1976. Osho Foundation 2007), 4.

but also as a guide for human behaviour. In this connection, he notes the disagreements among ancient authors, even regarding the title of Heraclitus's treatise:

And the book is described under several titles; some calling it the Muses, some a treatise on Nature... Some call it a science of morals, the arrangement of the changes of unity and of everything.<sup>8</sup>

Diogenes Laertius also reports that the grammarian Diodotus, a friend of Cicero and a subtle expert on Heraclitus's texts, called it

A well-compacted helm to lead a man  
Straight through the path of life.<sup>9</sup>

The structure of the cosmos, its rules and laws are a universal pattern of order, containing, among other things, the paradigm of correct social life, a set of moral norms.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the very term "nature" (φύσις) for the first time acquires an anthropological dimension, an ethical-existential meaning in Heraclitus's treatise,<sup>11</sup> and the most important ethical imperative of Heraclitus was the requirement to "live according to nature".

In the sequel, we will examine what nature is in Heraclitus's understanding and how its laws are related to the rules of human behaviour.

## HERACLITUS'S FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD ORDER

The analysis of the extant fragments of Heraclitus's treatise allows us to reconstruct his concept of the world order and the environmental ethics associated with it and formulate its fundamental theses.

.....  
8 Diogenes Laertius, *The lives and opinions of eminent philosophers*, trans. C.D. Yonge (London: Publ. by George Bell & sons, 1853), 380.

9 Ibid.

10 Andrei V. Lebedev, *Logos Geraklita. Rekonstruktsiya mysli i slova [Logos of Heraclitus. Reconstruction of thought and word]* (St. Petersburg: Nauka Publ. 2014), 25.

11 Ibid., 124.

## THE WORLD IS ONE UNIFIED INTEGRAL WHOLE, COMMON TO ALL

The world of Heraclitus is one and only one; it has universal coherence and harmony, and there are no autonomous parts in it. The key to understanding Heraclitus's conception is his statement:

οὐκ ἔμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ <δε τοῦ> λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν ἐν πάντα εἰδέναι.<sup>12</sup>

Listening not to mine but to this logos, one must agree: wisdom consists in knowing all things as one.<sup>13</sup>

If you have heard [and understood] not me but the Logos, it is wise to agree that all things are one.<sup>14</sup>

Heraclitus does not believe in a god-creator. He claims that nature is eternal and reproduces itself according to its rhythms and rules.

This world-order, the same for all (men), no one of gods or men has made (οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν), but it always was and is and shall be: an ever-living fire, kindling in measures and going out in measures.<sup>15</sup>

## THE WORLD IS GOVERNED BY A DIVINE MIND.

Heraclitus involves a notion of a Divine Mind, which he calls in various ways – the Sun, the Fire, or the Wise Being. This Wise Being is “distinct from everything,” that is, it is not like any of the things of the world. In particular,

Of all those whose *logoi* (λόγους) I have listened to, no one reaches the point of recognizing that the Wise is /totally/ distinct from all.<sup>16</sup>

12 L<sub>1</sub>; M<sub>26</sub>; DK<sub>50</sub>. By “L” is indicated Lebedev’s numeration system of the fragments. By “M” is indicated Marcovich’s 1967 edition. By “DK” is indicated Diels and Kranz edition.

13 Trans. by Lebedev.

14 Trans. by Marcovich. In the sequel, all translations cited are taken from Marcovich’s 1967 edition unless it is stated otherwise.

15 L<sub>37</sub>; M<sub>451</sub>; DK<sub>30</sub>

16 L<sub>139</sub>; DK<sub>108</sub>

However, at the same time, the Wise Being is not separate from nature because it is nature itself. The Divine Mind is perfect in contrast to the human mind, but this does not mean its truths are fundamentally incomprehensible to humans. A Wise Being articulates his divine truths in the Logos, which is addressed equally to every man, but not everyone hears and understands it.

ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD OBEY THE SAME LAWS.

Everything that exists is permeated with diverse and not always visible connections and dependencies that a fool does not notice, considering himself the rightful owner of his “private world”. The existence of all things in the world is due to the observance of measure, timeliness and appropriateness, and in case of violation of these principles, the principle of justice and well-deserved retribution triumphs.

The Sun will not overstep appropriate measures, otherwise Erinyes, the ministers of Justice (Δίκης), will find him out.<sup>17</sup>

Heraclitus repeatedly emphasizes the interdependence of elements and things, the alternation of their births and deaths due to each other.

The death of earth is the birth of water, the death of water is the birth of air, the death of air is the birth of fire, and vice versa.<sup>18</sup>

In describing nature, Heraclitus uses, among others, a debt metaphor: all things are bound by debt and seem to borrow from one another.

... the principle that creates /~ sets in order/ all things ... just as it by loan and mortgage now produces from itself the cosmos, now from the cosmos again itself, and obtains by exchange all things for /the price/ of fire and fire for /the price/ of all things as if property /=mortgage/ for gold /=money/ and gold /=money/ for property /=mortgage/.<sup>19</sup>

.....  
17 L 56; DK 94

18 L47; DK76

19 L42; DK90

If for Homer, the gods and men are two contacting but separate worlds, for Heraclitus, they belong to one universal polis. Gods and men differ only in their temporal roles, not their essence.

Immortals are mortals; mortals are immortals, they live at the expense of others' death, and they die at the expense of others' life.<sup>20</sup>

The gods die, taking the form of mortal bodies, while humans ascend to heaven as a reward for virtue and become a commensal of the gods and even their co-ruler (συμπότης τῶν θεῶν ἔση, ἀλλὰ καὶ συνάρχων).<sup>21</sup>

THE PROPER POSITION OF A MAN IS TO LIVE "ACCORDING TO NATURE."

What does it mean to live by nature? It means being aware of man's involvement in the common world, following its rules, and actively maintaining its order.

Man's existence is interwoven in the dense fabric of the world and inscribed in the world, like any of its things. That is why Heraclitus considered the ideal model of relations with the world to be *εὐαρέστηση*, rendered as "all-acceptance".

They say that Anaxagoras from Klazomen considered contemplation (τὴν θεωρίαν) and the freedom resulting from it (τὴν ἀπὸ ταύτης ἐλευθερίαν) to be the ultimate goal of life (τοῦ βίου τέλος εἶναι), and Heraclitus of Ephesus – *all-acceptance* (τὴν εὐαρέστησιν).<sup>22</sup>

*Εὐαρέστηση* is a term difficult to interpret. Usually, it is understood literally as the ability to rejoice, satisfaction, pleasure, and goodwill. It is often interpreted in the spirit of fatalism as submission to Fate, accepting everything it brings without protest.

However, in the context of Heraclitus's philosophy, this term acquires an ontological and ideological aspect. Suggesting to accept what is occurring without protest, Heraclitus reminds man that he is part of the world

20 L153; DK 62.

21 Lebedev 2014, 90; L159.

22 L101; Ma 37(a2); DK A21.

Whole. He calls man to change his standpoint and look at what is happening not from the viewpoint of daily tasks, problems, habits, losses and gains but from the viewpoint of the world whole, the general order of things, from the viewpoint of the *Logos*.

Does this mean that a human's task is blind and thoughtless submission to an external force (*Logos*, Fate, nature)? Heraclitus is a monist but not a fatalist in the traditional sense of the word. In his ethical system, two maxims that dictate human behaviour are dialectically consistent:

1. inclusion in the shared world and, accordingly, acceptance of its rules, and
2. personal responsibility for one's actions, choices, and daily behaviour.

Heraclitus insists that man's position in the world is the position of a participant, a co-worker of all world processes, regardless of the degree of awareness of participation. Man is included in the corporeality of the cosmos and participates in its order, being, according to Heraclitus, a "co-labourer" of its processes. Marcus Aurelius conveys this idea of Heraclitus as follows.

We all contribute (work together) to the achievement of a single common result, some consciously and attentively, others unconsciously, I think Heraclitus calls "Men asleep are *laborers and co-workers in what takes place in the world*" (ἐργάτας εἶναι λέγει καὶ συνεργοὺς τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ γινομένων).<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, the laws by which the natural world is arranged and exists are directly relevant to man. Therefore, the proper life of man is the *κἀτα φύσιν* ("according to nature") life. According to Heraclitus,

it is wisdom to speak the truth and to act according to nature with understanding (*σοφίη ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαΐοντας*).<sup>24</sup>

Since everything in nature is arranged and governed intelligently (and this intelligibility of structure is indicated by the regularity of processes, the structured dynamics, and the orderliness of the cosmos), living *κἀτα φύσιν* means both "in accordance to nature" and "in accordance to reason."

.....  
23 L107; Ma1(h1); DK75.

24 L100; Ma23f; DK112.

## WHAT PREVENTS MAN FROM LIVING IN ACCORDANCE WITH NATURE?

In asserting the principles of man's existence in the world and coexistence with the world, Heraclitus nevertheless understands how fragile the balance of relations is and how difficult it is to achieve this harmony. What prevents man from living properly and destroys his harmony with the world? Why does he not hear the Logos addressed to him? Why does he not understand the language of nature?

The ancient Greek tradition names three human vices that prevent peaceful harmony with the world: *κόρος*, *ὑβρις*, *ἀτη*.

– *Κόρος* is greed that has no reasonable limits, craving for excess, satiety, and surfeit.

– *ὑβρις* means impudence, arrogance, violation of existing social, divine, and natural institutions, refusal to worship the gods, insulting demonstration of one's superiority, and arrogance.

– *Ἀτη* means uncontrollable insane rage, and blind obsession, the consequences of which are grief, destruction, chaos, and death.

Heraclitus, as evidenced by his fragments, warns against these three vices, which are both the hardest and the stupidest, although he does not always call them by their names. They take on a special significance in light of the idea of the Unity of the world and the interdependence of its parts, and, above all, the position of man in relation to the world.

An unnatural, excessive craving for bodily pleasures, the absence of any measure in this craving occupies an essential place in Heraclitus's accusatory speeches. He considers chastity (the capacity for self-restraint) the greatest virtue:

To be temperate is the greatest virtue (*σωφρονεῖν ἀρετὴ μέγιστη*).<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, he bitterly points out that most people are incapable of voluntary asceticism:

The best choose one thing in place of all others: everlasting glory in place of mortal things; while the majority are gluttoned like cattle.<sup>26</sup>

25 L100; Ma23f; DK112.

26 L102; Ma95; DK 29.

Here we see a direct reference to one of the gravest vices – κόρος since the verb κεκόρηται (to overeat) comes from κόρος – surfeit.

Another vice of man is his desire for power, which leads to his moral corruption:

Positions of honour enslave gods and men (Τίμαι θεοῦς καὶ ἀνθρώπους καταδουλοῦνται).<sup>27</sup>

In his excessive lust for honours, power, and wealth, man increasingly moves away from connection with nature, the norms and order of the natural and human world. In doing so, man is also removed from a truly wise life because:

it is wisdom to speak the truth and to act according to nature with understanding.<sup>28</sup>

All these vices have a common source and common causes. What unites all of these?

First, the violation of the principle of measure. In all cases, there is a desire to go beyond the boundaries. The boundaries are not arbitrary, randomly assigned by someone, but fair and expedient. Furthermore, these vices are due to the *unwillingness (or inability) to act reasonably*, according to the objective order. At the same time, not only expedient behaviour is required from man (which is also characteristic of animals), but also the ability to curb man's desires, self-control, the *possession of honour, and decency* – what Heraclitus calls *chastity* (σωφροσύνη).

It is noteworthy that Heraclitus, in his ethical standards, does not require anything impossible – neither as a goal (“to be equal to a deity”) nor as a means (to keep a strict asceticism). He calls on man to realize his unique place in space, which is not among unreasonable cattle. Man can be capable of worthy life and co-reasonable to the *Logos* (since the microcosm is identical to the macrocosm). This reasonableness to the *Logos* requires effort on his part. However, the most important thing is that this lies within man's power.

Heraclitus clarifies that correct living means coordinating one's existence with the existence of the Whole, relying on the principles of measure,

27 L133A; Ma120; DK132.

28 L100; Ma23f; DK112.



rationality, chastity, proportionate to the world of measures, and co-reasonable to the divine mind. Man has a place within the whole and is a participant and co-worker of all its processes. Being a part of the world and having the freedom of choice, man bears personal responsibility for his existence and actions and thus bears personal responsibility for the well-being and fate of the world.

## Conclusions

The idea of unbridled progress, the perception of the world as an object of conquest and remaking, the insatiable thirst for consumption, and the inability to see the far-reaching consequences of man's actions have brought humanity to a moral, economic, existential deadlock. Man, confident that "everything is in his hands," has suddenly realized that he is in a hostile world, increasingly insecure, increasingly unpredictable.

Perhaps today, many centuries later, the Greek experience of understanding the relationship between man and the world (the world is a home, not a battlefield; it should not be conquered but equipped) may be in demand as a timely and relevant way out of this deadlock.

Of course, Heraclitus' ecological monism is not a practical step-by-step guide to action. Still, familiarity with it as a philosophical position can change the standpoint of man's perception of himself, his place in the world, and thus the modes of his interaction with it. From time immemorial, the voice of the Heraclitean Logos reminds us of a simple but very important thing: with all his plans, freedom and meanings, man is what the world allows him to be, and vice versa: the world with its truths – cosmoses, logoses and gods – is what we allow it to be. We are responsible for it.

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MAHJABEEN DHALA

# Ecological Theology: An Ecofeminist Reading of the Qur'anic Perspective of the Universe

## Introduction

The Qur'an is the most sacred and revered text for Muslims and undeniably plays an axial role in Muslim ritual, spiritual, and ethical life. It was revealed in the early seventh century over twenty-three years. During the eighth century, Qur'an studies comprised the *qurrā'*, custodians of the Qur'anic diction, and the *nahwiyyūn*, grammarians committed to the study of the written word.<sup>1</sup> Qur'an commentaries began as early as the late twelfth century. The essential questions for early exegetes such as Abul Faraj Abdal Rahman bin Ali Al-Jawzi (d. 1200) involved identifying the location of revelation (Mecca or Medina), the historical context of revelation, grammatical peculiarities, variant readings, jurisprudential implications, and aspects of doctrine and practice.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Alexander Knysh, "Multiple Areas of Influence," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 214.

2 Jane Dammen McAuliffe, "The Tasks and Traditions of Interpretations," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 184.

While one aspect of exegesis, *tafsīr*, focused on the literal meaning of the text, another aspect, *ta'wīl*, argued for more profound esoteric implications and interpretations. For early Muslim exegetes, *tafsīr* became the norm supported by mainstream Sunni thought, and *ta'wīl* became a consistent approach used by Shia and Sufi minorities to argue for their respective theologies and practice. By the tenth century, *ta'wīl*, which included esoteric and allegorical interpretations of Qur'anic verses, came to be dismissed by the mainstream as questionable in its approach and controversial in its aim.<sup>3</sup> Contemporary Qur'anic exegesis has added many dimensions to interpreting the text. Twentieth-century exegetes deployed anti-colonial and anti-western rhetoric and, at the same time, argued for reasonable engagement with the text to address issues that emerged with modernity. The Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) wrote his voluminous exegesis in prison, calling out the West's agenda of power and corruption and the complacency and inaction of Muslim nations. On the other hand, his predecessors in Egypt, Rashid Rida (d. 1935) and Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) proposed that reason should prevail where Scripture and reason contradict.<sup>4</sup>

While exegetes such as Abduh, Rida, and Qutb engaged the political and legal landscapes of their times, by the turn of the twenty-first century, Qur'anic exegesis had broadened its scope to issues of gender as well. Muslim female theologians such as Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, and Riffat Hassan deployed feminist hermeneutics calling for an unreading of patriarchal interpretations of the text. They scrutinized biblical influences on Qur'anic exegetical literature and argued for gender-inclusive and female-empowering interpretations.<sup>5</sup> In recent works on Islamic ecological theology, the earth has been presented as a reflection of the Face of God<sup>6</sup> and a sacred site.<sup>7</sup>

A prominent theme in the Qur'an is the call to understanding the transcendent nature of the Divine through signs (*āyāt*). In a Qur'anic context,

3 Hussein Abul-Raof, *School of Qur'anic Exegesis: Genesis and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 105, 106.

4 Stefan Wild, "Political Interpretation of the Qur'an," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an* ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (New York: Cambridge University Press 2007), 281, 282.

5 Marcia Hermansen, "The New Voices of Muslim Women Theologians," in *Muslima Theology: The Voices of Muslim Women Theologians*, ed. Ednan Aslan, Marcia K. Hermansen, Elif Medeni (Germany: Peter Lang AG, 2013), 11–34, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2t4f10.4>.

6 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "God is Absolute Reality and All Creation His Tajallī (Theophany)," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*, ed. John Hart (Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 8, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118465523.ch1>.

7 Fazlun M. Khalid, "Exploring Environmental Ethics in Islam Insights from the Qur'an and the Practice of Prophet Muhammad," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*, ed. John Hart (Hoboken NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 131, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118465523.ch11>.

*āyah* (pl. *āyāt*) refers to a verse as well as a sign which points to the Divine wonder. Signs are generally categorized as wonders found within oneself (internal) and in the universe (external), as is stated in Q 30:22, “Among His signs (*āyāt*) is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colors. There are indeed signs in that for those who know.” Together they prompt human inquiry into not just the pursuit of God but also the production of knowledge of the physical world: “Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for those who possess intellects.” (Q 3:190)

The Qur’an portrays the ecosphere as a pedagogical premise for applying reason and intellect to explore the intricate interconnectedness between humans and the more-than-human world. For example, Q 13:3,4 state,

It is He who has spread out the earth and set in it, firm mountains, and streams, and of every fruit He has made in it two kinds. He draws the night’s cover over the day. There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect. In the earth are neighboring terrains [of diverse kinds] and vineyards, farms, and date palms growing from the same root and from diverse roots, [all] irrigated by the same water, and We give some of them an advantage over others in flavor. There are indeed signs in that for a people who apply reason.

In this paper, I deploy a feminist lens in reading *āyāt* (Qur’anic verses) to present the universe as a sensible, sensitive, and surveilling entity. Muslims hold the Qur’an as their sacred text and a code of life. Scholars of Islamic studies consider the Qur’an their primary source for formulating tenets of faith and worship, deducing jurisprudential law, and understanding ethics. Drawing on selected verses from the Qur’an, I use a feminist approach to highlight the agency of the universe, its grieving, and its justice-oriented documenting of human actions. In doing so, I explore an alternative story of the universe, one that interweaves faith, grief, and hope in raising awareness of ecological crisis and the pursuit of environmental justice.

## A Sensible Universe: Subservience by Choice

In a Qur'anic paradigm, all created entities are called to worship the Deity. While human beings have free will to choose what and if they wish to worship, the universe is commonly understood to be in a constant state of glorification and praise of God. Q 17: 44 states, "the seven heavens glorify Him, and the earth [too], and whoever is in them. There is not a thing but celebrates His praise, but you do not understand their glorification." Is the worship of the universe ontologically ordained or a result of agency? To address this, we need to look at the eschatological understanding of accountability in the Islamic tradition and the idea of divine "Trust."

Worship broadly constitutes the pursuit of understanding the transcendent nature of God and abiding by the dictates of the Qur'an through ritual, spiritual, and ethical practices in preparation for being held accountable for one's actions on Judgment Day. For any ritual to be an act of worship, it must be done freely out of conviction and faith. The daily prayer ritual, *salāt*, for example, is an act of worship only if the performer intends to seek closeness to God through it. If she is forced to imitate the embodied actions of this ritual, it would not be deemed worship as is stated in Q 2:256, "There is no compulsion in religion..." Did the universe, then, have a choice?

Q 41:11 speaks about the creation of the heavens and the earth and the call to submit: "Then He turned to the heaven, and it was smoke, and He said to it and to the earth, 'Come! Willingly or unwillingly!' They said, 'We come heartily.'" "Come!" in this verse indicates a command, while "willingly or unwillingly" implies agency. Exegetes such as Makarim Shirazi reconcile this by proposing that even though the verse alludes to a choice, the matter was already decided at the genesis stage. So, God's speech, "come, willingly or unwillingly," is a declaration of the universe's subservience hard-wired in its formation, and thus, it responded with "we come heartily."<sup>8</sup> But why propose an option if there is no choice?

Furthermore, does "come!" mean come into being or come to obedience? If it is interpreted to mean the former, then that leads to a deeper discussion on the agency of a created being in its being created, which is beyond the scope of the discussion at hand. But, if it is interpreted to mean the latter, it points to the agency of a created being in choosing to obey or not to obey the Creator. This interpretation provides an alternative to the common

<sup>8</sup> Makarim Shirazi, *Tafseer Namuneh* (Lahore: Misbah al-Qur'an Trust, 1996), Vol. 9, 750.

understanding the universe was created for humankind which implies subjugation rather than service. If the universe chooses to serve, it claims its equal place among all created beings.

In choosing to submit itself willingly to God's call, the universe was absolved from being held accountable on Judgement Day. While there is a copious discussion on resurrection and accountability in the Qur'an, all the relevant verses indicate that it will be a solely human affair. There are no mentions of animals, birds, planets, stars, seas, or other more-than-human entities being called to judgement. One explanation lies in understanding the concept of the divine "Trust." Q 33:72 states, "Indeed, We presented the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, and were apprehensive of it; but [hu]man undertook it..." Exegetes present multiple interpretations of "Trust," such as intellect, faculties of the human body, and humankind's responsibility to be God's representation on earth. The popular notion among scholars is that "Trust" refers to free will.<sup>9</sup> Because humans were the only creation that undertook the "Trust," they will be held accountable on Judgement Day.

Hence, free will was offered to "the heavens and the earth and the mountains," and they chose not to bear it. The concept of "Trust" in Q 33:72 and the invitation to "come, willingly or unwillingly" in Q 41:11 indicate that humans are not the only intellectually rational beings, and that the universe is a conscious and sensible entity that chose not to choose. Its willful relinquishing of its free will rendered it in a constant state of worship and absolved from accountability in the hereafter. In doing so, the ecosphere awarded access to its resources for humankind's education and gain. Humans have misconstrued this access as entitlement and utilitarian license to use and abuse, becoming heedless of the sensibility, sensitivity, and surveilling aspects of the universe.

## A Sensitive Universe: Human Actions, Cosmic Consequences

The Qur'an also presents the universe as a creation that senses oppression and grieves, alluding to a deep interconnection between human actions and cosmic responses. While narrating the exodus of the tribes of Israel from Egypt, the Qur'an states that as they fled the oppressive regime of the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Vol. 11, 348, 349.

Pharaoh, they reached the sea. Just as they found themselves trapped between the sea and the Pharaoh's army, the sea parted, and Moses and the Israelites crossed over to the other side. While the parting of the sea is commonly understood as a miracle and an act of God, I ask if there is room to read this as God's Will manifested through the sea's act. Did the sea sense the anxiety of the persecuted refugees and avail itself as an instrument for their rescue? A purely monotheistic response would be that only God hears the cries of the distressed, as is stated in Q 27:62, "Is He [not the One] who answers the call of the distressed [person] when he invokes Him and removes his distress, and makes you the earth's successors...?"

Even if God is the Sole Succor, divine aid is delivered through intermediaries. For example, God is the absolute Guide, yet "He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His message to whomever He wishes of His servants." (Q 16:2). God is the only Creator, yet "Allah sends down water from the sky with which He revives the earth after its death. (Q 16:65) These verses speak of angels and rain as intermediaries who execute God's plan. In the narrative of Moses and the Israelites, the refugees were rescued through the sea parting. The participation of the sea in God's rescue mission for the Israelites reveals an interconnectedness between the persecuted, God, and God's aid that appears as a cosmic phenomenon that the believers hail as a miracle. Returning to whether the sea sensed the distress of the fleeing refugees, it is apparent that it sensed and executed God's Will to rescue them.

The Qur'anic narrative of the Israelites' flight continues to state that the Pharaoh and his army entered the parted sea in hot pursuit, but when they were halfway through, the sea merged back, drowning the villains. Moses and the Israelites rejoiced in gratitude and a sigh of relief. The saga ends with an interesting remark: "So, neither the sky wept for them [the Pharaoh and his men], nor the earth..." (Q 44:29) Exegetes differ in their interpretations of the weeping of the sky and the earth: Is this a metaphoric mention or the authenticating of the grieving universe? If the story had not ended the way it did and the Pharaoh had massacred the Israelites, would the sky and earth have sensed their pain and grieved their loss?

The weeping of the sky is often mentioned in Shia lament lore and literature about Ashura. Ashura is an annual commemoration of the killing of the Prophet's grandson Hussain, his family, and his small band of followers by the Umayyad caliph Yazid on the tenth day of Muharram, 61AH/680CE. Yazid demanded allegiance from Hussain, which the latter found unethical. Hussain enjoyed spiritual excellence among the Muslims as the Prophet's



grandson and a theological position among the Shias as a divinely appointed Imam. He chose not to validate Umayyad governance through his allegiance. He fled Medina with his family and a few followers, but they were arrested and killed in Karbala, Iraq.

The eleventh-century exegete Al-Fadhil Al-Tabrisi states that on the Day of Ashura, the sky wept as it witnessed the massacre of Hussain and his family in Karbala. In his commentary on Q 44:29, Al-Tabrisi draws on a literary analysis of the implication of the weeping of the skies and earth in Arabic poetry to suggest three understandings. First, “neither the sky wept for them [the Pharaoh and his men], nor the earth” (Q 44:29) means that neither the dwellers of the skies (angels) nor the dwellers of the earth wept for them. They were tyrants, and their destruction did not invoke any empathy. Second, Al-Tabrisi suggests that this is God’s way of eloquently and gracefully shattering the superiority that the Pharaoh claimed over his people. It was customary among Arabs to honor the loss of their leaders by saying, “the skies and the earth weeps, and the sun and the moon have darkened at his loss.” Third, the Qur’anic phrase alludes that the Pharaoh had no compassionate or good deeds that would have ascended to the skies. When the Prophet’s companion Abdullah Ibn Abbas was asked if the skies indeed weep for a person, as mentioned in Q 44:29, he replied, “Yes, the earth upon which they offered prayers and the portal in the sky through which their good deeds ascended to the heavens.” Al-Tabrisi narrates a hadith that states, “For every believer, there is a portal in the sky through which their good acts ascend and another portal through which their sustenance descends. When they die, the portals weep for them.” Summarizing his exegetical analysis of Q 44:29, Al-Tabrisi quotes a narration from Imam Jafar Sadiq, the sixth Imam of the Twelver Shias, which states, “The skies wept forty days for Yahya son/of Zakariya (John, the Baptist) and Hussain son/of Ali. The sky will never weep on anyone except these two.” When asked what the weeping of the sky meant, he replied, “an extraordinary redness would envelop the skies at sunrise and sunset.”<sup>10</sup>

Phenomena such as the weeping skies and blood rain have been recorded from antiquity to contemporary history. In their study of nature and society, Gerhard Jaritz and Verena Winiwater survey historical mentions of unnatural or supernatural occurrences in nature. Stressing how nature was perceived in early antiquity and the Middle Ages, they remark that blood rain

10 Ahmad Al-Tabrisi, *Majma’ al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an* (Beirut: Dar Al-Mortada, 2006), Vol. 9, 83, 84.

was interpreted differently at different times by different religious bodies.<sup>11</sup> It was commonly interpreted as a bad omen foretelling misery and misfortune. Scientists, however, explain that due to global warming, high temperatures cause sand particles from desert storms to mix with the moisture in the atmosphere that reaches the earth in the form of raindrops, stained red. Dust was also explained as a cause for blood rain occurrences in India at the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>12</sup>

Whether it is due to global warming caused by human abuse of the earth's resources or, as Shia exegetes suggest, due to the massacre of a minoritized group by hegemonic powers, blood rain is a demonstration of how human actions and cosmic consequences are interconnected. Even though past religious societies could not explain unnatural occurrences in the universe, they acknowledged it as a sensitive entity that experienced and communicated grief. Q 44:29 lends itself to a broad interpretation, including metaphoric and real ramifications of human conduct and ecological consequences, revealing an intriguing and intense connection between all created beings.

## The Perceiving Reporting Universe

After believing in a Unique God and prophets as divine instructors, the most fundamental tenet of the Islamic faith is belief in Judgement Day, known as *Ma'ad*. The term *Ma'ad* which means "the returning," is comprehensively used to indicate belief in death, purgatory, an afterlife, and resurrection in the hereafter, wherein humans will be held accountable for their actions and choices regarding the resources at their disposal. The concept of the day of reckoning was the most unfathomable aspect of revelation for the Meccan society. Nearly a third of the Qur'an addresses questions regarding *Ma'ad* giving vivid details of the sights, sounds, and anxieties of the afterlife.

Among the verses relating to *Ma'ad* are those that enumerate the witnesses that will be brought forth to testify for and against humans so that ultimate justice might be served. The list of these witnesses is intriguing. For example, several verses of the Qur'an state that body parts will testify against

11 Gerhard Jaritz, Verena Winiwater, "On the Perception of Nature in a Renaissance Society," in *Nature and Society in Historical Context*, ed. Mikuláš Teich, Roy Porter, Bo Gustafsson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 100.

12 Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, "Coloured Rain Falls on Kerala," *BBC News*, July 30, 2001, accessed March 5, 2022, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/1465036.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1465036.stm).

the person. The Qur'an states, "Today [day of judgement] We shall seal their mouths, and their hands shall speak to Us, and their feet shall bear witness concerning what they used to earn." Not only will their arms and legs bear witness, but their skins will also speak: "When they come to it [the day of judgement]], their hearing will bear witness against them and their sight and their skins concerning what they used to do. They will say to their skins, 'Why did you bear witness against us?' They [the skins] will say, 'We were given speech by Allah, who gave speech to all things.'"<sup>13</sup>

Q 99 talks about the earth reporting human atrocities from its documented chronicles:

When the earth is rocked with a terrible quake and the earth discharges her burdens, and [hu]man says, 'What is the matter with her?' On that day, she will relate (*tuhaddithu*) her chronicles for her Lord will have inspired her. On that day, [hu]mankind will issue forth in various groups to be shown their deeds. So, whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.<sup>14</sup>

The first part of this chapter speaks about the end of the world and the beginning of the afterlife. The shaking of the earth is symbolic of the disruption of normality and stability that tends to be taken for granted, hence, the alarming reaction of humans, "what is the matter with her (earth)?" The earth's unburdening has been interpreted in multiple ways, each invoking a subsequent human response. One theological understanding is that the earth will spill out the dead corpses that were buried from the beginning of humanity till the end. This massive resurrection will prompt a remorseful realization from those who did not believe in Judgement Day.<sup>15</sup> Another understanding is that the earth will empty all its hidden treasures, including precious metals that were the object of vain human desires for which wars were fought and lives destroyed. When all the earth's treasures are laid bare, humanity will come to a moral realization of the strife and corruption perpetrated in pursuit of riches.

Yet another understanding of the unburdening of the earth is that it will expose all humanity's actions since the beginning of time. Humans will realize

13 Q 41:20,21.

14 Q 99.

15 Shirazi, *Tafseer Namuneh*, Vol. 15, 410.

that none of their deeds had escaped the consciousness of the land they inhabited. This understanding resonates with the following verse, which states, “On that day, she (earth) will relate her chronicles.”<sup>16</sup> The eighteenth-century exegete, Abd Ali Al-Huwaizi narrates that the Prophet said, “Her chronicles refer to her witnessing of the deeds of every man and woman she carried on her back. She will say so and so did such and such on such and such day. Such shall be her reporting.”<sup>17</sup> Another hadith from the Prophet states, “Be mindful of your prayers (*salāt*), and the earth for she is your mother. There is no soul that commits an act of good or evil, but that she observes and will report.”<sup>18</sup>

Q 99 unveils the earth’s role as a witness and recorder of human actions. It will testify on Judgement Day. The testimony of the earth will be oral; the word “*tuhaddithu*” literally means that she (the earth) will narrate her chronicles. Its chronicles are thorough, not overlooking even an “atom’s weight” of human conduct. While the earth might appear to be a silent spectator, the Qur’an stresses that the land we inhabit is a perceiving entity that continually witnesses and meticulously documents its human residents.

## Conclusion

The Qur’an offers an alternative story of the universe, one that includes but is not exclusive of utility and service to humans. The earth and the sky are conscious and perceptive entities beyond human dominion and entitlement. The ecosphere’s service to its human inhabitants is a form of worship that implies agency. The Divine “Trust” that God offered to all created beings was the gift of free will which accompanied the burden of accountability on Judgement Day. By willfully forfeiting free will, the universe chose unfaltering service and, thus, was absolved of blame.

The consciousness of the universe extends to its sensitivity in connecting to the human perpetrations of injustice, responding with expressions of grief, and hurt. The Qur’anic narrative of the exodus of the Israelites and historical analysis of the event of Ashura allude to a weeping, grieving cosmos. At the same time, hadith narrations speak of the earth as a watchful mother who meticulously records human activity and will present its comprehensive

16 Q 99:4

17 Abd Ali Al-Huwaizi, *Tafseer Nur al-Thaqalain* (Lahore: Idarat Minhaj Al-Saliheen, 2012), Vol. 9, 350.

18 Al-Tabrisi, *Majma’ al-Bayan*, Vol. 10, 322.

and diligent chronicles as a testimony for and against humankind. A feminist reading of Qur'anic verses from the perspective of agency, emotionality, and justice presents the ecosphere as a sensible, sensitive, and surveilling entity with consciousness and perceptivity that is behooving attention and care.

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# Cohabitation with-in Nature and Digitality - Christian Ecofeminist vs. Transhumanistic Paradigm

## Introduction

We live in an age of uncertainty, between ecological devastation and on the threshold of a new world of digital culture that demands new responses to our increasingly uncertain way of being in the world. The combined challenge of unprecedented environmental changes and a more intensive involvement with digital technologies in our cultures and everyday lives calls for a common and technologically well-informed care for creation and “new humanology”<sup>1</sup> for a better future for us and other inhabitants of our planet.

The starting point for the first strand of this paper is Pope Francis’ “Laudato Si”<sup>2</sup>. In Chapter 3 Pope Francis considers the human roots of the ecological crisis and suggests that, despite the obvious progress that has been made as a result of technological advances, the power that is now apparently available to the human race is itself a temptation to exercise a dominance over creation which leads to environmental degradation and exploitation. The moral sense

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1 Mikhail Epstein, *The Transformative Humanities: A Manifesto* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012).

2 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’ of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home*, 2015, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).

and range of values which might be required to temper the excesses of human control have not developed at the same pace as our technological advances. What he calls the technocratic paradigm also tends to dominate economic and political life. The human condition and contemporary theology are confronted and challenged with a threat of ecological crises, on one hand, and comprehensive digitality, on the other.

The reality of the environmental crisis on the one hand and the quantum leap in technological growth and development on the other have left a deep mark on contemporary humans, who have been the co-creator of and, in turn, been co-shaped by both. Much like with the Neolithic revolution, which strongly affected human psychophysical development, interpersonal and interspecies relationships as well as relations towards natural, non-human beings, humans are undergoing profound change under the impact of the technological revolution.

Although technology is a by-product of human development it has come to affect humanity in unpredictable ways. In the sphere of computer technology, applications are becoming increasingly active, not only storing but collecting and processing data as well. Machines can no longer be said to be external to humans; in fact, technological development is promoting an ever-closer cooperation, even integral relationship between humans and technology, as well as a more comprehensive fusion of biological and mechanical elements.

Certainly, any major change or novelty may be seen to have both positive and negative consequences for the status quo, and “advances” are often linked to the socioeconomic status of individuals and groups. The promotion of technical innovation leads to rapid sociocultural change that results in new trends and new perceptions of the world, while also abolishing certain established practices.<sup>3</sup>

This provides a glimpse into the at times frightening aspect of technologically driven change. The inevitable results of technological change are not determined by society – in fact are anti-democratic – and it is not hyperbolic to note that technique and technology often make their own decisions.

Given this context, the popularity of transhumanism on the one hand and the need for a theological ecofeminist paradigm on the other are growing. Although at first glance both paradigms may seem incompatible, they

3 Toni Pustovrh, *Društvo za razvoj humanistike*, April 15, 2016, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://zofijini.net/tehnolosko-preoblikovanje-cloveka-narave-in-druzbe/>.



share a common ground. Joel Thompson claims that transhumanism promises us freedom from the biological restraints that define our human nature. Its goal is to increase physical, psychological and intellectual capabilities, thereby opening up new possibilities and expanding the horizons of experience. Thompson also argues that many transhumanists aims resemble those within the domain of religion.<sup>4</sup>

Proceeding from this point of view, this paper provides a comparative analysis of Christian ecofeminist ethics and transhumanist ethics, and presents a critique of transhumanism from a (Christian) ecofeminist perspective. The main query is: Is it possible to think Christian ecofeminism and transhumanism together, and if so, why do it?

## Convergences, tensions/differences

While attempting to outline some common ground and at the same time point out areas of tension and differences between Christian ecofeminist ethics and transhumanist ethics we should take into account their complex internal diversity as well, for neither Christian ecofeminism nor transhumanism are monolithic phenomena. They both comprise a series of different currents, forms, and trends, and it would be inaccurate to speak about any of them in a generalising singular, without awareness of and consideration for the varied internal plurality of the two. Within this framework we will try to identify some key convergences while also drawing attention to points of tension and divergence.

## Interdisciplinarity

Interdisciplinarity is one of the more obvious common grounds of (Christian) ecofeminism and transhumanism.

Heather Eaton compares the interdisciplinary orientation of ecofeminisms with “an intersection point of multiple pathways,” for in her opinion people enter ecofeminism from many directions, disciplines, sciences, and

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<sup>4</sup> Joel Thompson, “Transhumanism: How Far Is Too Far?,” *The New Bioethics* 23, 2 (2017): 180, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20502877.2017.1345092>.

activities, and in turn enrich them with ecofeminist ethics.<sup>5</sup> But regardless of the diversity due to the numerous disciplines and approaches that have shaped them (from humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, environmental studies and technology to political activism ...), all the individual types and forms of ecofeminism share the awareness that a solution to the environmental issue will only be possible if it is inclusive of the feminist issue, and vice versa. The element shared by feminism and ecology is therefore their struggle for the liberation from the shackles of cultural and economic oppression and exploitation, and for improving human and environmental conditions. The link between the abuse of the natural world and oppression of women is thus the crucial point of convergence for all types of ecofeminism, which strive to improve the human condition.

Nick Bostrom notes that transhumanism promotes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding and valuing the potential for improving the human condition and the human organism that is envisioned with the advancement of technology. Attention is directed to both current technologies, such as genetic engineering and IT, as well as to anticipated future ones, such as molecular nanotechnology and artificial intelligence. Interdisciplinarity in transhumanism is focussed on the optimistic trust in the enhancement of the human condition by technology. The advocates of transhumanism from various fields, sciences, and disciplines believe in the fundamental enhancement of the human condition through the use of practical reason and physical acceptance of new technologies.<sup>6</sup>

Interdisciplinarity as an efficient means for accomplishing the ultimate goals is thus a shared characteristic of ecofeminism and transhumanism, but as we are going to see, the way it is employed in the two philosophies differs considerably. While both ecofeminism and transhumanism strive to improve the human condition, they differ significantly in the methods, tools, and paths used in the pursuit of this desired goal.

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 5 Heather Eaton, *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2005), 12.

6 Nick Bostrom, *Transhumanist Values*, 2005, accessed 20 September 2020, <https://www.nick-bostrom.com/ethics/values.html>.

## Non-dualism and new metanarratives

From the perspective of liberation theology or, more accurately, from the feminist somatic and environmental points of view, Christian ecofeminism criticises the fundamental binary oppositions, ascribing the origin of the latter to the apocalyptic-Platonistic legacy of classical Christianity. These include the alienation of mind from body; of the subjective self from the objective world; the subjective withdrawal and dissociation of the individual from the communal human and social network; the supremacy of mind over nature. Influenced by the Cartesian dualistic paradigm, human's imperialist attitudes towards animals, plants, the environment, and nature have consolidated in the hierarchical binary perspective, which sees the supremacy of the substantial (man: lord) over what is considered non-substantial (nature, animals, plants: objectified and devoid of intrinsic meaning). Similarly, the paradigm of the individual's separation from entirety, human from nature, has been reinforced as well. The model of human being in the role of a superior master who has completely objectified nature and as the "crown of creation" possesses nature, ruthlessly exploiting natural resources, ravaging and mechanistically abusing them, has become an exemplary model of the human-nature relationship. By stripping nature of its intrinsic value, the relationship between humanity and nature is mechanistically debased through objectification.<sup>7</sup>

The Christian tradition has (from an ecofeminist point of view) contributed several problematic images and symbols that have taken hold and survived in the form of stereotypes and prejudices, entrenching in the legacy of Western philosophical-religious thought. All types of theological ecofeminism seek to dismantle the patriarchal paradigm of exploitation, supremacy, methodology, and thought. They try to deconstruct the entire paradigm of man's supremacy over woman, of mind over body, Heaven over Earth, of the transcendent over the immanent, of the male God, alienated and ruling over all Creation, and to replace all that with new alternatives or new metanarratives.

From the point of view of transhumanism, technology is more than a functional tool for gaining (energy; more sophisticated technology; or even immortality); it entered the posthumanist debate through intervention of feminism, particularly through Donna Haraway's cyborg and her

<sup>7</sup> Nadja Furlan Štante, "Ekonomija izkoriščanja narave in Gajino trpljenje," *Poligrafi* 20, no. 79/80 (2015): 211.

deconstruction of rigid binary opposites and boundaries, such as the one between human and animal; biological organisms and machines; the physical and the non-physical; and, ultimately, between technology and the self.<sup>8</sup>

A cyborg is, in the words of Donna Haraway, and further elaborated by Valerija Vendramin, “a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality and a creature of fiction at the same time. It is never an either-or but always both. A cyborg is ‘an ironic political myth’ as well as a point of permanent ambiguity between the literal and the figurative. The cyborg has been adopted, or rather appropriated, by the transhumanist movement, which aspires to overcome humans’ biological limitations by means of technology.”<sup>9</sup> However, the main purpose of this figuration is certainly not an insight into the synthesis of human and machine as a current transhumanist phenomenon – the cyborg is first and foremost a metaphor. Indeed, the metaphor is often the best means to complete a conceptual passage into a different perspective. Through it, the disproportionalities in the afore-mentioned dualities are examined and deconstructed, all the while highlighting the value scale that installed them. Donna Haraway’s “Manifesto” provides new perspectives of the contemporary relationships between animals, technology, and humans. Her breakthrough book *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, which in a later imprint brought out “A Cyborg Manifesto” as well, was intended as a cautionary tale about the evolution of bodies, politics, and narratives – including stories and accounts of nature, simians, cyborgs, gender, and epistemologies – but at the same time it justified the right to create different, less hostile accounts of nature and society.

Within the realm of transhumanism, and more specifically posthumanism, non-dualism is the baseline for a reconceptualisation of matter. Dualism comes to the fore as the structural principle of the transcendental and humanist traditions that transhumanism and posthumanism seek to change.<sup>10</sup> Posthumanism as a philosophical hub enables thinking beyond the dualist, hierarchical concepts, enlarging the focus to include the non-human realm in post-dualistic, post-hierarchical modes, allowing the envisioning of a

8 Francesca Ferrando, “Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms Differences and Relations,” *Existenz* 8, no. 2 (2014): 28, <https://www.existenz.us/volumes/Vol.8-2Ferrando.pdf>.

9 Valerija Vendramin, “Umetnost pripovedovanja znanstvenih zgodb: ob 35-letnici »Kiborskega manifesta«,” *Alternator* 55 (2020), accessed 10 September 2021, <https://www.alternator.science/sl/daljse/umetnost-pripovedovanja-znanstvenih-zgodb-ob-35-letnici-kiborskega-manifesta/>.

10 Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012), 98.

posthuman future, and thus radically expanding the reaches of human imagination. Posthumanist reflection and research require thinking outside the anthropocentric mentality, beyond dualisms, questioning the axiomatic (invisible or forgotten), transforming the universalist thinking (that we are all the same), and rejecting the hierarchy of power. The focus shifts onto posthuman subjects, subjectivities that are constantly emerging, co-becoming (towards what could be; virtual), as opposed to fixed identities.<sup>11</sup>

In this context, posthumanism meets the new materialism of Rosi Braidotti, who points to the transformation of dualisms as the main focus of the development of alternatives beyond binary oppositions, and in doing so analyses the inherent paradoxes created by dualism. “[N]ew materialism constitutes a philosophy of difference or immanence by working through or ‘traversing’ the dualisms that form the backbone of modernist thought.”<sup>12</sup> Braidotti articulates her nomadic thought as a materialist approach to philosophy relying on a monistic vision of matter as opposed to dichotomous and dualist modes of thinking.<sup>13</sup> Her nomadic thought is physical and material, as well as speculative and ethereal: for that reason she wants to build a theory which allows a positive portrayal of difference, becoming-nomad, which overthrows the main binary dualisms.<sup>14</sup> The downfall of binary oppositions will, she claims, undo the dualist mode and rebalance the power between the two sides of the dichotomy.<sup>15</sup>

While ecofeminism focusses on the deconstruction of binary opposites, transhumanism understands dualism almost as a notion of a past that must be left behind. But for both, dualisms and their deconstruction represent a significant part of the critical conceptualisation of the world.

## Human enhancement

At the core of Christian ecofeminist thought lies the ideal of metanoia (Rosemary Radford Ruether 1992, Eaton ..., Gebara 1999) – a change of consciousness in human’s relationship to and with nature. Human enhancement

11 Ferrando, “Posthumanism, Transhumanism,” 31.

12 Dolphijn and van der Tuin, *New Materialism*, 86.

13 Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press 2011), 3.

14 *Ibid.*, 3.

15 *Ibid.*, 42.

is understood in the sense of human's personal growth through responsible decision-making, inner change, individual transformation toward environmental sensitisation, acknowledgement of the intrinsic value of nature, and environmental literacy. It is thus a change in one's way of life resulting from a conscious decision or spiritual conversion, a complete change of mind and heart that rejects all supremacies of exploitation and hierarchical binary oppositions. Consequently, it leads to the less-is-more paradigm (in terms of consumerism) and responsible management of natural resources. For the ecofeminist paradigm, transforming the negative stereotypes that perpetuate supremacy into new metanarratives which affirm eco-centric egalitarianism is the next stage in the evolution of human and interspecies relationships in the web of life.

Transhumanists consider human nature a work in progress, a half-formed beginning that we can learn to reshape in desired ways. Current humanity is not necessarily the ultimate stage of its evolution. Transhumanists hope that through a responsible use of science, technology, and other rational means we will eventually succeed in becoming posthumans, creatures with much greater capabilities than we currently possess. Transhumanism thus lays stress on perpetual progress. Transhumanists always want more: more intelligence, more life, more experience. This wish is expressed on the level of the individual through another principle, self-transformation, which entails "affirming continual ethical, intellectual, and physical self-improvement, through critical and creative thinking, perpetual learning, personal responsibility, proactivity, and experimentation."<sup>16</sup>

The possibilities of human enhancement comprise radically extending human health, eradicating disease, eliminating unnecessary suffering, and enhancing human intellectual, physical and emotional capabilities. Other transhumanist topics include space colonisation and the possibility of creating superintelligent machines, together with any potential development that could bring about profound changes in the human condition. Human enhancement is thus closely related to technological progress, which is not limited to devices and medicine, but also refers to economic, social, institutional concepts, cultural development, as well as mental skills and techniques.

16 Max More, *The Philosophy of Transhumanism, V: The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 5.

## Essentialism /anti-essentialism

Ecofeminism has received its share of criticism, even from representatives of its own various currents. Some of the most ardent critics question the premise of a closer connection between woman and nature, which lies at the very core of ecofeminism. The strong woman-nature link that has asserted and developed within certain ecofeminist frameworks has made various feminists distance themselves from ecofeminism and intimate that it is essentialist in character. Tension within ecofeminism with regard to essentialism is high: the position of cultural ecofeminists about a female essence that is supposedly closer to nature conflicts with the criticism of essentialism as the exclusionary element oppressing both women and nature and originating in the patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism.

This tension can be explained by the fact that ecofeminism is composed of numerous co-existing movements, from spiritual ecofeminism and Marxist ecofeminism to cyborg ecofeminism. Ecofeminism critically analyses parallels between the oppression of nature and the oppression of women to emphasise the idea that both should be critically understood to allow a proper identification of the nature and means of their interrelatedness. These parallels include, but are not limited to, the conceptions of women and nature as property, of men as custodians of culture and women as custodians of nature, and to the understanding as to how men dominate women and humans dominate nature. Anne Primavesi lucidly summarises the pitfalls and dangers of universalising the relationship between women, nature and culture:

The boundary between nature and culture still continues to be a place of tension within the ecofeminist movement. On the one hand, there are those who reject any essentialist notion of the relationship between women and nature, seeing this as colluding with a patriarchal construct by which women are identified with nature in order to exclude them from culture. On the other hand, some see it as a relationship to be fostered, one which can serve as a catalyst for a new consciousness capable of halting destructive practices which threaten the well-being of life on the planet.<sup>17</sup>

17 Anne Primavesi, "Ecofeminism," in *An A to Z of Feminist Theology* 1996 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 45–46.

The domination and exploitation of nature and women that (Western) industrial civilisation is reinforcing is further facilitated by the stereotype of the woman-nature parallel, which is deeply ingrained in the collective memory of our culture. Some ecofeminisms (sometimes referred to as spiritual ecofeminisms) allow for some truth to the ideology that women are “closer to nature,” but critically point out that this closeness has been exploited by the patriarchal system to enact the male predominance over women and nature as inferior categories. Such distortion is, in their opinion, rooted in the essential truth that women are more attuned to the rhythm of nature and more in touch with their bodies owing to their “birth function.” Women should claim this kinship with nature and take the lead in creating a new earthly spirituality and practice of care for the Earth on their own terms, and not merely as defined by an oppositional view.

“New materialists want to radically challenge and redefine nature as it can ‘no longer [be] the repository of unchanging truths or determining substances but is itself an active, transforming, signifying, material force.’”<sup>18</sup> By insisting on the agency of matter, its interaction with bodies, new materialists attempt to refashion nature as a series of different material forces and currents in interaction with embodied beings in the world. They deculturate cultures by pushing forward new conceptualisations of nature without assigning it a deterministic role.

Rosi Braidotti draws attention to the evident essentialism, claiming that in posthumanism the referents of otherness are no longer that straightforward, as they do not always coincide with the specific embodied characteristics and have ceased to be simple “boundary markers.”<sup>19</sup> She believes that these referents can sometimes be useful for political organisation, but ideally we should back away from them due to the inner risk of essentialism. Objects are never determined and fixed; instead, the subject, for example “the woman,” is always a multifaceted, complex phenomenon composed of different variables. From this point of view, posthumanism exhibits traces of marked anti-essentialism.

18 Marie-Anne Casselton, “Ecofeminist Echos in New Materialism?,” *PhoenEx* 1 (2016): 90, <https://doi.org/10.22329/p.v1i11.4394>.

19 Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*, 40.



## Nature

For ecofeminists, the awareness of the interdependence and interrelatedness of all human and natural non-human beings, of nature, the environment, etc., is crucial and posits ecocentric egalitarianism as the fundamental point of departure of the ethics of interpersonal relationships (in the sense of interconnected ecosystems). Karen J. Warren argues that the ecofeminist criticism of patriarchy is contained in the principles of ecology: everything is interconnected with everything else; all parts of the ecosystem are equal in value. For ecofeminism, therefore, an ethics of mutual interdependence achieved through metanoia – individual changes of heart and mind – is a key expression of acknowledgment of the intrinsic meaning of nature. This ethical principle manifests in the fundamental human responsibility towards nature in terms of human environmental concern for nature conservation, with the ethical imperative of compassionate, ecological care for nature as its noteworthy element. People should be god's stewards of nature preventing its misuse and destruction. In fact, the word for the first man – *Adam* (Hebr. ADAMAH) – means 'earth, soil' and indicates the substance from which (according to the story of Creation) man was made. Also, the fact that men and women share the same warm blood with other mammals is supposedly the reason that according to the Book of Genesis humans are forbidden to eat meat. All this presupposes a deep mutual interconnectedness of human and earth/nature and non-human beings. The conception of female (and human) identity is thus in the context of theological ecofeminism centred along the ethical principle of basic interrelatedness and equality of all human beings and nature in the web of life.<sup>20</sup> Mercedes Canas describes this basic mutual interdependence and connectedness as follows: "The life of the earth is an interconnected web, and no privileged hierarchy of the human over nature, justifying its domination, exists. A healthy, balanced ecosystem, which includes human and non-human inhabitants, must maintain diversity."<sup>21</sup>

Here, in place of patriarchal androcentrism and matriarchic utopianism, the central position features cosmic environmental egalitarianism. Instead of androcentric patriarchal theology, which propagates relationships of domination and exclusion, there is ecofeminist theology centred on cosmic organic

20 Nadja Furlan Štante, "Biotska soodvisnost: iz perspektive teološkega ekofeminizma," in *Iluzija ločenosti* (Koper: Univerzitetna založba Annales, 2012), 115.

21 Mercedes Canas, "In Us Life Grows," in *Women Healing Earth* (New York: Maryknoll, 1996), 27.

egalitarianism, a theology of intrinsic acknowledgment of the human and natural other. As such it appeals to all institutionalised religions and spiritual practices to replace discriminatory paradigms with lost images and symbols, such as: the understanding of the universe and nature as God's body (Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sally McFague), which used to be the typical metaphor (albeit existing in various shapes) and the central image of sensitivity in the Western (Mediterranean) world. It was replaced by the 17th-century mechanistic worldview model (Carol Merchant and Vandana Shiva).<sup>22</sup>

While ecofeminism stresses the power of cooperation between different ecosystems of the biotic community (with humans in charge, but not by exerting control in the sense of the negative stereotype of the crown of Creation, rather emphasising the imperative of responsible care for and life with nature), transhumanism sees nature as a thing to conquer, prevail over. Rod Dreher finds that in transhumanism, declarations of solidarity, consensus, and shared values would eventually be sacrificed on the altar of an individual's choice, for the Technological Man considers as progress anything that expands choice and grants more power over nature.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, transhumanism calls for a separation of human from nature, as it is based on the premise that the most effective way to end suffering is by getting rid of the biological substrate causing the suffering or defects, seeing in it nothing but a burden. In transhumanism, all meaning and all objectives rest in the hands of a technological-scientific utopia that relies on unlimited human plasticity and refuses, without any argumentation, the possibility of the irrecoverable and finite. Nature is regarded as unpredictable and imperfect, and as such it should be conquered, subdued, dominated or perfected.

In posthumanist ecocritical analyses we are confronted with how human is submerged in non-human loops and how literature, biology, chemistry, technology, aesthetics, and politics have become impossible to separate from material networks, thus making up a natural cultural (Donna Haraway) space as an intertwining of science and literature. Donna Haraway's work *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, was in part a provocation aimed at those (eco)feminists who saw women in a more harmonious

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22 Ibid., 108.

23 Rod Dreher, *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Sentinel, 2017), 223.

relationship with nature and in opposition to technology,<sup>24</sup> perhaps even in the sense of the “back to nature” motto.

Posthumanist ecocriticism is also alert to social, political, and ethical consequences of hybrid life forms, drawing attention to the ambivalent ethical risks of certain new developments: for example, engineering new life with inorganic or synthetic matter, an objective that today’s nanotechnologies are already set on achieving.<sup>25</sup>

## Technology

Ecofeminism is mainly suspicious of technology, fearing that it further separates us from the natural ways of discovering and interacting with nature.

Albeit critical of anthropocentrism, certain ecofeminist paradigms remain in its paradigmatic lap (Plumwood, Merchant, Warren), while posthumanism is predominantly leaning towards an anti-anthropocentric understanding of the world. In that regard, the question of acknowledging intrinsic value is crucial to a consistent differentiation of positions and paradigms. While most theological ecofeminisms acknowledge the intrinsic value of living, non-human natural beings (animals, nature), posthumanism and transhumanism concede active agency to inorganic, inert matter and, consequently, to man-made, non-natural objects as well.<sup>26</sup>

Some ecofeminist anti-technological stances critically regard technology as a powerful sexist tool that oppresses women and nature, dominates them through objectification and abuses them in similar ways. Other ecofeminists call attention to the possibility of understanding technology as a neutral tool that could, when supported by a suitable critical analysis, be useful in terms of emancipation as well.

In this context, Donna Haraway’s declaration “I’d rather be a cyborg than a goddess” can be interpreted as a shift towards a new materialism, in the sense that we should integrate technology into our concept of subjectivity, for we cannot eliminate it without eliminating ourselves as well. In this sense,

24 Katherine Hayles, “Unfinished Work: From Cyborg to Cognisphere,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 7-8 (2006): 159–166, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276406069229>.

25 Serpil Oppermann, “From Posthumanism to Posthuman Ecocriticism,” *Relations Beyond Anthropocentrism* 4, no. 4.1 (2016): 23–37, <https://doi.org/10.7358/rela-2016-001-oppe>.

26 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter : a Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 55.

new materialism takes interest in interactions between matter and technology, particularly the way the latter changes and influences our perceptions and actions. New materialism, unlike ecofeminism, maintains a more open stance towards technology as it theorises the posthuman and transhuman, stepping out of the framework of traditional theories of the human subject. Posthumanism observes how intelligent technology and humans are increasingly intertwined, while transhumanism represents “the project of modifying the human species via any kind of emerging science.”<sup>27</sup> Rosi Braidotti believes that “[t]he boundaries between the categories of the natural and the cultural have been displaced and to a large extent blurred by the effects of scientific and technological advances.”<sup>28</sup>

From the point of view of transhumanism, the transition from humanism into posthumanism requires integration rather than the subversion of technology: it is important to admit that technology is already part of who we are and our quotidian life, a constant influence and moulder of our identities. With that in mind, the situation calls for great, critical caution and keeping track of any negative effects of technology, as they could, in many segments, lead to systematic oppression. After all, technology as such (for the time being still the domain of humans) can be turned into an efficient instrument of oppression and inequality of the human species and of nature.

## Conclusion

Based on a brief analysis of divergences and convergences, the paper aims to point out that combining Christian ecofeminist ethics and transhumanist ethics is a vital project, as Christian ecofeminism is able to contribute critical insight into transhumanism and posthumanism, particularly with regard to the analysis of impeding the oppressive effects exerted by the oppressive structures of transhumanism, posthumanism and technology on humans and nature. While (theological) ecofeminism and transhumanism share an interest in surpassing binary oppositions and in interdisciplinary agency, they differ in their conceptualisation of essentialism, nature, and technology, as well as in regard to the ethical and ultimate goals and methods of human enhancement.

27 Casselton, “Ecofeminist Echos,” 87.

28 Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 3.

In his book *Homo Deus – A Brief History of Tomorrow*, the critical Israeli historian and writer Yuval Noah Harari envisages that the humans of the future will be confronted with their own redundancy as their role is taken over by robots and algorithms, and will consequently need to transform into God him/herself. Harari further notes that Homo Sapiens will probably upgrade itself gradually and merge with robots and computers, until our descendants look back one day and realise they are no longer the kind of animal that wrote the Bible, erected the Great Wall of China, and laughed at Charlie Chaplin's comic performances. This will not happen in a day, nor in a year. In fact, it is already happening, as we speak, through countless everyday crepitations. Every day millions of people yield their smartphones more control over their lives or try some new and more effective antidepressant. In their pursuit of health, happiness and power, people will gradually change first one of their traits, then another, and another, until they cease to be humans.<sup>29</sup>

In this setting, theological ecofeminism calls for an internal environmental change that would result in personal growth and a more healthy relationship with ourselves, our fellow humans, and nature (natural non-human beings), and lead us to take a more sober stance towards technology, which should always be in the service of humans and nature. It calls for a paradigmatic shift that stresses the importance of responsible co-existence of different ecosystems, of human's responsible management of natural resources and critical use of technology with the aim of preserving balance among natural ecosystems. It emphasises the intrinsic value of nature and human existence (being), which in transhumanism and posthumanism is blurred in the fusion of nature, machine, and the human.

The technological transformation of human, nature and society is a process taking place among us here and now, before our very eyes – so painfully obvious that in its patency it is, paradoxically, invisible. And precisely in this lies the danger for the contemporary human to forget in the onslaught of commodities the meaning of their own humanity, the humaneness that should essentially fulfil and perfect them in the sense of ethical compassion. At a time of accelerated digital culture, ecofeminism stands as a beacon of fundamental compassionate humaneness and humanity in the full sense of those words, and defines the idea of humanity outside and beyond oppressive hierarchical, androcentric binary oppositions.

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 29 Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus - Kratka zgodovina prihodnosti* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2017), 49.

Both transhumanism and theological ecofeminism offer the contemporary world visions of a better future. The former, which follows faith in human reason and scientific progress, argues that the development of appropriate technology will pave the way into a world where there is less suffering and a greater freedom for individuals and communities to realise their potential. The latter believes that a change of heart and mind in the sense of empathic responsibility towards ourselves, others, and nature, represents the necessary step in the effort for the preservation of the human and other natural species. This ensures the basis for a social transformation that can, in part, be achieved by developing new communities of co-existence and knowledge informed by God's perpetual creative presence in the world. This also requires an awareness which Serpil Oppermann highlighted in relation to the new configurations of the world from a posthumanist perspective:

Although robot technologies, genetic engineering, cybernetic mechanisms, and biotechnological developments indicate a speedy move beyond the speculative in alarming ways toward a more literal disavowing of human control, the fundamental question framing posthumanism is not about superseding the human and establishing a robotic culture, but admitting the human as an interdependent part of the material configurations of the world "in its differential becomings".<sup>30</sup>

It is in this very differential becoming that the critical (Christian) ecofeminist reflection is vital, as it points to the importance of preserving the structure of human existence, the existence of natural species, and the intrinsic values of natural living beings.

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30 Oppermann, "From Posthumanism," 25.

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LESYA SABADA

## The Cosmic Temple - A Reflection of God's Love in Eastern Christian Theology

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis departs from the once dominant view in the West of animals as useful and/or disposable and instead “inaugurates a new era in the Catholic Church’s approach to the natural world. The world of animals, forests, mountains, and waters [is] inextricably part of God’s good news for us; they express and participate in the mystery of salvation”.<sup>1</sup> With that shift, Pope Francis aligns himself with ancient Christian teaching about the role of non-human creatures, a teaching which has been continued in Eastern Christianity.

According to early writings, dating well before the split between East and West in Christianity, animals have both emotion and intelligence. As both St. Gregory Nazianzen (320-390) and St. Ephrem the Syrian (356-372) explain, such a view of animals as sentient beings is evident in Romans 8:22-23:

All things cry out to you.  
Those which speak,  
Those which cannot think.

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<sup>1</sup> Jostrom Isaac Kureethadam, *The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si'* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2019), 57, 58.

For there is one longing, one yearning,  
That all things have for you.<sup>2</sup>

St. Irenaeus, still highly regarded by both Eastern and Western churches, saw in animals “profound mental intuition and perception,” given by God.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, St. Basil the Great (330-379) articulated the following central themes: the creaturely fellowship based on the common origin from God of all creatures; opposition to injustice and all wrong; the recognition of the suffering of fellow creatures; and the rejection of a wholly instrumentalist view of animals in favour of the recognition that they also live for God.

Such a view, in patristic teachings, of the animal world as a sensitive, instinctive reflection of God’s creation and God’s love was based firmly on the Bible. St. John, in Revelation 5:13 (RSV), tells us that all creatures participate in worship: “And I hear every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, ‘To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever.’” The Prophet Agur speaks of the wisdom of ants, badgers, locusts, and lizards.<sup>4</sup> Job likewise invites his friends to seek truth from beyond their prized philosophy: “But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; or the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Bible, as interpreted by the earliest writers, would indicate clearly that the non-human community has both *instrumental value* and *inherent value*.

That wholistic embrace of all creation has generally remained a strong component of Eastern Orthodoxy although Met. John Zizoulas (1989) admits that a tendency to overlook the natural world’s inherent value had entered the Church at an early point, a tendency from which the Orthodox are not immune. He acknowledges the “strong negative influence of Platonic Gnostic dualism on the perception of the material world.”<sup>6</sup>

That Platonic dualism, unfortunately, was much “further developed in the West via Augustine and Boethius. Because of this, theologians and

2 Christina Nellist, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and Animal Suffering: Ancient Voices in Modern Theology* (Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018) 69-70.

3 Nellist, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 30.

4 Proverbs 30: 24-27.

5 Job 12: 7-9, RSV.

6 *Ibid.*, 153.

philosophers such as Aquinas, Kant, and Descartes denied animals any intrinsic value, justice or mercy and importantly denied that animals had the capacity to feel pain.<sup>7</sup> Western thinking thus adopted a strongly hierarchical view of all creation, known as the Chain of Being, which ranked animals well below humans and made it natural to view the non-human world as subordinate to humanity. Indeed, the command given to Adam and Eve in Genesis to “have dominion over” Nature in Gen. 1:26-28, was interpreted through the lens of the Chain of Being and later through a post-Renaissance scientific lens, becoming what Pope Francis has called a “tyrannical anthropocentrism unconcerned for other creatures”.<sup>8</sup>

To understand Pope Francis’ clear call in *Laudato Si’* to disassociate ourselves from an exploitative treatment of animals and irreverent attitude toward much of creation, it is helpful to review current teachings of Eastern Orthodoxy, which are based on early Christianity and have been a continual part of Orthodoxy ever since. St. Athanasius (c. 293-373) teaches us that “no part of creation is left void of Him: He has filled all things everywhere”.<sup>9</sup> Metropolitan Kallistos sums up this patristic teaching: “[a]nimals are holy and therefore the way we treat animals is directly relevant to our living a Christian life”,<sup>10</sup> and adds that we have a “pastoral responsibility towards the living creatures, domestic and wild, that God has given us to be our companions”.<sup>11</sup> The commandment in Genesis that Eastern Christianity emphasizes is found in Genesis 2:15: “[t]he LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” For the Eastern Church, the stewardship of the earth is a central theme and ultimate act of charity.

What does our pastoral responsibility toward the created world entail? First, it means acknowledging that the natural world is the “cosmic temple” housing the community of life (Mary).

With this recognition of Nature’s sanctity comes the responsibility of sanctifying nature, which is our purpose. For the Eastern Christian, this sanctification is done not only through formal prayer but through lifestyle. Prayer in the East is aimed towards a prayerful life which might be called a

7 Ibid., 153.

8 Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops’ *Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace*, 68.

9 Nellist, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 29.

10 Ibid., 162.

11 Kallistos Ware, “Compassion for the Animals in the Orthodox Church,” *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 10, no. 2 (2019), 20, <https://www.orthodox-theology.com/media/PDF/2.2019/MetropolitanKallistosWare.pdf>.

“waking meditation”. Every breath, thought, word, and action is a prayer in the Cosmic Temple. And just as the Jesus Prayer is the anchor for the Eastern Christian’s breath and mind to find a proper relationship with God, an integral ecology is the anchor for one’s actions for a proper relationship with the non-human community. It is here that Pope Francis’ conversion shakes hands with Orthodoxy’s theosis. To be God-like, for the Eastern Orthodox, is not “have dominion over” as much as it is to “keep [watch over]”. As Ware explains, “in the exercise of our dominion over the animals we are to show the same gentleness and loving compassion that God himself shows towards the whole of creation”.<sup>12</sup> Just as God takes care of all the Ornaments of the Cosmic Temple, not just the human ones, so too must we. In the East, integral ecology is a mode of divinization.

At the very least, this awareness of animals as not only our co-worshippers of God, but also among those for whom God shows particular care – the most vulnerable, the widows and orphans – calls for compassion, and not only compassion. St. Isaac the Syrian (613-700) reminds us, “Oppression is eradicated by compassion and renunciation”.<sup>13</sup> Renunciation, or asceticism, is a key component of the Eastern Orthodox way of life. This should not be understood as an extreme asceticism that includes self-harm. Rather, it is what might be called a mild asceticism that advocates simple living, or living with less while focusing on needs, not wants. Met. Kallistos emphatically states,

Biblical and patristic teachings also inform us that whilst some actions may be lawful, they are not necessarily expedient. Importantly, we must “not use our liberty” as a cloak of maliciousness. A theology of love for “all things” would promote the fact that at no time were we given permission to kill animals to indulge the passions and sins of greed or blood lust. It promotes the ideal that we are to treat animals with love, compassion, and mercy both when they are living and if they have to be killed.<sup>14</sup>

Pope Francis would agree with the need to limit our own freedoms, and renunciation is crucial for integral ecology of *Laudato Si’*. This sentiment is clearly addressed by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in *Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace*:

.....  
12 Ibid., 22.

13 Nellist, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 96. (emphasis added).

14 Ware, *Compassion for the Animals*, 66.

When biblical texts are read in context, the proper interpretation “implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between humans and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations” (*LS*, no. 67). This involves respecting the laws of the earth and the “delicate equilibria” (*LS*, no. 68) among creatures.<sup>15</sup>

Early Christians and then also Eastern Christians would have explained that they learned about the inter-connectedness (“delicate equilibria”) of all creatures from the “Book of Nature”. Though the idea that the Book of Nature can provide revelations on spiritual matters may seem foreign to some, possibly many Roman Catholics, it is an ancient tradition of the Church. Even St. Aquinas saw the Book of Nature as revelatory. Pope Francis, when he speaks of the Gospel of Creation, references a view of Nature very familiar to Eastern Orthodox. According to St. John Climacus, “Nothing is without order or purpose in the animal kingdom; each animal bears the wisdom of the Creator and testifies of Him. God granted man and animals many natural attributes, such as compassion, love, feelings”.<sup>16</sup>

Interestingly, as Pope Francis is aware, modern science is now “reading” the Book of Nature and arriving at similar conclusions: “many species have language, intelligence, rational thought, self-awareness, creativity, use of tools, loving family units, and the capacity to feel physical pain and experience psychological suffering. In essence, any difference is a matter of degree rather than absence”.<sup>17</sup> However, *Laudato Si’* is harshly critical of “technocracy,” which has, as Krueger points out, “desensitized us to the witness of creation”.<sup>18</sup>

Pope Francis is thus aiming to revive in the Roman Catholic Church the same conviction that is at the heart of the Eastern Church’s view of the animal kingdom: all created things, both human and non-human, make one congregation, one united body of worshipers seeking to glorify God. That calls for compassion, respect, and above all, reconciliation. As Met. Kallistos relates:

15 Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops’ *Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace*, *LS*, 67, 68.

16 John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 238.

17 Nellist, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 147.

18 Frederic W. Krueger, *Greening the Orthodox Parish: A Handbook for Christian Ecological Practice* (Charleston, South Carolina: The Orthodox Fellowship of the Transfiguration, 2012), 84.

In the lives of Eastern Christian saints—as among the saints of the West—there are numerous stories of close fellowship between the animals and holy men and women. The mutual understanding between animals and humans recalls the situation before the fall, when the two lived at peace in paradise, and it points forward to the transfiguration of the cosmos at the end of time. In the words of St. Isaac, the Syrian (7th century), “The humble person approaches the wild animals, and the moment they catch sight of him their ferocity is tamed. They come up and cling to him as to their master, wagging their tails and licking his hands and feet. For they smell on him the same smell that came from Adam before the transgression.”<sup>19</sup>

Though some in the Christian community see the climate change as a scientific, not religious, problem, Pope Francis and the Eastern Church would disagree. Met. Kallistos simply reminds all Christians:

This is not only Orthodox but part of our Christian heritage. Animals are part of God’s creation and we humans have a God-given responsibility towards creation, then at once, one sees that it is both a moral and spiritual question.<sup>20</sup>

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 19 Ware, *Compassion for the Animals*, 23.

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**SECTION 2:  
GOVERNANCE, POLITICS,  
GOOD PRACTICES, AND  
CRITICAL EVALUATIONS OF  
ECOLOGICAL (IN)JUSTICE**



TOM SVERRE BREDAL-TOMREN AND  
BENEDIKTE CECILIE RENBERG

## The Church of Norway and the Sami Fight against Wind Turbines: A Case Study

On Thursday, 23 February 2023, a group of Sámi youth blocked the entrance to the Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy in Oslo.<sup>1</sup> They were protesting against the Storheia wind farm (Storheia *vindmøllepark*) in Fosen, in central Norway.

The Storheia installation had been established in an area with the status of Sámi reindeer grazing land. During the night of Monday, 27 February, the campaigners were carried off by Norwegian police forces. In the days that followed, the protest expanded, and demonstrators blocked several other ministries. Once again, the Sámi campaigners were carried off shortly after they began campaigning. Within a few days, Greta Thunberg arrived from Sweden to take part in the demonstrations.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Martin Lægland, "Operasjon Endgame," *Verdens Gang*, March 26, 2023, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/BWzVov/operasjon-endgame>.

2 Ibid.



The campaign led to great debate in the Norwegian media. Bishops and priests from the Church of Norway (CoN) also spoke out and participated by supporting the campaigners. The actions concluded a week later with a demonstration in front of the king's palace in Oslo. At this point, the Minister of Petroleum and Energy admitted publicly that the controversial wind farm was a violation of Sámi human rights. In this paper, we will examine the background of the campaign, the church of Norway's role in it and the debate that followed.

The overarching theme of the chapter is the CoN's role in the debate over wind turbines in traditional Sámi grazing areas. The article's research problem is formulated as follows:

- What is the historical background of the demonstration?

- What did the different CoN spokespersons do and say over the course of the demonstration and debate?
- What were the clergy’s theological and ethical arguments?
- How did the local members of the clergy involve themselves and what was their experience of the ongoing environmental conflict?

The article concludes with a summary and a reflection on what churches can learn from this experience.

## Data material

To answer these questions, we have studied official legal documents, statements by church leaders and church councils, and posts in the Norwegian media (especially the two major Christian daily newspapers, *Avisen Dagen* and *Avisen Vårt Land*, the Norwegian national television channel (NRK) and the country’s largest newspaper, (VG), supplementing these with information drawn from e-mail correspondence with the priests involved. Our study also draws on previous research and other relevant literature.

The data to be analysed is available as text. The methods have therefore been taken from the hermeneutic tradition. Specifically, we combine perspectives from *idea analysis*, the *historical method* and *partial discourse analysis*.<sup>3</sup> The idea analysis maps the ideas in the texts under examination and asks which ideas are prominent among the actors concerned, where these ideas are rooted and what they lead to. The historical method traces a course of action and tries to reproduce it within its historical context.<sup>4</sup> Here the questions are what the reasoning was that affected the decision(s) and which situations were relevant. Discourse analysis focuses on “tracing collective opinion structures to show how communication is dictated by shared expectations and frameworks”. The question asked here is how the dominant understandings have been presented in isolation and in relation to each other linguistically.<sup>5</sup> In order to gain more insight into the ecclesiastical actors’ motives and ideas, we have studied newspaper clippings, press releases and minutes together with data obtained through e-mail interviews with the implicated priests.

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3 Øyvind Bratsberg, *Text analysis for social scientists* (Oslo: Gyldendal forlag, 2021), 213.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

## Tools for analysis

In the analysis, we draw on established terms and categories as used in the Lutheran World Federation's (LWF) work on Mission and Diakonia, as well as on ecotheological tradition.<sup>6</sup>

An umbrella term the Lutheran World Federation uses to discuss how churches and Christians can help promote a fairer society is *transformation*. A church's *transformation* work includes helping to develop societies in which everyone is valued equally and has equal opportunities for self-fulfilment. Theologically, the term is linked to God's continued creation (Latin: *creatio continua*), a theological concept that emphasises God continuing to innovate and keep life going on the planet and the Creator endeavouring to realise his will with creation. In the field of mission studies, this is often referred to as God's mission, *Missio Dei*.<sup>7</sup> Man is invited as God's co-worker.<sup>8</sup>

As part of its transformative efforts, the LWF highlights three main methods: *teaching, advocacy for the weak*<sup>9</sup> and *mobilising against injustice*.<sup>10</sup>

Another key term found in the LWF documents is *empowerment*, which refers to the Biblical message emphasising that all people are created in God's image, with equal value and equal rights, and to the mutual dependence of all human beings on one another. This also means that the voices of all minorities must be heard and that the churches have a duty help those not usually heard to get their word out.

A third term is *reconciliation*, which focuses on God having reconciled the world with himself through Christ and, consequently, the church's call to create reconciliation. *Diakonia in Context* emphasises that reconciliation means the voice and story of the oppressed being heard and moving the parties towards a better situation: "Reconciliation has taken people to a new place – it empowers them for renewed relations."<sup>11</sup> The term is particularly relevant in this chapter because the demonstrations occurred in the same year that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which deals with abuses

6 Kjell Nordstokke, ed., *Diakonia in context: transformation, reconciliation, empowerment: an LWF contribution to the understanding and practice of diakonia* (Geneva: LWF, 2009), 43.

7 Rolf Kjøde, "Økumeniske perspektiv på misjon [Ecumenical perspective on mission]," in *Misologi en innføring [Misology an introduction]*, ed. J. B. Nikolajsen, K. S. Haug, F.-O. Thoresen and I. Eskilt (Oslo: Cappelen akademisk, 2021), 129.

8 Nordstokke, *Diakonia in context*, 43–44.

9 "Advocacy often is related to resisting the power of the mighty and their ideology." *Ibid.*, 83.

10 *Ibid.*, 61.

11 *Ibid.*, 45.

and suppression of the Sámi population, was to deliver its report. Other key analytical terms used in this chapter are *leiturgia*, *kerygma* and *diaconia*.<sup>12</sup> *Leiturgia* refers to the community celebrating the service, *kerygma* to preaching and the word, and *diaconia* to the church's service of care.

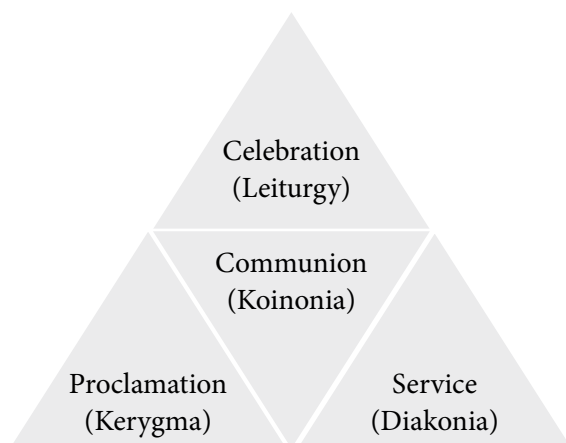


Figure 1. Dimensions of the church<sup>13</sup>

## My prejudices

No researcher can proceed without making certain assumptions, which Gadamer refers to as *prejudice*. Our prejudices and professional traditions are often referred to as ecotheology. Ecotheology is a normative theology that aims to encourage religious actors to engage in ecological sustainability work. In other words, ecotheology has significant implications for what is often referred to as action research. Having a clearly stated agenda does not exempt a researcher from the requirements of other types of theological research. The data and analysis must be documented, and other researchers must be able to verify the material presented, the analysis and the conclusion. Before giving an account of the matter under discussion, I will provide an overview of the context so that even readers not very familiar with Sámi and Norwegian culture and history will have sufficient background to follow the presentation.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

## Sámi culture and history

The Sámi are an ethnic group in the North Calotte region of Europe. The traditional Sámi settlement area, Sápmi, encompasses central parts of Norway, northern Sweden, northern Finland and the Kola Peninsula of Russia. According to figures from Statistics Norway, in 2017 the Norwegian Sámi had a population of 55,544. The latest overview for all the Nordic countries dates to 2005 and gives figures of 57,567 for Norway, 20,000 for Sweden, 7,500 for Finland and 2,000 for Russia, yielding a figure of 85,267 for the Sámi population in 2005.<sup>14</sup>

The Sámi population has developed various regional cultural expressions and ten different languages, Northern Sámi being the majority language. The Sámi population is often categorized by respective language as well as occupation and settlement, for example coastal Sámi and reindeer-herding Sámi. The permanent coastal Sámi tended to engage in fishing, agriculture and trade, while the reindeer-herding Sámi moved in annual cycles between inland and coastal areas. Norwegianisation and assimilation has had greater impact for the coastal Sámi in losing their cultural identity and language, compared to the reindeer-herding Sámi. Consequently, there is a unified understanding that the element of reindeer-herding has contributed with maintaining Sámi language and culture.

## Norwegianization

War and power struggles between nations have affected the national borders, which have implicated Sápmi. Acceptance of the Sámi language and traditional Sámi culture has varied from country to country and from period to period.<sup>15</sup> In the following we shall focus on the Sámi population in Norway.

According to historian Steinar Pedersen, prior to 1814 the central administration of the Kingdom of Denmark-Norway hardly distinguished

14 However, the figures here are misleading as they are partly based on territorial calculations and do not count individuals. This means that those who live in certain areas are automatically counted as Sami, while Sami who live in areas that are not considered Sami municipalities are not included in the statistics (Astrid Andresen, "Mellom politikk og demografi: Å være og å representere [Between politics and demography: To be and to represent]," in *Samenes historie fra 1750–2010 [The Sami's history from 1750–2010]*, ed. A. Andresen, B. Evjen and T. Ryymin (Oslo: Cappelen Damm, Akademisk, 2021), 49).

15 Cf. Tomren 2022.



between the Sámi and Norwegians. The Danish colonial state looked after the interests of the Sámi in the same way as it did those of the Norwegian population.<sup>16</sup> This changed in 1814 when Norway gained internal independence. In the new national centre of Kristiania (today's Oslo), the authorities and the elite endeavoured to create and enhance their Norwegian national identity. The implication was that the Sámi, especially from the 1840s on, were in a weaker position in the Norwegian state than under the Danish monarchy, as they were now inhabitants of a nation where the majority population used the state as a tool to promote its own interests. The prevailing ideology was the nation-state, meaning one people, one state, one language and one legal system. This was the beginning of what came to be referred to as the Norwegianization policy,<sup>17</sup> which was official Norwegian policy from 1840 until the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> Norwegianization also refers to a more general process of cultural assimilation, that is, the general social, economic and cultural modernisation and integration processes that led to linguistic and cultural changes amongst the Sámi and others.<sup>19</sup> Researchers who have studied Norwegianization policy categorise it by phase on the basis of motives, target groups and values.<sup>20</sup>

The period 1850-1870 is referred to as the *introductory phase*, when the economic and organisational foundations of Norwegianization were laid. This is followed by *escalation and tightening* (1870-1900), when Norwegianization policy was implemented in schools and other areas of society such as the church, by then a state church. The third phase is *culmination* (1900-1940), characterised by consolidation and expansion policies as well as growing resistance to Norwegianization. A new central instrument was the establishment of state boarding schools. The fourth phase, described as a down-scaling of Norwegianization policy, is associated with the post-war period. Finally, since 1960, political currents have reversed, and the state has gradually granted the Sámi population more rights.

16 Steiner Pedersen, "Inn i den norske nasjonalstaten 1814-1852 [Into the Norwegian national state 1814-1852]" in *Samenes historie fra 1750-2010 [History of the Sami from 1750-2010]*, ed. A. Andresen, B. Evjen and T. Ryymin (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2021), 155.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 158-159.

19 Ketil Zachariassen, Teemu Ryymin, and Bjørg Evjen, "Fornorskningsspolitikk og samer [Norwegianization policy and the Sami]," in *Samenes historie fra 1750-2010 [The history of the Sami from 1750-2010]*, ed. A. Andresen, B. Evjen and T. Ryymin (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2021), 157.

20 Ibid.

The first Sámi self-interest organisation in Norway, Brurskanken Samiske Kvindeforening, was formed in 1910 on the initiative of Elsa Laula Renberg. In 1917, the first international Sámi meeting was held in Trondheim. After World War II, the Norwegian state gradually gave more rights to the Sámi population. In the following years several Sámi federations were formed as well as The Sámi Council, a joint umbrella organization whose mandate is to look after Sámi interests across national borders. Parallel to the development of Sámi self-interest organizations, various Sámi social institutions emerged in education, mass media, cultural preservation and Sámi culture.

## The Alta conflicts

A significant event leading to the awakening and consolidation of Sámi interests was the conflict over damming the Alta River in Finnmark.

The first design for the Alta-Kautokeino dam was presented in 1968. The suggested areas, which would be affected by the dam, were used for reindeer herding, Sámi salmon fishing and Sámi settlement. Among other things, it was proposed that the Sámi village of Máze be submerged. In 1978, fifteen thousand signatures were collected from those in opposition to the plan. By 1979, resistance had grown into a civil disobedience movement. In the autumn of that year, Sámi activists raised a lavvo (tent) outside Parliament. Demands to halt the construction of the dam were rejected by the Norwegian authorities, thus triggering hunger strikes and further protest. In 1982, the Supreme Court ruled that the development was legal. The popular action was then shut down.<sup>21</sup> The decision and the process created deep distrust in the Sámi population towards the Norwegian state. The incidents also led to large portions of the Norwegian environmental movement seeing the Sámi organisations as a key partner in the struggle to care for nature and the environment.<sup>22</sup> This alliance sprang to life during the Fosen demonstration, and in the debate that followed many voices found parallels with the Alta action.<sup>23</sup>

21 Astrid Andresen et al., “Kampen om rettighetene: Fra språk og kultur til naturresurser 1963-1990 [The battle for rights: From language and culture to natural resources 1963-1990],” in *Samenes historie fra 1750-2010 [The Sami's history from 1750-2010]*, ed. A. Andresen, B. Evjen and T. Ryymin (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademisk, 2021), 370-386.

22 Ibid., 373-375.

23 Cf. for example E24, “Støtter rivning av Fosen-vindkraft: – En ny Alta-kamp [Supports demolition of Fosen wind power: - A new Alta battle],” last updated 27 February 2023, <https://e24.no/energi-og-klimatek/2023/02/27/stoetter-rivning-av-fosen-vindkraft-en-ny-alta-kamp>.

The Alta conflict revealed a need for new legislation and institutions with Sámi representation. In 1980, a Sámi rights committee was set up that presented its recommendations in 1984. In 1987, the year the Alta dam was opened, a new Sámi law was adopted in Parliament, and the following year, Parliament adopted a new constitutional paragraph on Sámi language, culture and society. The year after that, a separate Sámi Parliament (SP) was established and opened, which replaced the Sámi Council. The SP has responsibility for all matters concerning Sámi interests and the national authorities consult the SP on all relevant matters. In 1990, the Norwegian legislation on the Sámi language was expanded. That same year, Norway was the first state in the world to ratify ILO Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples. In the conflict that we are studying in this chapter, the Sámi Parliament sided with the activists.

## Sámi understanding of nature

Although the Sámi population was, as we shall come back to, officially Christianised about a thousand years ago and several hundred years have passed since the Sámi population has practised the traditional shamanistic religion, old ideas about the underground and the sacred places in nature typify how many Sámi think about the sanctity of nature. In order to understand the Sámi position and strong commitment to nature and the landscape, it is necessary to have insight into how the Sámi thought, and still think about, relationships between people, animals, the landscape and the sacred. In 1996, Roald Kristiansen gave an account of how traditional Sámi religious concepts entailed greater respect for nature than is found in the in most of modern Norwegian Christianity, which has implications for how one thinks about the relationship between nature, man and the sacred.<sup>24</sup>

Later studies by Tore Johnsen, among others, show that even though the Sámi population has been Christian for hundreds of years, remnants of the traditional Sámi understanding of nature persist in the population and are not perceived as conflicting with the Bible's message and reality picture. According to Johnsen, this is particularly evident in such everyday religious practices as asking the land for permission to tent by uttering blessings and avoiding certain places.

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 24 Roald E. Kristiansen, "Samisk Religion i en økologisk sammenheng [Sami Religion in an ecological context]," in *Kirke og Kultur* 99, no. 2 (1994), 145–60.

Sámi ecotheologians like Tore Johnsen and Bierna Bientia tend to stress the connection between nature, humanity and the divine. They are more concerned with ontology and cosmology than ethical practice and emphasise the spiritual dimensions of nature.<sup>25</sup>

The Sámi understanding of nature emphasising respect for natural spaces and species other than human beings can explain some of the strong reactions that arose when the state decided to instal an industrial park in untouched traditional reindeer-grazing areas.

In short, the Sámi population is consistently Christian, and several institutions have been developed to deal with Sámi church life. However, the Sámi population, which is in contact with its traditions and customs, has inherited a sensitivity to nature that emphasises the sacredness of the landscape and of other species. Even if not stated directly in the debate or in the highest court judgement, religion and cosmology cannot be ruled out as contributing to the strong Sámi commitment to opposing industrial development in Sámi natural areas.

## The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Another element of context needed to understand the causes and effects leading to the demonstrations is the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. On 20 June 2017, Parliament set up a committee to scrutinise the indigenous policy of Norwegianization for “lay(ing) the foundation for an acknowledgement of the state-driven discrimination against Sámi and Kvens/Norwegian Finns and the consequences these experiences have had for them as groups and individuals”.<sup>26</sup> It was intended to establish a common understanding of the policy of Norwegianization and create a basis for continued reconciliation between Sámi, Kven/Norwegian Finns and the majority population.<sup>27</sup> The commission’s report was published on 2 June 2023.<sup>28</sup>

25 Bredal-Tomren, “Sámi ecotheology as a resource for the church of Norway,” in *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology* 77, no. 2 (2023), 14–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0039338X.2023.2194273>.

26 <https://uit.no/kommissionen/mandat>.

27 Ibid.

28 Sannhets- og forsoningskommisjonen, “Sannhet og forsoning [Truth and reconciliation],” Dokument 19 (2022–2023), <https://www.stortinget.no/globalassets/pdf/sannhets--og-forsoningskommisjonen/rapport-til-stortinget-fra-sannhets--og-forsoningskommisjonen.pdf>.

Over the course of this official reconciliation work, conflict escalated between Sámi reindeer owners and nature conservation interests on the one hand and, on the other, Norwegian state and business interests that wanted to develop a wind farm in Sámi grazing areas.

## The political framework for energy

A licence to build wind turbines at Fosen was granted in 2011 because the Norwegian government wanted more renewable energy in the market. At this time, wind power plans were regulated through county area plans. Some counties adopted comprehensive regional plans. In 2018, Norway joined the EU's energy cooperative, The European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (abbreviated ACER). One of the main arguments for Norway joining ACER and for Norway's integration into the European power market was that Norway would be able to offer the EU power market renewable energy from hydropower whenever there was a deficit of wind-based power in Europe. According to the slogan, Norway should function as Europe's green battery.<sup>29</sup> New transmission cables were laid for electricity to the continent and the British Isles from southern Norway. The effect on the ordinary citizen was a significant increase in the price of electricity. This led to intense political debate, as a result of which the Norwegian government adopted a system whereby the government paid at least a portion of private household electricity bills when the price went above a certain threshold. Another factor affecting the energy market and the debate in Norway was Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Norwegian environmental NGOs were at odds over how to deal with wind farms in Norwegian nature. The split in the environmental movement was partly between groups and individuals concerned primarily with the protection of biological diversity (classic nature conservation) and those concerned primarily with climate change. Another, somewhat coincidental, axis of conflict existed between environmentalists who thought climate and environmental problems could be solved by lifestyle change and reduced energy

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<sup>29</sup> Norges Høyesterett [Norwegian Supreme Court], *Dom avsagt 11. oktober 2021 av Høyesterett i storkammer* [Judgement handed down on 11 October 2021 by the Supreme Court in Grand Chamber], <https://www.domstol.no/globalassets/upload/hret/avgjorelser/2021/oktober-2021/hr-2021-1975-s.pdf>.

consumption versus those who it could be solved by developing new technology based on renewable energy sources.<sup>30</sup>

## The Fosen case – Supreme Court judgement

Fosen is a peninsula in the middle of Norway. In 2010, the Norwegian authorities granted wind turbine companies a licence to build turbines in the mountainous areas of Storheia and Roan on Fosen,<sup>31</sup> where several Southern Sámi families have engaged in reindeer herding for generations. The area was referred to as the *Fosen reindeer herding district*. The reindeer grazing district includes two herding groups, *Sør-Fosen Sitje* and *Nord-Fosen Siida*. The reindeer owners objected to the plan, claiming it would infringe upon their traditional grazing rights and prevent them from practising their traditional culture. Their claim was rejected by the Norwegian authorities. The reindeer-herding Sámi then brought the case before the Norwegian courts. However, the turbine company, Fosen Vind DA, was still given permission to start construction and the turbines were installed in 2019 and 2020, despite the case not being finalised in the legal system. In parallel, the reindeer owners appealed the case, first to the Court of Appeal, where they were only partially upheld, then to the Norwegian Supreme Court, which delivered a verdict on 11 October 2021.<sup>32</sup>

The dispute that the Supreme Court decided on was whether the development of wind farms in the Sámi reindeer herding districts infringed upon the reindeer-herding Sámi's right to exercise culture according to Article 27 of the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights (SP). The Supreme Court unanimously concluded that these rights had been violated and hence that the decisions on the concession and expropriation of land were invalid.<sup>33</sup> In its judgement, it also stated that consideration for the reindeer owner could be set aside but only if dictated by important societal interests. It then

30 Lars Nehru Sand and Ellen Viseth, "Bellona advarer mot De Grønne [Bellona warns against the Greens]," *NRK*, August 19, 2013, <https://www.nrk.no/valg2013/bellona-advarer-mot-de-gronne-1.11189237>; Helena Rongstad, Helena Heimer and Ole Bjørlo Strande, "The Environmental Protection Association wants the demolition wind power plant," *NRK*, December 8, 2020, <https://www.nrk.no/innlandet/miljovernforbundetkrever-bygggestans-av-vindkraftverk-pa-kjolberget-1.15279750>

31 In the presentation, we take the text of the Supreme Court judgement as our starting point. *Norges Høyesterett, Dom avsagt 11. oktober 2021.*

32 *Norges Høyesterett, Dom avsagt 11. oktober 2021.*

33 *Ibid.*

discussed whether climate change and the transition from fossil to renewable energy sources represented such an interest and pronounced that it was not, as the turbines could have been located elsewhere.<sup>34</sup>

The logic of the Supreme Court judgement can be reproduced as follows:

- Reindeer herding is a culture-supporting industry crucial to the practice of Southern Sámi culture.
- The reindeer grazing district is ecologically and economically vulnerable, meaning that the reduction of grazing areas by a wind farm could have the consequence of some families having to stop reindeer herding.
- This would contravene Article 27 of the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights (SP), which reads as follows:

In those States where ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, those belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, together with other members of their group, to cultivate their own culture, profess and practice their own religion, or use their own language.<sup>35</sup>

The Supreme Court judgement did not emphasise biological diversity, as it was determined that the area did not contain unique natural values or species populations threatened with extinction.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the judgement shows that the conflict affected all three sectors of sustainability: ecological sustainability, referring to climate change, and social and economic sustainability, referring to herding and the cultural practice surrounding it. The argument of the wind power developers was heavily based on the climate (i.e., global ecological sustainability), whereas the reindeer owners' argument was based on the social sustainability and economic sustainability of the indigenous Sámi population. Compared to the arguments referred to in the judgement, the arguments of both parties were anthropocentric.

When the verdict was announced, the reindeer owners and much of the Sámi population in general expected the case to be closed and the turbines taken down. This did not happen. The Ministry of Petroleum and Energy wanted to leave the turbines standing, so the Department of Petroleum and Energy sent the case to its own lawyers for investigation. Exactly 500 days after the Supreme Court verdict, Sámi youth took action with the organisation

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

<sup>36</sup> Norges Høyesterett, *Dom avsagt 11. oktober 2021*.

Natur og Ungdom (NU) (Nature and Youth). After a week of action, both the Minister of Petroleum and Energy and the Prime Minister conceded that the Norwegian state was guilty of an ongoing human rights violation. Partly because of the Supreme Court judgement and partly as a result of the ongoing work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and maybe partly as a result of the Fosen conflict, on 15 May 2023, Parliament adopted a change to the wording of the Norwegian constitution, which came into effect immediately. The law now states emphatically that the Sámi are an indigenous people in Norway. According to Section 108, “It is the responsibility of the state authorities to create the right conditions for the Sámi people, as an indigenous people, to secure and develop their language, their culture and their social life.”

Nature and Youth (NU) has traditionally focused on ecological sustainability. If one compares the organisation’s involvement and statements in this case with its previous statements on wind turbines, we may be tempted to speculate that it is emphasising social sustainability more so than it has traditionally.<sup>37</sup>

With this, the Norwegian Parliament has confirmed that it accepts the premises on which the Supreme Court based the Fosen judgement. However, this has not led to the government instructing the mill owners to take down the wind turbines, a situation which persists even as we write this.

As our historical review has shown, the Fosen demonstration and the wind turbine conflict need to be understood against the backdrop of the latent and historical tensions between the Sámi minority population and the Norwegian majority population, the tensions over who should own the natural areas in the districts, and the internal tensions within the environmental movement.

The Supreme Court recognises that the Southern Sámi culture and language arenas for the Southern Sámi population are marginal and that the reindeer herding and environment around it are the main Sámi cultural arena.

This leads us to the subsequent research questions in the introduction, dealing with the church’s role in the conflict.

To indicate what the role is that the Norwegian Church plays and assumes in Sámi culture, it is necessary to start with the role that the CoN has and used to have with regard to the Sámi population.

37 <https://www.vindenergi.no/news/klimaet-trenger-vindkraften>



## The Sámi and the Norwegian Church

The Sámi population converted to Christianity over a long period of time.<sup>38</sup> In Norway, the Sámi were in contact with Christianity from the time of Olav Tryggvasson's travels along Helgeland in 999 and Olav the Holy's journey to Bjarkøy in 1020.<sup>39</sup> At that time, several chiefs in the area converted to the Christian faith, and much of the population did so with them. According to Bo Lundmark, it is highly probable that this was also true of some of the Sámi population.<sup>40</sup> Following the Catholic archbishop Waldendorf's visit to Vardø in 1510-1522, he had concluded that the Sámi had been converted. However, according to Bo Lundmark, this was a hasty conclusion, as many Sámi chose to be baptised and presented themselves as Christian, while continuing to practice their traditional Sámi religion.<sup>41</sup> Lundmark nevertheless emphasises that a large part of the Sámi population was in frequent contact with priests and the church and thus heavily influenced by Catholic Christianity. Signs of this are the Maria monograms on the buckles of many Sámi costumes and the Maria motif in several old *joiks*.<sup>42</sup>

The Reformation was introduced in Norway, Sweden and Denmark in 1536, and Sweden's transition to Lutheranism took place in the period 1527-1593. The Reformation put emphasis on the individual having personal faith in Christ and this shaping their way of life. The Bible was translated into Danish and Swedish, and books and catechisms were published to strengthen the Christian faith among the population. The Sámi population was also to be reached with the Gospel.<sup>43</sup> Thomas von Westen led the efforts aimed at the Sámi in Norway and emphasised that the missionary work should be in the Sámi language. Von Westen himself carried out three missionary journeys in Sámi areas, through meetings, teaching and personal conversations with an emphasis on conversion. Jens Kihl's descriptions of the gatherings that von

38 Roald E. Kristiansen, *Samisk religion og Læstadianismen [Sami religion and Læstadianism]* (Bergen: Fagbokforlaget, 2005), 85.

39 Bo Lundmark, "Medeltida vittnesbörd om samerna och den katolska kyrkan [Medieval testimony about the Sami and the Catholic Church]," in *De historiska relationerna mellan Svenska kyrkan och samerna 2 [The historical relations between the Church of Sweden and the Sami 2]*, ed. D. S. Lindmark and O. Sundström (Uppsala: Artos & Norma bokförlag, 2016), 221-223.

40 Tomren, "Sámi ecotheology," 373-378.

41 Ibid.

42 Lundmark, "Medeltida vittnesbörd," 227.

43 Roald E. Kristiansen, *Den norske kirken og det samiske* (Skellefteå: Artos & Norma bokförlag, 2016), 1055.

Westen conducted paint a picture of personal, heartfelt dialogues and conversations that often ended with the Sámi choosing to repent.<sup>44</sup> Von Westen's work is considered to have had such a great impact that he has been referred to as the apostle of the Sámi. Following his death, however, the view of the Sámi language changed and, in 1790, Bishop Schröder abolished the missionary college.<sup>45</sup> During this period, demand and desire for Norwegian independence grew, along with a desire for more emphasis on Norwegian in missionary work and seeing Sámi church life as an integral part of the ordinary church structure, which meant with Norwegian as the main language. In retrospect, this was an expression of an emerging national consolidation, culminating in the establishment of the Norwegian national state in 1814.

As the Reformation led to various groups in Europe gaining access to the Bible in their own languages, popular revival movements began to emerge. This also occurred in the North.

A pietist movement that left a strong mark on the Sámi population was the revival that developed in the period 1846-1849, arising from the background of Swedish priest Lars Levi Læstadius (1800-1861). Læstadius's preaching was radical and conversion oriented, emphasizing penance, confession and redemption. Preaching was often conducted in Sámi language and, later, Kven (a language derived from Finnish). In Norway, the priests rejected Læstadius's teachings,<sup>46</sup> which led the leading figures of the movement to conclude that the Norwegian priests were lacking in essential Christian faith and the movement distanced itself from the clergy. The preachers of the revival saw it as their duty to judge those who were not converted, and people who were not part of the movement could all be exposed to the wrath of the guards.<sup>47</sup> In 1852, this dissatisfaction culminated in a group associated with the movement attacking a merchant, priest and countryman in what is referred to as the Kautokeino Rebellion, which resulted in three deaths. At the end of the events, two of the leaders of the attack, Aslak Hætta and Mons Somby, were beheaded. However, these dramatic events did not bring about the disappearance of Læstadianism. The Laestadian movement remains alive

44 Jens Kildal referenced in H. Skanke and J. Kildal, *Nordlands og Troms finner i eldre håndskrifter: Annet hefte [Nordlands and Troms are found in older manuscripts]* (A.W. Brøggers boktrykkeri, 1945), 145.

45 Kristiansen, *Samisk religion og Læstadianismen*, 40-44.

46 Bredal-Tomren, "Sámi ecotheology," 376-377

47 *Ibid.*, 376.

and well to this day and has left its mark on church life in many of the local communities and congregations.

Although the clashes in Kautokeino and the reaction that followed did not lead the Sámi population to turn its back on the CoN, the events created wounds in the families implicated, in the local community that was most affected and in the collective Sámi consciousness. To this day, films are made about the conflict, the events are taught at the Sámi college and academic articles are written about what happened. One of us, Bredal- Tomren, have previously advocated that the events be a subject for the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.<sup>48</sup>

From 1840 onwards, as previously mentioned, the Norwegian state intensified its policy of assimilating the Sámi population. Initially this had little effect on the church's work among the Sámi.<sup>49</sup> On the contrary, many priests said that the state's aim of teaching Norwegian to the Sámi should not affect the church. As priests, it was their task to preach the Gospel in a language that would be understood, and no higher earthly powers should require them to use the Gospel as a tool for politics.<sup>50</sup> Priests working in Sámi areas were therefore required to have Sámi language competence. Many became proficient in Sámi, and in other cases an interpreter was used. In Lebesby, a priest was dismissed in 1869 because he had not learnt Sámi and, in 1873, the level of one's Sámi language proficiency was a decisive factor in who could be leading clergy in West Finnmark.<sup>51</sup>

At the turn of the century, the church was nonetheless under pressure to serve as a tool in the state's Norwegianization process. An instruction made priests aware that they must not in any way hinder the work of the government to absorb foreign nationalities, that is, the Sámi and Kven, into Norway's culture and social order. In other words, it was a requirement that the church's leadership and priests not oppose the Norwegianization policy.<sup>52</sup>

This led to increased tension between the authorities and church leaders as well as within the church among the priests. Some of the clergy sided with the authorities, while others clearly opposed Norwegianization. Several bishops in the North clearly opposed the use of the church as a tool for more further Norwegianization, one of the most prominent being Bishop Johannes

.....  
48 Ibid.

49 Zachariassen, Ryymin and Evjen, "Fornorskningspolitikk og samer," 181.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., 182.

N. Skaar of the Nord Hålogaland diocese, who believed the Sámi should receive their education and church service in Sámi.

In 1888, Skaar established the Norsk Finnemisjon, the aims of which included opposing Norwegianization, publishing the Bible and religious writings in Sámi, preaching in remote areas and opposing Laestadianism.<sup>53</sup> In 1925, Norsk Finnemisjon and the Norwegian Lutheran Finneforbund merged and in 1966 became the organisation Norges Samemisjon (NSM). Today, NSM preaches by radio (Radio DSF) and the magazine *Samenes venn*. The stated vision of NSM is to support the Sámi language and Christian cultural heritage.<sup>54</sup> In the debate over wind turbines at Fosen NSM the second of March 2023 stated that “wind turbines in the middle of reindeer grazing areas are a violation of the Sámi’s rights to economic activity” and that the organisation “supports Sámi youth and others who stand up for justice in the middle of Oslo’s streets. We would like to call on the government to come together to face the situation with recognition and take the consequences of this.” In other words, the usually apolitical organisation went so far as to support the illegal protests. We will return to this statement later in the article.<sup>55</sup>

## The Sámi Church Council

Next to the Laestadian movement, the ecclesiastical organisation working most actively among the Sámi today in Norway is the Sámi Church Council of the CoN. The council was established in 1992 and today has its head office in Tromsø. The council’s main tasks are to promote and look after Sámi church life in the CoN; take a position on matters that affect Sámi church life and indigenous people; promote knowledge of Sámi values, language, and culture; increase the commitment to the position of the Sámi in CoN maintain contact with Sámi congregations; and engage in global indigenous rights work on behalf of the CoN. Another measure established in and implemented by the CoN to ensure the rights of the Sámi minority is the three northerly dioceses of the CoN having their own Sámi representatives on the regional council.

53 Ibid., 184.

54 Norges Samemisjon [Norwegian Sami Mission], “Visjon og formål [Vision and purpose],” <https://www.samemisjonen.no/sider/visjon-og-formal/15/>.

55 Bjarne Gustad, Jon Teigen, Stein Kalviknes, Bernhard Iversen, Øyvind Fonn, “NSM støtter Fosen-demonstranter [NSM supports Fosen protesters],” Norges Samemisjon, last modified March 3, 2023, <https://www.samemisjonen.no/sider/hjem/aktuelt/nsm-stotter-fosen-demonstranter/360/>.

According to Tore Johnsen, former secretary general of the Sámi Church Council, several factors led to the establishment of the Sámi Church Council.<sup>56</sup> In the aftermath of the Alta protest, it was asked why the church leader and CoN had been absent from the debate on Sámi rights, both during the demonstrations and in the post-war period. In 1984, the church meeting was established as a constitutional body for the CoN. Just two years later, in 1986, a case on Sámi relations appeared on the agenda of the Church Synod. The introduction to the case, which was headed 20/86 *The Church and the Sámi*, pointed out that the development after the Alta case set an agenda that the church must also take seriously.<sup>57</sup> The decision on case 20/86 was that a committee should be set up to “investigate fundamental and practical questions concerning the work of the CoN in the Sámi population”. Against this background, the church meeting and the bishops’ meeting came into play. The working group was set up and was followed one year later by the report *Sámi church life in the Norwegian church: Draft action programme. From a working group set up by the Church Council*. In his account of the Sámi Church Council’s history at its 20th anniversary, Johnsen points out that the church meeting’s treatment was limited to purely ecclesiastical questions and that it failed to take a position on societal questions.<sup>58</sup> The investigation led to two hearings in the Church Council, one in 1990<sup>59</sup> and the other in 1992. In the case *KM 12/92 Sámi Church Council*, the Synod decided to establish the Sámi Church Council for the Norwegian Church as the Synod’s body for Sámi church life. The Sámi Church Council’s mandate is not limited to internal church issues; it is also expected to play an active role in “matters which, in the Council’s opinion, affect Sámi church life

56 Tore Johnsen, “Klimaendringer og behovet for et økologisk teologisk paradigme sett i et utfolksperspektiv,” in *Tro til handling*, ed. A. Sommerfeldt (Oslo: Verbum forlag, 2012), 3 ff.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., 3.

59 According to Tore Johnsen, the church meeting in 1990 led to three principles which have since become cornerstones of CoN’s work with the Sami: “Firstly, the decision meant that a new principled thinking was laid down based on three basic principles: (1) the equality of Sami church life with the rest of church life, (2) the CoN’s special responsibility for Sami church life, and (3) a goal of Sami self-determination in their own church life. (...) Secondly, the decision meant that Sami church life went from having been only a local and regional church to also becoming a central church matter. A special central ecclesiastical body for Sami church life in the Norwegian Church – the Sami Council for the Norwegian Church – was decided to be established. Thirdly, the decision meant that Sami church life went from being purely Northern Sami to also becoming a Lule Sami and Southern Sami affair. From now on, Sami church life was defined and organized in relation to the three official Sami written languages in Norway: Northern Sami, Lule Sami and Southern Sami. And the three northernmost dioceses are requested to take responsibility for all church services in each of their Sami languages.” (Johnsen, “Klimaendringer.”)

and indigenous peoples”. The legacy of Alta means that the Sámi Church Council has statutes that allow it to get involved in a case relating to the Fosen case, which they did, as we will see shortly.

This leads us to the next theme of our research: what was the church’s role, both before and during the conflict?

## The Norwegian Church’s role in the development of the conflict

The first CoN ecclesiastical council to speak out against the wind turbines in Fosen was the Sámi Church Council in its statement of 17 June 2020. The reason for this was a debate over whether Sámi interests and the interests of the reindeer herders had been sufficiently safeguarded when the government granted licences for new wind farms.

The impetus for the statement arose from a 2018 statement by the Sámi Church Council in case SKR 4/18 *Protection of creation and fight for justice*. The introductory documents for this discussion contain a theological justification for the involvement of the CoN and its employees in environmentalism. In the same text, the church is challenged to be a critical corrective in disputes where participants do not consider that the human being is woven into nature. The final statement made by the Sámi Church Council in case SKR 4/18 is as follows:

The dioceses and congregations are asked to intensify their effort and define objectives and concrete measures in their work in the care of creation and struggle for justice that concern the Sámi in Norway. We encourage you to promote and make visible how the man-made degradation of nature affects Sámi culture. The congregations are challenged to show an intensified commitment in solidarity with those who bear the consequences of damage to nature...<sup>60</sup>

In other words, the Sámi Church Council has challenged the diocesan councils and congregations to contribute actively to *transformation* by being *advocates* and by mobilising against injustice, both of which are in line with the strategy formulations of the LWF.

60 SKR 2018, 2. <https://www.kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/samisk-kirkeliv/samisk-kirkeliv/saksdokumenter-og-vedtak/samisk-kirkenad---ajluokta---drag-21-22-February-2018>

In the document that followed this case, the Fosen wind farm conflict is referred to as one of several planned projects that interfere with Sámi interests. The same text states that the public authorities are unable to take into consideration the cumulative effect of the interventions planned in Sámi areas. It furthermore declares that the Norwegian energy sector authority (NVE) actively seeks to limit the influence of those promoting Sámi interests. The NVE is an example of “how the sectors in society become actors who actively work to weaken Sámi rights, and who, on behalf of the state authorities in this way, do not work in line with Section 108 of the Constitution”.<sup>61</sup> As a result, the bishop in northern Hålogaland, Olav Øygaard, a member of the council, told the newspaper *Vårt Land* on 23 February 2018 that the church had not been vocal enough in the discussion about wind power.<sup>62</sup> One of the proposals made in the same newspaper was that priests should bless nature locations threatened by development and even celebrate the mass there. In other words, the bishop proposed using the liturgy as a tool in the church’s transformation, empowerment and mobilisation work. The ethical justification for decision SKR 4/18 is, in its deepest sense, consideration of Sámi culture. That said, the council also wanted to communicate that if nature is degraded, it will influence on Sámi culture. The council implies that natural sustainability provides the basis and framework for cultural practice, especially regarding to the Sámi.

In January of the following year (2019), the Fosen problem was mentioned again by church leaders in an article in *Avisa Nordland* signed by the three bishops from the northernmost dioceses and the leader of the Sámi Church Council, Sara Eira.<sup>63</sup> They wrote that there had been complaints to the Norwegian authorities about human rights violations committed against the Sámi in two separate cases. One of these related to the Storheia wind power plans on the Fosen peninsula. They also wrote that the UN Committee on Racial Discrimination (CERD) had asked the Norwegian authorities to stop construction until the reindeer owners’ case was tried in the Supreme Court. The bishops were also critical of the demand of the Norwegian Ministry of

61 Kjell Kvamme, “Oppfordrer kirken til å kjempe mot vindkraft [Encourages the church to fight against wind power],” last updated November 11, 2020, <https://www.vl.no/nyheter/2018/02/23/oppfordrer-kirken-til-a-kjempe-mot-vindkraft/>.

62 Kjetil Kvamme, “Encourages the church to fight against wind power,” *Avisen Vårt Land*, 23 February 2018.

63 “Norske myndigheter på kollisjonskurs med FN? [Norwegian authorities on a collision course with the UN?],” [https://www.kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/samisk-kirkeliv/dokumenter/milj%C3%B8-b%C3%A6rekraft/kronikk%2001-2019\\_norge%20p%C3%A5%20kollisjonskurs%20med%20fn\\_%201.docx](https://www.kirken.no/globalassets/kirken.no/samisk-kirkeliv/dokumenter/milj%C3%B8-b%C3%A6rekraft/kronikk%2001-2019_norge%20p%C3%A5%20kollisjonskurs%20med%20fn_%201.docx).

Petroleum and Energy to CERD where they asked CERD to reject the case. The four church leaders stood with the Sámi and urged the authorities to recognise the abuses committed by the state against the Sámi minority. This text is an example of empowerment and advocacy, empowerment in the sense that the bishops emphasise the message by Eira and advocacy in the sense that they support the Sámi minority in their case against a powerful opponent, the Norwegian state.

The request for greater activity in the congregations by the Sámi Church Council and the article in *Avisa Nordland* led to several priests joining the protests against the wind farms planned for Sámi areas. In May 2020, a petition was signed by 31 priests in which they urged the leaders of the CoN to strengthen their commitment to supporting the Sámi and protecting biodiversity.<sup>64</sup> The letter was sent to the Bishops' Conference, the Sámi Church Council and the Inter-Church Council.<sup>65</sup>

The Sámi Church Council responded to the letter by issuing a new statement that dealt explicitly with wind power on 17 June of the same year (2020).<sup>66</sup>

In this statement, the Sámi Church Council starts by referring to the letter from the priest, in which they “underline that developments in the wind industry are threats to human life and human culture in the broadest sense. This endangers the basis for Sámi life and the survival of Sámi culture.” The concrete projects mentioned are *Øyfellet/Vesterfjella*, *Fosen*, *Rásttigáisa*, *Rødfjellet/Kvitfjellet* and *Sállán/Sørøya*. Furthermore, this time the Sámi Church Council states that the concessions in Sámi areas do not consider the Sámi people's sense of justice or customs. It states that this implies a breach of section 108 of the Norwegian constitution and of ILO Convention 169. The council fears this will weaken trust in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

64 Mattis C. O. Vaaland, “Prester til kamp mot vindturbiner [Priests fight against wind turbines],” last updated December 10, 2020, <https://www.vl.no/religion/kirke/2020/06/30/prester-til-kamp-mot-vindturbiner/>.

65 The letter was signed by Ingrid Nyhus, Kjell Arnold Nyhus, Knut Rygh, Solveig Mysen, Kim Ibe Marie Astrup, Hans Christian Haaland, Bjørn Magne Hansen, Dag Tormod Milje, Mark Akali, Bierna Bientie, Einar Sørliid Bondevik, Ragnhild Floberg, Steinar Floberg, Hilde Lundquist, Gjermund Johannes Lygre, Claes Blom Mørch, Anders Hammer, Ole Thomas Bientie Reiten, Nils Gøran Riedl, Gry Solbraa, Einar Vegge, Trond Laksaa, Kirsti Evensen Bjåstad, Reiulf Pedersen, Siv S. Limstrand, Brita Hardeberg, Per Gustav Nilsen, Gunnar Mar Kristjansson, David Spjøtvold and Geir Sørebo. Later it was also signed by Hanne Kristin Sørliid and Lena Caroline Stordalen. In a scientific article, transparency is an important value and for that reason it is appropriate to say that it was the author who advised the initiators Anders Hammer and Gry Solbraa to formulate a letter and a list of signatures and address it to various levels of the church.

66 Ibid.



This statement argues theologically that “protection of creation is a central part of the church’s work” and goes further, saying that that man’s role as steward means the church has an obligation and that the idea that man is created in God’s image obliges the church to take responsibility for the rights of indigenous peoples. In addition, reference is made to international obligations towards indigenous peoples in which the CoN has been the driving force. The statement ends with a declaration of support for those fighting against the wind power plan:

The Sámi Church Council wishes to support the opposition to the construction of a wind turbine industry in Sámi areas. The church’s diaconal task is to help people in the congregations when there are spiritual and material needs. The Sámi Church Council encourages congregations in Sámi regions to seek knowledge about the effect the reduction of wilderness has on their congregations, local communities and individuals. As followers of Christ, we are called to fight for human dignity and rights, as well as to fight against injustice in these matters.<sup>67</sup>

The announcement was well received both by the Sámi and by the priests who opposed the wind turbines. However, the priests that wrote the letter of May 2020 did not receive an answer from the Bishops’ Council. Consequently, two of its initiators, Anders Hammer and Gry Solbraa, wrote an article that was published in the newspaper *Vårt Land* in late June in which they called for answers from the bishops’ meeting as well. Solbraa is a priest in Mosjøen, which is close to the location of the Øyafjellet wind farm. This wind power project is related to the Storheia project in Fosen in the sense that it also affects traditional Southern Sámi reindeer-grazing land.

Solbraa was then instructed by her superior, the dean in southern Hålogaland, not to use her title of chaplain when protesting the wind turbine project and to sign herself as “priest”; in other words, not to mention the congregation where she worked. The logic here was that Solbraa’s protest did not have the support of the congregation where she worked as a chaplain, and it would be unjust to the members of the congregation to create the impression within the public debate that the congregation supported these protests. In other words, the dean did not want to prevent Solbraa from speaking out and engaging in activism as a priest but emphasised that the protest was an activity that had to be separate

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67 SKR 2018.

from her work as a local priest.<sup>68</sup> Bishop Ann-Helen Fjeldstad Jusnes stated in the newspaper *Vårt Land* that she shared this concern, but for her it was the Sámi themselves who should be in charge and front the matter and not local (Norwegian) priests. Members of the Sámi Church Council had previously argued in the newspaper *Vårt Land* services and blessings should be held in areas threatened by the wind power projects, but when Solbraa, a local priest, followed this call, she was reprimanded by her supervisor.<sup>69</sup> In the media, it seemed as if the bishops, the Sámi Church Council and some of the priests did agree on content but disagreed over how to protest the wind turbine projects and who should do the protesting. Solbraa wrote in an email that someone in the congregation had reacted negatively to her involvement in the protests. A parent or youth had contacted the church office and insisted that Solbraa not participate in his son's confirmation. In this was of no practical consequence as Solbraa was not going to serve in this confirmation anyway, but it is worth noting that her employer did not use this as an opportunity to express support for her. At least in theory, the dean was acting on behalf of the bishop.<sup>70</sup> Solbraa's experience of being asked not to indicate which congregation she worked for was a sign that priests engaged in advocacy of such protest can easily become isolated if they do not receive the express support of their church superiors.

On 11 October 2021, the Norwegian Supreme Court delivered its verdict, confirming that the construction on Fosen was illegal and the case represented an ongoing violation of human rights. The reindeer owners and many church leaders probably expected this to be the end of the debate over Fosen, but this turned out not to be the case.

Although the mill owner and the state suffered a defeat, the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy argued that the verdict did not mean the turbines had to be taken down and repeatedly stated that its lawyers were working on the case. As time went by, fear over whether the state would respect the judgement began to spread, both within the Sámi community and among church leaders.<sup>71</sup> Bishop Herborg Finnset made it the main theme of her annual New

68 Email from Gry O. Solraa, 20 May 2023.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Den Norske Kirke, "Seminar om urfolks rettigheter, teologi og miljø [Seminar on indigenous rights, theology and the environment]," October 31, 2022, <https://www.kirken.no/nb-NO/om-kirken/slik-styres-kirken/mellomkirkelig-rad/arkiv/seminar%20om%20ourfolks%20rettigheter%20teologi%20og%20milj%C3%B8/>.

Year's speech in Nidaros Cathedral at the beginning of 2023,<sup>72</sup> stating, among other things, the following:

As a church, we must also be present when someone is subjected to injustice. (...) An indigenous culture is mostly threatened by extinction: that is how important reindeer herding is for the culture of the Southern Sámi people. Nidaros diocese has a particular responsibility for the Southern Sámi language and Southern Sámi church life. We therefore have a special responsibility to be alert and survey what is happening. In this case, the rule of law is challenged when the government does not follow up the Supreme Court's decision.<sup>73</sup>

Nidaros's bishop used the same argument as the Supreme Court but expressed concern over whether the government would respect the law. She used primarily anthropocentric ethical arguments. In the speech, she also used the term green colonialism and argued that the wilderness was threatened by the race for metals and minerals needed for the green shift.<sup>74</sup> In other words, Finnset used her New Year's speech to advocate on behalf of Southern Sámi culture and rights. The speech received a lot of attention, and the case was, among other things, covered by the national broadcast.<sup>75</sup>

A few weeks later, the presiding bishop, Olav Fykse Tveit, and the leader of the Sámi Church Council, Ellen Anne Eira, wrote an open letter to the Minister of Petroleum and Energy in which they criticised the state for violating human rights and not respecting the Supreme Court's decision.<sup>76</sup> In this letter, they state that they are speaking on behalf of the Norwegian Church.<sup>77</sup> They argue for consideration of southern Sámi culture, suggesting that the lack of respect for herders' rights undermines the ongoing efforts for reconciliation. Their argument culminates in a strong call for the government to accept the Supreme Court's decision and not delay its implementation any

72 Den Norske Kirke, "Biskop Herborg om vindkraft på Fosen: - Regjeringen utfordrer rettsstaten," January 17, 2023, <https://www.kirken.no/nb-NO/bispedommer/nidaros/nyheter/biskop%20herborg-%20regjeringen%20utfordrer%20rettsstaten/>.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Olav Fykse Tveit and Sara Ellen Anne Eira, "Høyesterettsdommen i Fosen-saken må respekteres [The Supreme Court judgement in the Fosen case must be respected]," *NRK*, January 23, 2023, <https://www.nrk.no/ytring/hoyesterettsdommen-i-fosen-saken-ma-respekteres-1.16267440>.

77 Ibid.

further. The letter is without biblical references or stated theological motifs.<sup>78</sup> The reason for the choice of style and argumentation is that Tveit and Eira were addressing a secular state power represented by the Minister of Petroleum and Energy, Terje Aasland.

By this point, the presiding bishop, other bishops and the Sámi Church Council had spoken out against the wind power mills in Fosen and acted as advocates for the reindeer-herding Sámi's rights. The church leaders had a clear agenda: to empower the affected Sámi. That said, it is worth noting that at present (May 2023), the wind turbine project has not yet appeared on the agenda of either the Bishops' Conference or the Church Synod. Only the Sámi Church Council has voted on an authorised statement. The initiatives and statements that have appeared (as part of the Sámi Church Council statements) are, despite their use of wording such as "the Norwegian Church views with concern", are more the opinions and analyses of individual clergy than an expression of the Church's official unanimous voice. In light of the attention the case has received, one might expect it to be dealt with in both the Church Synod and the Bishops' Council. However, three months after the presiding bishop and the leader of the Sámi Church Council published their open letter, the situation escalated.

## The Norwegian Church's actions during the Fosen action

On 23 March 2023, five hundred days after the Supreme Court verdict, the activists sat down to protest in the main office of the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. This was the start of what would become a week of demonstrations and protest, which ended with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Petroleum and Energy admitting that the turbines in Fosen represented an ongoing violation of human rights.<sup>79</sup> The protest received widespread press attention, both nationally and internationally, and it also triggered the involvement of priests and individuals in CoN.

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78 Ibid.

79 Emrah Senel, Mette Ballovara, Eilif Andreas Aslaksen, and Lena Marja Myrskog, "– Ekte mennesker lever med dette overgrepet hver dag [- Real people live with this abuse every day]," *NRK*, February 23, 2023, [https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/500-dager-siden-fosen-dommen\\_-na-aksjonerer-ella-marie-haetta-isaksen-departementet-1.16307645](https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/500-dager-siden-fosen-dommen_-na-aksjonerer-ella-marie-haetta-isaksen-departementet-1.16307645).

In Oslo, Trinity Church, which is close to the ministry, chose to open its doors and offer a place to rest and shelter for the protesters.<sup>80</sup> Youth from Norske Samers Riksforbund Nuorat and NU were allowed to use the kitchen, and the toilets were made available to the campaigners. Greta Thunberg, the famous Swedish activist, announced her arrival to mark solidarity with the reindeer-herding Sámi. She was asked by the newspaper *Avisen Vårt Land* about the importance of the CoN's involvement in environmentalism and this conflict, to which she responded, "It is very important and it means a lot."<sup>81</sup> Thunberg elaborated as follows:

This is a concrete fight. But beneath the surface lies a much greater frustration with continued colonialism, violation of and lack of respect for human rights. This applies not only to Fosen, but everywhere. Partly on the Norwegian side of Sápmi, but also the Swedish side of Sápmi. The fight for indigenous people's rights is global.<sup>82</sup>

The priest at the church, Pål Kristian Balstad, wrote in an email that several members of the congregation had basic insight into the research committee's work due to their work in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which meant they had a platform that enabled them to engage in dialogue with the young people when the action began. Someone from the church went over to the young people involved in the climate strike when the action began and asked if they needed anything. When the strikers were not thrown out of the ministry over the course of the day or even over the weekend, it became clear that they needed access to food. A solution was negotiated with the ministry whereby the church's staff and other helpers could buy food for the young people, which was done. In his email, Balstad describes the events that followed:

On Monday night, the youth were carried out by the police. They were given 15 minutes to pack up their things before being carried down to the basement and into police cars and driven away. Many of the young activists experienced this as traumatic and we found that some of the youth had strong

80 Andreas W. H. Lindvåg, "Greta Thunberg i Fosen-protest i Oslo – Gir ros til Den norske kirke [Greta Thunberg at Fosen protest in Oslo - Praise for the Church of Norway]," *Vårt Land*, February 27, 2023, <https://www.vl.no/nyheter/2023/02/27/greta-thunberg-i-fosen-protest-i-oslo-gir-ros-til-den-norske-kirke/>.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

emotional reactions. The youth proclaimed that they wanted to continue the protests outside the ministry and block all entrances. They asked us if we could keep our doors open so that they could have a place to warm up, a place to charge their mobile phones and do the necessary errands. There are two reasons why we chose to open the doors. Firstly, it was important for us to base the open church on our diaconal mission. Secondly, the presiding bishop and the leader of the Sámi Church Council had previously published an open letter, which we referred to. This was clearly communicated in all posts on digital platforms and in the media. This gave us sufficient freedom to respond to the young people's wish for a "warming room". During the week, we found that our mission changed character, as the experience of the church room invited liturgical practice: the church offered a space to share life stories, light candles, talk together, rest and pray together. Early on, the young people also said they wanted the presence of a priest. A continuous rotation was organised during the church's opening hours of priests, deacons and other volunteers. On Thursday, we were contacted by the Prime Minister's office, which wanted Trinity Church to facilitate a conversation between the Prime Minister and the young people. This was carried out on Thursday evening. The campaign ended on Friday.<sup>83</sup>

When Balstad was asked by the newspaper VG whether this involvement meant the church had interfered in politics, Balstad replied that the church's role was justified based on the understanding of diaconia, in which the struggle for justice, charity, the protection of creation and inclusive community was key, and he pointed out that the leaders of the Sámi Church Council and the presiding bishop had taken an active stance on the matter. On the church's website, the congregation writes that the church was opened for the protesters: "In the church they can warm up, go to the bathroom, spread food, charge mobile phones and light candles for hope and justice."<sup>84</sup> According to the congregation's Facebook page, more than 2,300 youth activists visited the church the week the action was taking place.

On the second Sunday of Lent, 5 March, the congregation held a service emphasising the church's role in the action. In the sermon, Balstad emphasised that the church's role was to listen to people's life stories, be a listener

83 Pål Kristian Balstad, email, 19 May 2023.

84 Trefoldighet freds- og forsoningskirken i Oslo, "Rettsaken mot 18 Fosenaksjonister starter nå, og er berømmet tom 18. mars," Facebook, March 11, <https://www.facebook.com/Trefoldighet/posts/789274703232075>.

during conflict and pray for the world and for people who are suffering. He stressed that this did not make the church a political party. Considering his sermons, Balstad appears to say that his church's role was more along the lines of a provider of soul care for the young activists during the conflict. In his email, Balstad writes that they regularly pray for the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and that it is a starting point for sermons, where it is natural, and in discussion groups in the Faith and Politics groups.<sup>85</sup> According to Balstad, it was a great help that the previous bishop and the leader of the Sámi Church Council had come up with a clear and unambiguous statement (cf. the above-mentioned open letter).

Because of the church's physical location and perhaps also because of its proactive approach, Balstad and the congregation ended up close to the conflict while the action was taking place. This led them to play a somewhat different role than other ecclesiastical actors. They helped the young people to keep the campaign going and speak out through the national media by offering food, care and accommodation. They offered physical care, used liturgical tools such as candle lighting, silence and prayer, and helped the young people to keep the action going. Their entrance was diaconal. In the last phase, the congregation was also asked to help start a dialogue between the Prime Minister's office and the young people. They thus actively entered the role of reconciliation actors. They mediated contact and created a space for dialogue where the activists met face to face with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Petroleum and Energy.

At the same time as, and in connection with, the Fosen protests in Oslo, several local priests in the region where the Fosen wind turbines were located were asked how they and their congregations had responded to the action. The newspaper *Vårt Land* interviewed three of the parish priests about how they felt about the renewable energy developments.<sup>86</sup> On the same day as the interview took place, the above-mentioned statement by Samemisjonen expressing support for the demonstrators was published on the organisation's website.<sup>87</sup>

Åfjorden parish priest Kjetil Kjenes responded that the case had not received much attention in his parish. He emphasised that the turbines should

85 Pål Kristian Balstad, email, 19 May 2023.

86 Selma Elise Leinebø Ekre and Marit Mjøltneset, "Sokneprest: Menigheten er delt i synet på Fosen-aksjonen og vindmøllene [Parish priest: The congregation is divided in its views on the Fosen campaign and wind turbines]," *Vårt Land*, March 3, 2023, <https://www.vl.no/religion/2023/03/03/sokneprest-menigheten-er-delt-i-synes-pa-fosen-aksjonen-og-vindmollene/>.

87 Gustad et al., "NSM støtter Fosen-demonstranter."

never have been built, but because they are there, the people in his congregation have adopted a pragmatic attitude. In the interview with Vårt Land, he emphasises that there is a need for more energy, that the turbines contribute to the municipal economy and that many are concerned about the need for access to climate-friendly energy.<sup>88</sup> In the newspaper, he is quoted as follows: “When the wind turbines are [already] up and running, it is madness to have them removed and have the area restored.”<sup>89</sup> In other words, he was suggesting that the turbines should be allowed to stand as they had already been set up. He did not support the campaigners’ demand that the turbines be removed. In an email, Kjenes wrote that the reaction on the internet after he spoke to the newspaper was overwhelming. He found it necessary to disconnect from social media for a period and to ask for the case to be reviewed by a meeting of the congregation. In an email, he commented on the situation as follows: “It was demanding to speak out on behalf of a congregation where there were several different views.”<sup>90</sup> In consultation with the congregation, he chose to wait until there was less media pressure. At the same time, he emailed the bishop and explained what had happened. Kjenes said that he was disappointed that church leaders had come up with “simple answers to complicated questions”. When I asked Kjenes whether he himself has brought up the topic in church prayers or sermons, he confirmed that he has but that he has “problematized it more than come up with simple solutions to difficult ethical and legal issues”.<sup>91</sup> Kjenes did not actively seek to make this case visible. He was not among the 29 priests who proactively signed a letter to the bishops’ meeting but became an actor because the newspaper contacted him in his capacity as a local priest. When he was asked what he thought, he wanted to say that it was a complicated legal and ethical issue. In the newspaper, he says that none of the reindeer owners were active in his congregation. This statement makes it natural to read the statements he made in the newspaper Vårt Land as an attempt to communicate and be a spokesperson for the perspective he encountered in the congregation. Vårt Land is read all over the country and, given the high level of conflict in the case, his outspokenness was viewed by many as so negative in relation to the ongoing conflict that he felt compelled to disconnect from social media while the reaction was at its worst.

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88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 Email from Kristian Kjenes, 9 May 2023.

91 Ibid.



The other priest interviewed about the case, Lise Marit Hansen, told the newspaper that she supports the Sámi and you “should play on a team with those who have run the areas for the longest time. Now we are throwing good old management methods under the bus in favour of something we think is better.”<sup>92</sup> Hansen justifies this commitment in terms of environmental ethics: “We are absolutely clear that we must safeguard the rights of all people. This applies to God’s creation and its management.”<sup>93</sup> In email, she said that she encountered mixed reactions to her newspaper statement. Some people, especially the Sámi, were grateful, while others said they did not understand why the church would say anything about such a matter. She also said that she has included this subject in the intercessory prayer at certain church services, including in prayers where it is expressed as thanks for “Sámi reindeer herding and what this gives us during thanksgiving”.<sup>94</sup>

The third priest interviewed, Eirik Bakken, is a parish priest in Beitstad and Verra.

In an email to *Vårt Land*, Bakken says that they fully support the Fosen Sámi in the matter. He then writes that his actions in the conflict related to his answer to the question from *Vårt Land*, that he has congratulated a Sámi friend on the Supreme Court verdict and that he has studied the topic by writing a paper on the Fosen verdict. He has addressed the issue in his sermons, and he mentioned it in a prayer during Sunday services on Sámi national day, 6 February. When asked about reactions, he says: “I have received feedback from the Sámi that they appreciate it that a priest supports them. Otherwise no reactions.”<sup>95</sup> Bakken is priest in a parish where reindeer herders live and he has a good level of knowledge about the case. In the newspaper and in his sermons, he assumes the role of advocate for the rights of the Sámi. He uses both *kerygma* and *leiturgia* in his approach.

## Conclusion

The introduction asked how church actors in the conflict have argued and acted and what this says about their position and understanding of

92 Leinebø Ekre and Mjøltneset, “Sokneprest.”

93 Ibid.

94 Email from Lise Marit Hansen, 23 May 2023.

95 Email from Erik Bakken, 8 May 2023.

their role in the ongoing environmental conflict. This review shows that the church representatives' interpretation of the situation has been similar: all of the church leaders involved and all of the priests who have taken action and spoken out in the case have said that the wind turbines should not have been built. Nevertheless, one of the priests concerned has said that he thinks the turbines should be left where they are when first erected. The bishops in the Sámi counties have all acted as advocates for Sámi rights. In different ways and at different times, they have gone public in support of the Sámi demand that the Norwegian government respect the Supreme Court judgement and implement the verdict. They carried out active advocacy by preaching, chronicling events and, in one case, writing a letter to the government. Several local priests adopted a similar strategy, some proactively writing letters to the Bishops' Synod and the Church Synod and others not responding until the media contacted them. Several of the priests said they used the liturgy and church services as arenas to put the conflict in the spotlight. Trinity Church's approach stood out in a sense that it provided physical care to the youth taking part in the protest. It also assumed the role of facilitator of dialogue and reconciliation. All the clergy involved saw the conflict more as a human rights issue than an environmental ethics issue. Some of the priests said it was a burden to speak out during the conflict. Not all of them had the support of their superiors when they stepped into the role of Sámi rights advocate. When we take an overall look at the church's actions, it is possible to identify a dialectic between the Sámi Church Council, the local priests, the bishops and the leader of the Sámi Church Council, the activists, the media and the other priests and congregations involved.

Postscript: On a personal note from Bredal- Tomren, if I personally as a veteran clerical environmentalist am going to evaluate this discourse, my first observation would be that the church has distinguished itself as a current and credible player in this debate. The great majority of church leaders and priests have spoken credibly and competently. Trinity Church has been particularly important in this respect, as it helped by providing diaconal care to the campaigners. The fact that it was asked by the Prime Minister's office to help create dialogue between the governing authorities and the young people is a huge sign of recognition of the roles of both the congregation and the church leaders in this heated debate. If I am to highlight one future learning point for the church, it is that the diaconal approach and the offering of a meeting place for conversation are important. I think this is a way of working that could be used in other congregations in this conflict and similar future

conflicts. It can improve the church's credibility if priests have the courage to open their church and invite conversation, prayer and candle-lighting when the local community is divided and affected by conflict. Another observation worth mentioning is that many of the priests who actively participated in the actions or spoke out in the case found this to be burdensome. It is paradoxical that priests who accepted an invitation from the church's national council (the Sámi Church Council) were reprimanded instead of being supported. The email interviews show that the CoN needs to discuss how to balance staff care, the desire for active advocacy

In the actual conflict between the reindeer herders involved, a development took place after this article was sent to the editors. On 12 December 2023 there was a press release from the government that the Norwegian national mediator had brokered a compromise between the southern Sami group Sør-Fosen Sijte on the one hand and Fosen Vind.<sup>96</sup> The compromise involved financial compensation for the families involved, replacement areas for reindeer grazing, and the right for the reindeer herders to veto and to demand that the windmills be removed after a period of 25 years. On 6 March 2024, the government announced in a new press release that an agreement also had been reached with the northern Nordic group Nord-Fosen Sitje. Several Sami actors, including the leader of the Sami church council Silje Karine Muotka and the Sami activist Ella Marie Hætta Isaksen expressed their joy that an agreement had been reached, but they emphasized that they wanted full review and an independent investigation of the whole matter.<sup>97</sup> As I write this, neither bishops nor church councils have commented on the compromise and the development of the conflict.

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96 Ministry of Energy, "Agreement between Sør-Fosen Sijte and Fosen Vind," Government.no, December 19, 2023, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/agreement-between-sor-fosen-sitje-and-fosen-vind/id3019277/>.

97 Sven Arne Buggeland, "Enige om Fosen-avtale – vindturbinene blir stående i sør [Agreement on Fosen deal - the wind turbines will remain in the south]," *Verdens Gang*, December 18, 2023, <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/i/kE5mmj/enige-om-fosen-avtale>.

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# Land Grabbing in Africa: Two Decades of Injustice and the Christian Response

## Introduction and Background

The purpose of this paper is to determine if the ethical framework of Christianity can provide viable solutions for the problem of land acquisition (land-grabbing) in Africa. “Land-grabbing” or the more neutral term ‘land acquisition’ is a complex and multifaceted issue with widely divergent viewpoints and even differences in fundamental definitions, but generally involves two scenarios: 1) large purchases of land in a foreign country by a wealthier country for crops that are exported to the purchaser country (food security) or for biofuels production; 2) internal appropriation of indigenous lands by governments or wealthy individuals without compensation, which may subsequently be sold to foreign investors. The practice generally involves asymmetrical power relationships, violation of rights, inequity, and displacement of small landholders. These situations also often arise due to a conflict between national legal systems defining land as state-owned or a common resource; and traditional, customary patterns of usage which are not defined in written legal documents or codes. In Africa, as in many parts of the post-colonial world, the nation-state as a political entity is a relatively new phenomenon imposed by the previous colonial powers, and differs substantially

from tribal-based and culture-based traditional governance networks. In the post-colonial period, many African national constitutions and policy documents have delegated land ownership and custodianship to the state, which is the manager of land, water, and mineral resources.

The 2008-2009, the U.S. mortgage debt crisis precipitated a corresponding sharp rise in speculation in food futures (debt instruments based on future agricultural yields). Subsequently, food prices rose, resulting in food shortages worldwide, and wealthy nations accelerated the process of 'land grabbing' in Africa. The term 'land grab' specifically refers to purchase or lease of land by wealthy developed nations in developing nations for investment, biofuel production or food security purposes by using deceit, corruption, or by leveraging asymmetrical military power and crony capitalism relationships against smaller nations. Implicit in the term 'land grabbing' is the unfairness, illegality, and injustice of these land deals to local landowners, specifically small farmers. These acquisitions frequently involve the violation of individual and community land use rights. The level of overseas land acquisitions peaked at 46 million hectares in 2008-2009 according to the World Bank. One and a half decades later, after the food crisis abated, land-grabbing continues even after lengthy reports by the African Union, the African Development Bank, and Oxfam have clearly exposed the mechanisms of land grabbing. New areas for land grabbing in 2023 include Liberia (date palm oil) and Nigeria (sugar cane production). This paper surveys the land grab phenomenon, locates key issues affecting local farming and landowning communities in Africa, and attempts to apply a Christian framework of social justice and stewardship to solve pressing problems of human rights and injustice.

Overseas land purchases have been carried out by mainly Christian majority countries (led by the U.K., U.S., and Canada); in addition, Muslim majority nations with limited arable land and water supplies such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia have also spent substantial sums on overseas land leases. In some cases, such as Saudi Arabia's (KSA) leasing of farmland in the U.S. state of Arizona and exporting the water-intensive crop of alfalfa back to the KSA (which is illegal to grow in that country), developed nations are carrying out land-grab practices in other developed nations by proxy. Land-rich countries are located primarily in Africa (Sudan, Mozambique, Madagascar, Ethiopia, and Tanzania), Asia (Malaysia, Indonesia, India) and Latin America (Brazil).

Ethical principles that come into play in land grabbing include fairness, human rights, individual rights, distributive justice, and utilitarianism. Given



Christianity's long history of land management (monastic houses, donations, trusts, tenancy, etc.), the Church's theological framework, ethical system, formalized jurisprudence (Canon Law) and scripture itself can be tapped to create sustainable and balanced farming ecosystems in the same way that the Church provides a sustainable house of God (*oikos*). For example, in Leviticus 25:23, God states "for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." This verse emphasizes God's ultimate ownership of land and contrasts sharply with private land ownership regimes which often only exist for purely economic purposes without the concomitant stewardship responsibilities of maintaining natural resources for diverse goods such as health, happiness and habitat for fellow creatures, as well as for sustenance of future generations.

The United Nations throughout its many declarations recommends that nation states should recognize indigenous rights since traditionally land tenure has been a non-documented, oral and consensus-based tradition in most parts of the world: "States should provide appropriate recognition and protection of the legitimate tenure rights of indigenous peoples and other communities with customary tenure systems, consistent with existing obligations under national and international law, and with due regard to voluntary commitments under applicable regional and international instruments. Such recognition should take into account the land, fisheries and forests that are used exclusively by a community and those that are shared."<sup>1</sup>

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that "eighty percent of the farmland in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia is managed by smallholders (working on up to 10 hectares)"<sup>2</sup> Thus, farming is a significant form of employment and sometimes the only means of survival in regions of Africa where no other sources of income are available due to non-existent manufacturing, services, and transportation sectors. Farming practices are often at the heart of religious rituals as well which ensure abundant rain and harvest; thus, they form part of a community's cultural and religious identity. According to the African Union policy group,

In many countries in Africa, the majority of rural lands are governed by customary tenure regimes. This means that rights to these lands and the

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<sup>1</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *Factsheet: Smallholders and Family Farmers* (Rome: FAO, 2012), 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

resources in them are based mainly on customary tenure regimes and may not have been documented. Land laws developed in these countries frequently fail to recognize, document and protect these customary rights. Increasing demand for African agricultural land by domestic and foreign investors... has increased the vulnerability of local people, particularly women, smallholder farmers and pastoralists whose livelihoods depend on access to land, water and forests resources.<sup>3</sup>

A definite spike in food prices and shortages of some commodities has been documented from 2006-2009 corresponding to the global financial crisis and was linked in several ways to global economic instability since food is an important part of the global economy and ultimately an economic commodity as well as a human necessity. Investment in land for biofuels production—along with futures speculation—and subsequent removal of land from food production has often been blamed for rising food prices contributing to global inflation, but the complicated economics of these land policy changes have never been successfully elucidated.

Some recent documented conflicts in 2020-23 concerning large transnational land purchases include: a) employment, wage, and fairness issues between the local village of Apouh, eastern Cameroon, and the palm oil giant Socapalm (subsidiary of the Belgian agricultural corporation Socafin); b) Astra Agro Lestari (AAL) corporation in Indonesia has faced backlash from large western corporations for local land-grabbing practices (a rare instance of the acknowledgement of land-grabbing by transnational interests); and c) on July 1, 2023, Dubai Investments added 3,750 hectares of agricultural land to its existing Angolan land investments portfolio.<sup>4</sup> In total, the Land Matrix (which has been tracking large scale foreign land investments, documenting a total of 1,785 land deals comprising 50 million Ha), estimates that 26.7 million Ha of agricultural land have been bought worldwide by foreign investors since 2000.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020-2022 caused an interruption in the research and data-monitoring activities of land-grabbing

3 African Union, African Development Bank, and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. *Guiding Principles on Large Scale Land Based Investments in Africa* (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Economic Commission for Africa, 2014), 7.

4 Farmland Grab, "Latest Posts," accessed July 19, 2023, <https://www.farmlandgrab.org/>.

5 International Land Coalition, "Land Matrix Initiative," accessed July 18, 2023, <https://www.landcoalition.org/en/explore/our-work/data/land-matrix/>.

NGOs and research institutes, with funding scarcity, loss of data scientists, and the inability to meet internationally for policy decision making. The biennial Conference on Land Policy in Africa, sponsored by the African Land Policy Centre (ALPC), the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and the African Development Bank, will resume meetings in November 2023 to begin work again on the pressing issues of international land acquisitions in Africa.

## Definition and Practical and Ethical Scope of the Problem

### DEFINITIONS

There is no agreed upon definition of “land grabbing” as those who benefit from the practice define it as “land investment,” “foreign investment,” “foreign direct investment” (FDI), or “land acquisition,” and thus frame the transactions as legal contractual bargains in an international free market economy. In this context, the legal language of contracts is employed to describe the process, i.e., making use of such common terms as “unused” or “vacant land,” “selling,” “purchasing,” “leasing,” and “acquiring.” “Land grab” has been criticized as an imprecise and vague term, encompassing many different kinds of land relationships, including legal and morally defensible ones.<sup>6</sup>

However, employing legal terminology may legitimise land grabbing practices as within the bounds of national laws and resolvable within legal systems. The difficulty in describing the phenomenon in these terms is that there is no enforceable transnational legal system for land rights, and western terms for land are culturally laden and simply do not fit other cultural paradigms in many instances. Moreover, cultural and religious dimensions of land are not easily quantifiable within capitalist systems of production. Dispossessed victims are often deprived of lands that they customarily used, or are given inadequate compensation, or offered future benefits such as the construction of schools, roads, and other infrastructure that never materializes. When forced appropriation of land through military and police violence,

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6 Saturnino M. Borras Jr., Ruth Hall, Ian Scoones, Ben White, and Wendy Wolford. “Towards a Better Understanding of Global Land Grabbing: An Editorial Introduction,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 38, no. 2 (2011): 209, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2011.559005>.

or the perceived threat of violence is present, or through deceit and misrepresentation, then the term “land grabbing”, is justified, since colloquially the word “grab” means taking something that does not belong to you, i.e. theft. The term “land grab” therefore is used in this paper since it is easily understood even by non-native English speakers and does not invoke inappropriate legal metaphors or analogies. Thus, the term encompasses the practices of unethical seizures of land which unfortunately sometimes may be legal under existing (albeit immoral) national laws.

Another major problem of defining and studying the problem is the lack of transparency surrounding transnational land deals which results in incomplete and skewed datasets – there is currently no reliable estimate of the size of the problem of land grabbing. Corruption, in addition, prevents the free flow of information about national land distribution, and local complicity with buyer nations allows corrupt individuals to avoid public moral scrutiny of their land purchase practices.

The NGO GRAIN was one of the earliest organizations to provide data on the international extent of land acquisitions. Its 2006-2012 dataset documents 35 million hectares (416 total purchases) in uncanceled purchases by foreign entities in other countries. Land purchased was primarily in Africa, and Latin America, but also in Eastern Europe. Purchasing countries included Western nations such as the U.S., Canada, U.K., and Europe, but also water-scarce Gulf nations such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia (KSA), with Saudi Arabia and UAE combined accounting for the second largest purchasers after the U.S.<sup>7</sup> The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) reported that 15-20 million hectares changed hands in 2006-2009.<sup>8</sup>

After reviewing definitions from various NGOs, international development agencies, and United Nations reports, the Oxfam definition of land grabbing below was selected for this contribution as the most comprehensive and clear terminology. According to Oxfam:

7 GRAIN, “GRAIN Releases Data Set with over 400 Global Land Grabs,” last modified 2012, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://www.grain.org/article/entries/4479-grain-releases-data-set-with-over-400-global-land-grabs>.

8 Joachim von Braun and Ruth Meinzen-Dick, “*Land Grabbing*” by Foreign Investors in Developing Countries: Risks and Opportunities (Washington, D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute, 2009), 2.

A large-scale land acquisition can be defined as the acquisition of any tract of land larger than 200 hectares (ha), or twice the median landholding, according to the national context. The 200-ha figure comes from the International Land Coalition's definition of "large-scale". Not only is 200 ha ten times the size of a typical small farm, but according to the latest FAO-led World Agricultural Census, it is also larger than the average land holding in all but three developing countries.

### WHAT MAKES A LAND ACQUISITION A LAND GRAB?

Land acquisitions become land grabs when they do one or more of the following:

- violate human rights, particularly the equal rights of women;
- flout the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) – under which affected communities are informed about and are able to give or refuse consent to a project;
- are not based on a thorough assessment or in disregard of social, economic and environmental impacts, including the way they are gendered;
- avoid transparent contracts with clear and binding commitments on employment and benefit-sharing;
- eschew democratic planning, independent oversight and meaningful participation.<sup>9</sup>

Borras and Franco have additionally warned that the fluidity of the terms land acquisition and land grab have led to misappropriation of these terms by some groups as a means of promoting neoliberal capitalism as a positive force for development:

Increasingly, the image of "global land-grabbing" is being appropriated by those who are bent on re-casting the phenomenon itself as a golden opportunity to further extend capitalist agro-industry in the name of pro-poor and ecologically sustainable economic development. This extremely dubious agenda is now being consolidated around the dangerously seductive call for

<sup>9</sup> Oxfam, *"Our Land, Our Lives": Time Out on the Global Land Rush* (Oxford, UK: Oxfam, 2012), 5.

a “code of conduct” to discipline big bad land deals and transform them into supposedly more ethical “win-win” outcomes.<sup>10</sup>

### SUMMARY OF THE ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE LAND-GRABBING PROBLEM

Taking land from rightful owners is a very simple case of theft which is usually regulated under a nation’s private property laws. Defining ‘rightful owners’ in the context of competing historical and modern legal and ethical systems lies at the heart of defining such practices as **simple theft**. Thus, clear instances of land theft are relatively straightforward from an ethical and legal standpoint, but are complicated by the legal concept of ownership.

The fact that land dispossession used for food production can lead to displacement, impoverishment, malnutrition and starvation leads to the spectre and potential for **genocide** when such practices are targeted against specific groups for both political and economic purposes. Since women are traditionally heavily involved in many agricultural tasks, and may be more vulnerable with respect to property rights and inheritances in some African nations, land grabbing may also exhibit **gender discrimination**.

**Complicity** on the part of the purchasers also arises as an ethical issue as they benefit from low land prices below market value, since the land has often been obtained by illegitimate means: thus, the purchaser could be accused of knowingly ‘trafficking in stolen goods’ or ‘aiding and abetting’ illegal practices.

**Land is a gift from God** (human ownership is only temporal) – land use should be regulated within some religious, sacred or ethical framework. Historically, there has been no inalienable human right to land ownership (taking land through conquest is a widely acknowledged practice), but an inalienable right to sustenance for maintenance of life has recently been internationally supported through various universal human rights frameworks, primarily the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Traditional uses and historical local needs must be respected within these frameworks. This view embraces the ecotheological principle of Stewardship that has been

10 Saturnino M. Borras and Jennifer Franco. *Towards a Broader View of the Politics of Global Land Grab: Rethinking Land Issues, Reframing Resistance* (Amsterdam: Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies, Land Deal Politics Initiative and Transnational Institute, 2010), 3.

widely discussed and which has biblical support. Stewardship in Christian ecotheology means that mankind holds responsibilities toward land as a gift which must be protected and preserved for current and future generations: land does not exist solely for the profit or benefit of the individual landowner (steward).

**Land is sacred**, as the creation of God. Thus, land grabs for unecologically sound practices such as deforestation, monoculture (which threatens other species in creation), or strip mining is disrespectful to the Creator since it damages the gift that has been freely given. This scenario results in the perversion of the purposes of land for sustenance and enjoyment, and subverts any inherent ecological rights that nature possesses. Christopher Stone, for example, has argued in his influential *Should Trees Have Standing?* (1972) that nature has intrinsic rights that should be protected by a guardian or surrogate.<sup>11</sup>

**The common good** is an important consideration in land use (we all need land). The just distribution of all goods to everyone in the community is a core Christian concept.

#### INTERNATIONAL LEGAL AND ETHICAL FRAMEWORKS TO ADDRESS LAND-GRABBING

Land and sustenance are recognized as fundamental and universal rights in many international rights frameworks. Table 1 below lists some of the covenants, conventions, charters, and declarations related to the prevention of land grabbing.

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 11 Christopher D. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing? Law, Morality, and the Environment*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010 [1972]).

*Table 1. International Frameworks Relevant to Protection Against Land-Grabbing*

Document	Date	Rights
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25	1948	“a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food...”
International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11	1966	self-determination (art. 1) and “an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions...”
Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	1979	“the same rights for both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property...”
African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights	1979	equality (art. 3), life and personal integrity [implying food] (art. 4), dignity (art. 5), freedom from slavery (art. 5)...
International Labour Organization, C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)	1989	“governments shall respect the special importance for the cultures and spiritual values of the peoples concerned of their relationship with the lands or territories, or both as applicable, which they occupy or otherwise use, and in particular the collective aspects of this relationship” (art. 13)
United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	2007	self-determination and autonomy (arts. 3-4), right to maintain legal and cultural institutions (art. 5); nations should provide protection against: “any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing [people] of their lands, territories or resources...” (art. 8b)
Bishops’ Synod for Africa, Propositions	2009	“this Synod urgently calls upon all governments to ensure that its citizens are protected from the unjust alienation of their land and access to water” (prop. 30)



M'bour Declaration on land grabbing in Africa	2011	“We recommend to the Church to.... integrate land questions into evangelisation, supported by the theology of land, and prioritise land issues in pastoral work, especially in the work of Caritas and Justice and Peace Commissions and at all levels” (art. 2).
African Union Economic and Social Council, “Facing the Challenges of Land Monitoring....”	2016	“promote consensus for shared principles as the basis for securing access to land for all users, enhancing agricultural productivity and sustaining livelihoods”

One major problem is that these frameworks represent international legal solutions that may ultimately be unenforceable unless national laws are altered. Also, universal rights have been criticized as Eurocentric and embodying western values such as the emphasis on individual rights over communitarian values. The communal value of land is a valid ethical argument in land use; however, the argument is often misused to justify land appropriation (eminent domain policies) for supposed social benefits when in fact profits and benefits only accrue to select individuals in land grabbing. Faith-based approaches are advantageous as they appeal to actual behaviours and can be justified by real world practices. Also, Christianity specifically has a tradition of protecting the more vulnerable members of society.

### CONGRUENCY OF EXISTING INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS FRAMEWORKS WITH CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES

Fortunately, already existing human rights principles for land ownership and land regulation, including the resolution of competing interests, are fully compatible with Christian moral precepts and ecclesiastical law (Canon Law), including the jurisprudence systems which govern the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Catholic Church, Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, etc. This compatibility is no accident, since, in fact, modern universal human rights, although strongly impacted by the secularism of the Enlightenment philosophes, are also firmly based on both earlier Roman Law and the natural rights doctrines of theologians Saint Hilary of Poitiers and Saint Augustine.

The table below (Table 2) demonstrates clearly that the suggested fundamental human rights principles established in the landmark 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights express a view of land rights fully compatible with Christian ecotheology and Christian justice (Canon Law).

To reiterate, this congruency is not accidental and ultimately derives from the Creator’s desire to create just societies that function for the benefit of all of creation, including its continuance and future sustainability. These doctrines, embodied in scripture, have made their way into modern formalized systems of law because they provide practical normative ethics for day-to-day living and the preservation of just communities.

Table 2. Principles of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) applicable to land-grabbing. Source: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *Land Governance* (2017).<sup>12</sup>

Human rights relevant to The Way that Competing Interests in Land are Dealt with:	Source
– Right to life	UDHR art. 3, ICCPR 6.1
– Right to recognition as a person before the law	UDHR art. 6
– Equality before the law	UDHR art. 7, ICCPR art. 14.1, art. 26
– Right to effective judiciary/remedy	UDHR art. 8, ICCPR 2.3 (a)
– Ban on arbitrary detention	UDHR art. 9
– Right to public hearing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.</li> </ul>	UDHR art. 10, ICCPR art. 14.1
– Right to the presumption of innocence	UDHR art. 11 See also: ICCPR art. 14.2

<sup>12</sup> United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). *Land Governance: A Review and Analysis of Key International Frameworks* (Nairobi, Kenya: UN-Habitat, 2017), 5.

<p>– Everyone shall be entitled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence and to communicate with counsel of his own choosing;</li> <li>• To be tried in his presence, and to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing; to be informed, if he does not have legal assistance, of this right; and to have legal assistance assigned to him, in any case where the interests of justice so require, and without payment by him in any such case if he does not have sufficient means to pay for it;</li> <li>• To examine, or have examined, the witnesses against on his behalf under the same conditions as witnesses against him;</li> <li>• To have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court</li> </ul>	ICCPR art. 14.3
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## Review of Proposed Christian Solutions

Several Christian responses to the land governance ethical issues outlined above have been formulated specifically for Africa. These frameworks can also be extended to similar well-documented scenarios in Latin America and Asia and other developing areas of the world, although the focus of this chapter is Africa. Both Jesus and the Old Testament Prophets opposed the unrestrained accumulation of wealth, including land. Isaiah says, “Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!”<sup>13</sup> Micah states “And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.”<sup>14</sup> The concept of Jubilee (forgiveness of debts) was designed to prevent accumulation of wealth, such as land wealth, by the aristocratic classes. These ethical precepts were undoubtedly designed to prevent land from simply becoming an economic commodity divorced from moral considerations.

Modern Christian churches, despite the previous patterns of communalism and communal property, recognize privately owned property, partly in compliance with secular national laws. However, they recognize the

<sup>13</sup> Is 5:8, King James ver.

<sup>14</sup> Mic 2:2, King James ver.

important spiritual dimensions of land as a sacred gift for which humans have been given a providential stewardship.

Christian Churches in Africa have been aware of the acuteness and seriousness of the land problem since the beginning of the Western colonization of Africa in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Similarly in Latin America, the 16th century Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagún was critical of some of the ‘Christian’ practices carried out by colonists in New Spain among the native Aztecs, such as land theft and forced slavery. More recently, large-scale land purchases have forced the issue of land grabbing into the consciousness of all thinking Christians. The Bishops’ Synod for Africa met in Vatican City on October 23, 2009 and declared:

Since large stretches of fertile land and water resources are unscrupulously exploited by foreign and local investors in many African countries, causing the displacement and dispossession of poor persons and their communities, who are often powerless to oppose this ‘assault’, this Synod urgently calls upon all governments to ensure that its citizens are protected from the unjust alienation of their land and access to water, which are essential goods of the human person.<sup>15</sup>

In Leviticus 25:23, God states: “The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.”<sup>16</sup> This verse emphasizes God’s ultimate ownership of land and contrasts sharply with private land ownership regimes which only exist for economic purposes without the concomitant stewardship responsibilities of maintaining natural resources for diverse goods such as health, happiness and habitat for fellow creatures, as well as for sustaining future generations.

Another Christian response to the land grabbing phenomenon was the meeting of various Catholic Development Organizations in Mbour, Senegal on February 6-9, 2011 to draft the *Mbour Declaration on Land Grabbing in Africa*. The representatives confirmed “that land is a gift from God and a common good entrusted to us by past generations for our use, and holding this in trust for generations yet unborn” and “that land should be viewed not

.....  
15 Bishops’ Synod for Africa, “Propositions,” prop. 13, last modified 2009, accessed July 18, 2023, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20091023\\_elenco-prop-finali\\_en.html#:~:text=Since%20large%20stretches%20of%20fertile,Synod%20urgently%20calls%20upon%20all.](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20091023_elenco-prop-finali_en.html#:~:text=Since%20large%20stretches%20of%20fertile,Synod%20urgently%20calls%20upon%20all.)

16 King James ver.

as a mere commodity for profit making but rather as territory in which is inscribed our culture, our identity and the source of our sustenance”.<sup>17</sup> The declaration made several specific demands on world governments, including to: “Provide legal recognition for, and protection to customary land and natural resource rights of the people and ensure equitable access to land for farming families, pastoralists and indigenous communities; [and] Facilitate prior, transparent consultations with local communities for all projects that affect their livelihoods as required by the African Union land policy guidelines...”.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the Mbour representatives called on the Christian Church to:

Denounce land contracts that violate human rights as illegal and illegitimate; Integrate land questions into evangelisation, supported by the theology of land, and prioritise land issues in pastoral work, especially in the work of Caritas and Justice and Peace Commissions at all levels; Strengthen linkages and deepen trust with local communities through closer consultations, and stand by these communities in times of challenges; Closely monitor the implementation of the African Union Land Policy and popularise the implementation of propositions 22, 29 and 30 on land by the Second Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa.<sup>19</sup>

According to the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN)

The Church clearly states that land is a common good given by the Creator for the needs of all, now and in the future. The right to use of land is natural and primordial; it is a universal value that applies to every human being and that may not be overridden by any other economic right. The social doctrine of the Church supports private property as a means of achieving autonomy and freedom, a means, however, which is subordinate to the first social function of property: to enable each and every person to live.<sup>20</sup>

At a 2011 meeting in Nairobi chaired by former President of Botswana Festus Mogae, a number of delegates from the African Union and African

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<sup>17</sup> “M’bour Declaration on land grabbing in Africa,” last modified 2011, accessed July 18, 2023, 3, <http://archives.aefjn.org/index.php/action-347/articles/mbour-declaration-on-land-grabbing.html>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN). *Land Grabbing in Africa: An Ethical and Biblical View for Reflection and Action* (Brussels: AEFJN, 2011), 3.

Development Bank drafted the *Guiding Principles on Large Scale Land Based Investments in Africa*. This was part of the Land Policy Initiative of the African Union to develop a guiding framework for land use in Africa. The Land Policy Initiative was particularly interested in land-based investments in land parcels over 200 hectares.

Self-determination and social participation in communities is a core principle of Christian social ethics. As Schonecke and Fouarge point out: “What Christian social thinking insists upon is the need of participation in decision-making processes, particularly of the people concerned with an issue.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, all of the Christian principles enumerated above by various Christian groups in Africa (which are well supported by scripture and well attested in theology) can directly combat land-grabbing by exposing the criminal intent of the most overt practices (violence and theft), emphasizing the ephemeral nature of human land tenure and man’s social and stewardship responsibilities in using land as necessary for sustenance and not only as a means of wealth accumulation. Man also is enjoined in Christianity not to defile creation through pollution and unnecessary consumption that endanger the earth’s ecosystems.

In 2019, Dr Kelebogile Thomas Resane of the University of the Free State proposed a four-step Christian response to postcolonial land issues of Africa:

firstly to advocate strategies to clarify, and secondly to entrench rights for the victims – bilateral agreements – with which the church is conversant with current policies regarding land to assist the dispossessed. Thirdly, to reach degrees of consensus which may contribute to amicable settlement of disputes that satisfy both parties and where majority decisions are respected. Finally, the church should promote dialogue, where dissenting parties should synergise towards a unified action to address the situation; or clarify any misunderstanding.<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusion

21 W. Schonecke and C. Fouarge. *Land – Biblical and Ethical Dimensions* (Berlin: Netzwerk Afrika Deutschland, 2011), 4–5..

22 Kelebogile Thomas Resane, “The Role of the Church in the Land Debate,” *Scriptura* 118, no. 1 (2019): 1, <https://doi.org/10.7833/118-1-1526>.

The ethics of land appropriation or land acquisition ('land-grabbing') have been approached within both a legal and international human rights framework, but also from the perspective of Christian ethics (most notably, the 2011 *Mbour Declaration of Land Grabbing in Africa* and the Bishops' Synod for Africa meeting in 2009). The ecotheological principles of Christian ethical stewardship of creation as well as distributive and social justice can be productive concepts in developing socially just land policy in Africa.

## Statement of Research Ethics

No financial, research or personal conflicts of interest related to this research are reported by the author. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar (WCM-Q), Cornell University, or Qatar Foundation. No human or animal subjects were used in this research.

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EVELYN A. ARMSTRONG

## “We Hold the Whole World in Our Hands” A Canadian Story about Political and Eco-Social Issues

### Introduction

I draw from lived experiences – of teaching, travel, and from conversations with Indigenous peoples, First Nations Elders, students, and other informants. I collect information and do research to understand and to discover eco-social achievements directed toward reconciliation that are underway in my community – Merritt and the Nicola Valley, and elsewhere in the Province of British Columbia, Canada.

Looking back in order to look forward I shall sketch a Canadian History, then to comment on important features – such as those that justify sovereignty over lands and peoples, and those that search for reconciliation – specifically, I shall introduce and comment on recommendations for reconciliation gleaned from the findings of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I shall discuss eco-social and environmental justice, global warming and climate change. Throughout, I shall show through art, literature, film and poetry accounts in which aesthetic and political views can aid in the endless task of bringing justice, beauty, truth and the need for reconciliation to public awareness. I have tried to understand, and share, some of the ways in which

culture and social values tie diverse communities to the ecological whole: the future of which we hold in our hands.



*Figure 1: ©E.A. Armstrong*

## Part One: A history lesson

We read that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada came into being as the result of, “...the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.”<sup>1</sup> With that information, we discover many things that had been hidden and or remain unresolved:

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<sup>1</sup> The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement.

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, including the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, was an attempt to resolve thousands of lawsuits brought against the Federal Government of Canada for cases of historical abuse. Its implementation has also been challenging. Canada and the churches have made apologies to Survivors, their families and Communities.<sup>2</sup>

A great deal has happened since that 2015 report. When we read the headings, contemplate the list of recommendations and calls to action, there is little doubt that, "...reconciliation is in the very best interests of all Canada."<sup>3</sup> The history of colonial authority and settler governments has been a focus of study of the United Nations for some time, and eventually, in 2016 Canada endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>4</sup>

Canada has a long history of colonialism in relation to Aboriginal peoples. That history and its policies of cultural genocide and assimilation have left deep scars on the lives of many Aboriginal people, on Aboriginal communities, as well as on Canadian society, and have deeply damaged the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. It took a long time for that damage to have been done and for the relationship we see to have been created, and it will take us a long time to fix it. But the[reconciliation] process has already begun.<sup>5</sup>

What we need to remember are not only facts that concern the origins and antiquity of humans in the Americas, but also the ecological worldviews of Indigenous Peoples. We need to hear those wonderful creation stories,

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2 The Settlement was/is meant to resolve numerous lawsuits brought against the Canadian government and Canadian churches for historical abuses of Aboriginal people's rights and liberties. See, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [hereafter TRC]. *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Volume One: Summary, Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* (James Lorimer & Company Ltd., Publishers Toronto, 2015), 186–187.

3 TRC, *Final Report*.

4 See <https://canada.ca/en/justice/news>, accessed July 10, 2022. In 2016, the Government of Canada endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the "Declaration") without qualification, and committed to its full and effective implementation. Bill C-15 proposes to affirm the Declaration as a universal international human rights instrument with application in Canadian law.

5 TRC, *Final Report*, 183.

“...cultural origins in supernatural terms”.<sup>6</sup> Many such, Sptákwelh — creation stories — can be found in local collections such as this one from the Nlaka’pamux Nation in south central British Columbia:<sup>7</sup>

Our presence in our ancestral lands’ dates back thousands of years to Sp-tákwelh, the Creation period when Coyote, Bear, Owl, and the other Transformers inhabited and shaped these lands. When Coyote freed the salmon from their trap at the mouth of the Fraser River, he sent them all the way up to the Thompson....<sup>8</sup>

Over the years I have heard and read many such stories of origin and creation, my favourite is an account of how kokanee, a land locked salmon fish, came to be in Nicola Lake:

Coyote was standing on the shore of the Thompson River near Cooks Ferry when he spied Salmon, he jumped on her. She swerved and escaped by hiding in the waters of the Nicola River, but Coyote found her and pounced. Again, Salmon swerved, Coyote pounced, Salmon swerved. Over and again, this happened until Salmon, with a big splash of her tail, disappeared into the deep waters of Nicola Lake.

And that, I was told so long ago by Mrs. John, a First Nations Elder, is how kokanee came to be in Nicola Lake. Mrs. John also explained that the twists and turns of the Nicola River that we know today, were made by Coyote chasing Salmon. “Coyote,” said Mrs. John, “was discouraged, and as he walked away, he scuffed his feet, thereby leaving a hillock to mark his foot print; this, at the mouth of the Nicola River and several others downstream.”<sup>9</sup> One such land form exists near the mouth of the Nicola River.<sup>10</sup>

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6 Alan D. Mc Millan and Eldon Yellowhorn, *First Peoples In Canada* (Vancouver: Douglas&McIntyre, 2004).

7 The Nlaka’pamux Nation is one of the Interior Salish Nations that have lived for thousands of years along the Thompson and Nicola rivers; the Nicola Valley and the City of Merritt in the southern interior of British Columbia.

8 Lower Nicola Indian Band, Community Profile, accessed August 30, 2022, <https://www.lnib.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/LNIB-Community-Profile-December-2015.pdf>.

9 I was a child when I first heard this story. Since then, I have read many more ‘creation’ stories, most notably those collected by James Alexander Teit, Annie York, and those a collection by Darwin Hanna and Mamie Henry.

10 Three other earth mounds said to be coyote’s ‘foot-marks’ were downstream in Merritt, B.C., alongside Nicola Avenue. In my time, two earth mounds were excavated for gravel, the last was flattened to make way for a housing development.

Following Darwin Hanna, "The Coyote stories are the most well-known Sptákwelh [creation], followed closely by those about Grizzly and the Bear Cubs/Transformers and those about Owl."

Throughout Canada Aboriginal stories will be similar – even though distinctive cultures – the stories are often "spoken" by animal forms in human shape. Indigenous people's creation stories, deeply rooted in the land and shapes that support life, thus provide areas for hunting, fishing, gathering fruit and berries. Since time immemorable this offers a sense of one's being.

Two well-known nature writers, Peter Knudtson and David Suzuki, point this out with:

...attempts to convey a sense of the cultural diversity of Native peoples' intellectual and experiential insights into the workings of nature and into the proper human relationships with the natural world. This organization reflects our commitment to acknowledging each Native group's perspective on nature as culturally valid and worthy of respect in its own right.<sup>11</sup>

These writers go on to share, or open discussion on a wide range of, "Native vignettes... – in which, at least traditionally, [Indigenous peoples] have a profound and deeply rooted sense of place and a relationship with the entirety of the natural... bound together in part by an assortment of shared primary ecological perspectives and themes."<sup>12</sup>

In the sense to say that Canada's Aboriginal cultures, rooted in the land, and now facing the upheavals of climate change, still hold the distinctive belief of an ancient system and social organization that must be upheld. More of which we shall see in the chapters to come, but first it must be said that Canada's Indigenous peoples continue the struggle to claim ownership of lands that they have been occupying since time immemorable. As Naomie Klein, an award-winning journalist and author points out: "Aboriginal peoples are more than capable and...able to claim responsibility to care and, ...protect their common lands, water and air from destruction."<sup>13</sup>

Before going forward on the topic of eco-social, political and economic transformations, already underway in my community – this, in response to the process of reconciliation and in response to global warming and climate

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11 Peter Knudtson and David Suzuki, *Wisdom of the Elders* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1993).

12 Ibid.

13 Naomie Klein, *This Changes Everything. Capitalism vs. The Climate* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2014).

change – I want to briefly offer a little history of human activity in North America from anthropological investigation. Vast research in North America shows activity expanding from the ice-free corridor of the late Pleistocene era on through the vast cultural adaptation of, “the warmer climate of the Holocene environment”<sup>14</sup>

Throughout that part of North America known as Canada we find archaeological evidence of human activity and established communities. These range from the far north, through the west coast, east past the Rocky Mountains, across the vast prairies, around the Canadian Shield, the great Lakes and continuing along to the far east coast, where the earliest encounters with Aboriginal peoples and the Vikings took place.<sup>15</sup> In short, this land has been inhabited since time immemorable. An ancient First Nations story of creation tells us:

At one time, very long ago the earth was very different for what it is in present... after a time, men successively appeared on earth, travelling here and there, working wonders, changing and modifying the existing order of things...<sup>16</sup>

Eventually, changes will address: identity and cultural loss; land claims, the loss of archaeological sites; and the destruction of valued hunting and fishing sites due to resource extraction.

As I noted above, Aboriginal “creation” stories take the form of animals that talk, plants that seem to have interconnections with people, and non-creation stories that, “...include information about history and cultural teachings.”<sup>17</sup>

While the changing eco-social environment, in Canada, involves troubling aspects of growth in an economic system based in ‘resource management’ and ‘resource extraction’ there are numerous unacknowledged treaties from colonial times that have created their own changing environment. According to Naomi Klein:

.....  
14 McMillan and Yellowhorn, *First Peoples*.

15 ROM, “Collections & Research,” accessed August 20, 2022, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/collections-research>. Archaeological evidence shows that in the early eleventh century CE, the Vikings arrived in Newfoundland and established a small encampment, known today as the UNESCO World Heritage Site L’Anse aux Meadows.

16 See Darwin Hanna and Henry Mamie, eds., *Out Tellings Interior Salish Stories of the Nlha7káp̓mx People* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 21.

17 *Ibid.*, 119.

What is changing is that many Non-Native people are starting to realize that Indigenous rights – if aggressively backed by court challenges, direct action, and mass movements demanding that they be respected – may now represent the most powerful barriers protecting all of us from a future of climate chaos.<sup>18</sup>

In 1867, under the provisions of the British North America Act, Canada became a self-governing dominion: "...the only colony in any empire to extract full democracy from the central power without going to war."<sup>19</sup>

The fate of New France was decided on September 13, 1759, in Québec City, on the Plains of Abraham. The famous battle of Québec pitted French troops against English, with their respective Generals Louis-Joseph de Montcalm and James Wolfe...<sup>20</sup>

North America colonies under the rule of British Crown, also included the New England colonies to the south. What's important is the very decisive Royal Proclamation of 1763,<sup>21</sup> in which the fate, or lives of Indigenous peoples considered as "wards" of the crown, took in the lands they occupied. Although occupation along the lines of ownership was acknowledged, the only way for the crown to acquire ownership of otherwise Aboriginal occupied lands was through a treaty process.<sup>22</sup> In 1998 Mr. Justice Tom Norris of the British Columbia Court of Appeal has ruled:

18 Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 380.

19 John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country Telling Truths About Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2009).

20 See Quebec cité, "Battle of the Plains of Abraham," accessed August 30, 2022, <https://www.quebec-cite.com/en/quebec-city/battle-plains-abraham#>.

21 The Royal Proclamation of 1763 established the British definition of Indian Country. On these lands the Crown claimed sovereignty, but it also decreed that the land was to be considered in the possession of the Indigenous peoples who occupied them. Consequently, in order to transfer ownership of the land to the Crown through the surrendering of the land from the indigenous peoples, there had to be payment.

22 Great Britain began formalizing various treaties such as a "peace and Friendship" agreements in 1760 and 1761, then the Treaty of Niagara with the First Nations on July 8, 1764. In other events, the Ottawa of Detroit, the Wyandot of Sandusky, and the Lenape and Shawnee of the Ohio refused to attend the Treaty Council. This treaty created a new Covenant Chain between Britain and the First Nations of the western Great Lakes. During the War of 1812, Nations involved with this treaty allied themselves with the British, as the Nations believed the treaty bound them to the British cause. Wikipedia, "Treaty of Fort Niagara," accessed July 28, 2022, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty\\_of\\_Fort\\_Niagara](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Fort_Niagara).

...like other treaties signed between the Crown and Canadian Aboriginal peoples, [these] consistent with the direction of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, [in which]... aboriginal rights as to hunting and fishing [are] affirmed by the Proclamation of 1763 and recognized by the Treaty... [which] still exist.<sup>23</sup>

From guidelines set out in the 1763 Royal Proclamation those Aboriginal rights were/are acknowledged.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the 1982 Canadian Constitution Act clearly upholds:

...recognizes and affirms “the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada”, ...as a focal point for contemporary Aboriginal jurisprudence, the post 1982 Constitution is the meeting ground for a past vision and a future vision. It speaks with a colonial voice from the imperial, era and a voice of liberation directed to the future.<sup>25</sup>

Before addressing the alarming global ecological crisis, impacting the well-being and healthful future of Planet Earth, I should like to say quite a lot on the topic of the struggle to restore mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

While we stand proudly for a Canada True North Strong and Free – a full constitutional democracy wrested from the British Crown without going to war,<sup>26</sup> and with the British North America Act 1876 – under which Canada was formed – what’s not fully known, understood or comprehended, is the one-sided heavy-handed domination – authority, and control over the lives, identity, cultures and lands – that the government holds over Canada’s Aboriginal peoples:

...lack of historical knowledge has serious consequences for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, and for Canada as a whole. In government circles, it makes

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23 Dara Culhane, *The Pleasure of the Crown Anthropology, Law and First Nations* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1998), 77.

24 See Indigenous Foundations, “Royal Proclamation, 1763,” accessed August 30, 2022, [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/royal\\_proclamation\\_1763/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/royal_proclamation_1763/). See also Culhane, *The Pleasure*, 77.

25 Alan C. Cairns, “First Nations and the Canadian Nation: Colonization and Constitutional Alienation,” in *Canadian Politics Fourth Edition*, ed. Bickerton, James, and Alain-G Gagnon (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), 354.

26 John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country Telling Truths About Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2009).



for poor public decisions. In the public realm it reinforces racist attitudes and fuels civic distrust between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians.<sup>27</sup>

As we champion the British North America Act, hereafter, BNA, which anchors our distinctly Canadian Constitution, we also hail our 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and we acknowledge and uphold the wording of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 that underlies our 'rule of Law'.<sup>28</sup>

Clearly and without question, The Royal Proclamation sets in place, "...broad treaty rights of the First Nations,<sup>29</sup> but it also caused turmoil for British settlers to the south. Upon examination of a map, drawn on animal skin and held in the collection of the British Museum, historian Neil MacGregor describes the map, "...drawn on buckskin, by a Native America, around 1774". MacGregor opens it to illustrate the extent of British controlled land:

...from the Great Lakes down to the Mississippi... [but] the British colonial governors now had their own countrymen to contend with. ...British settlers were eager to move west. ...A few years later tension, between settlers wanting land and the British Crown eager to maintain good relations with the Native American chiefs, would be one of the elements that triggered the War of Independence.<sup>30</sup>

The much later Indian Act of 1876, "basically an administration document" allowed the British Crown to administer control over the land, lives, customs, and education of Canada's first peoples. Eventually the Act became an instrument of cultural destruction: banning languages and cultural rituals. John Ralston Saul quotes a section from a debate in the House of Commons:

From 1884 to 1951 the potlatch ceremony, or celebrations, was banned by law through an amendment to the Indian Act. The potlatch was a spiritual event as well as an important social moment. ...At first the enforcement of the ban was sporadic. Then in 1913... Duncan Campbell Scott took over as deputy superintendent general of Indian Affairs. He was determined to enforce the law.<sup>31</sup>

27 TRC, *Final Report*, 8.

28 James Bickerton and Alain-G. Gagnon, eds., *Canadian Politics Fourth Edition* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), 28 and 128.

29 Saul, *A Fair Country*, 117.

30 Neil MacGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 579.

31 Saul, *A Fair Country*, 193.

Further amendments, such as in 1920, enforced compulsory attendance of Native children to attend residential schools. Scott often addressed the notion of ‘assimilation’ and has been quoted as saying, “I want to get rid of the Indian problem.... Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question.”<sup>32</sup> Dominating and overreaching, the Indian Act has:

...subsumed a number of colonial laws that aimed to eliminate First Nations culture in favour of assimilation... The Act has been amended several times, most significantly in 1951 and 1985, with changes mainly focusing on the removal of discriminatory sections. It is an evolving, paradoxical document that has enabled trauma, human rights violations and social and cultural disruption for generations of Indigenous peoples.<sup>33</sup>

A change to note can be found in The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms 1982. This important document not only upholds the Rights of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, but also recognizes through Part II section 35, “The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal peoples of Canada... hereby recognized and confirmed.”<sup>34</sup> In other words the broad treaty rights that are written into the 1763 Royal Proclamation, stand strong. Eventually, with Bill-C31 the long-awaited change to the Indian Act reinstated the statuses of Indigenous women.

A great deal has happened in my own area, British Columbia, and in Canada. In some cases, there have been public demonstrations and equally public court actions directed toward reclaiming aboriginal lands. Lands occupied since time immemorial by Canada’s Indigenous peoples. Such actions have often drawn world-wide attention.

In 1990 the “Oka Crises” erupted over a land dispute with the Kanien’kéhaka and a land development project. The televised demonstrations, that opposed a housing development project and a golf course to be built over an ancient Native burial ground, sent images of masked Indigenous warriors “facing it off” with uniformed military and armed police. The “action” was also caught on a highly acclaimed documentary film by First Nations Film

32 Cairns, “First Nations and the Canadian Nation,” 349.

33 See The Canadian Encyclopedia, Indian Act, accessed August 30, 2022, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-act>.

34 Bickerton and Gagnon, *Canadian Politics*, 476.

Director Alanis Obomsawin.<sup>35</sup> The National Film Board of Canada has this vivid report on the website:

In July 1990, a dispute over a proposed golf course to be built on Kanien'kéhaka (Mohawk) lands in Oka, Quebec, set the stage for a historic confrontation that would grab international headlines and sear itself into the Canadian consciousness. Director Alanis Obomsawin – at times with a small crew, at times alone – spent 78 days behind Kanien'kéhaka lines filming the armed standoff between protestors, the Quebec police and the Canadian army. Released in 1993, this landmark documentary has been seen around the world, winning over a dozen international awards and making history at the Toronto International Film Festival, where it became the first documentary ever to win the Best Canadian Feature award. Jesse Wentz, Director of Canada's Indigenous Screen Office, has called it a "watershed film in the history of First Peoples cinema".<sup>36</sup>

In British Columbia, a land action in 1993 focused on the creation of National Parks of Gwaii Haanas; this, on and around the sacred First Nations lands on the Queen Charlotte archipelago – Haida Gwaii – a groundbreaking decision whose time had come. The preservation of Gwaii Haanas, whose Indigenous peoples argued against logging, especially clear-cut logging, is now hailed as a first in protecting Indigenous lands in B.C., David Suzuki explains:

The Haida believe that a common sustainable future based on respect for the land and its plants and animals is possible for all people. They want to cut back logging and... if the Haida succeed they could provide a model to the world of how people can live sustainably and in balance with nature.<sup>37</sup>

This is one of the most compelling stories based on the Aboriginal affirmation of kinship with nature, with animals, and a deep abiding spiritual

35 Jordan Wheeler, "Oka Crisis: 5 films that shed light on the events," *CBC News* · Posted: Jul 19, 2015, 9:40 AM ET, last updated July 21, 2015, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/oka-crisis-5-films-that-shed-light-on-the-events-1.3158333>. See Alanis Obomsawin, *Kanehsatake, 270 Years of Resistance*, accessed August 31, 2022, [https://www.nfb.ca/film/kanehsatake\\_270\\_years\\_of\\_resistance/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/kanehsatake_270_years_of_resistance/).

36 To view film images, go to: [https://www.nfb.ca/film/kanehsatake\\_270\\_years\\_of\\_resistance/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/kanehsatake_270_years_of_resistance/).

37 Knudtson and Suzuki, *Wisdom of the Elders*. "GWAII HAANAS NATIONAL PARK PRESERVE," accessed August 30, 2022, <https://cases.open.ubc.ca/gwaii-haanas>. This conservation resource was created by Andy Ferguson, Joseph Moric, Joseph Timmermans, and David Watson.

connection to the land of which Haida Gwaii has been the home, “...to its aboriginal inhabitants since the beginning of time.”<sup>38</sup>

In other “groundbreaking” land issues Jason Proctor, a reporter in British Columbia for the CBC News, writes:

When Captain James Cook encountered the ancestors of the Nuchatlaht people in 1778, the British Explorer wrote in his journal that he had “no where met with Indians who had such high notions of every thing the Country produced being their exclusive property”. ...the Nuchatlaht case also promises to be significant because it’s the first to come to court since the province passed legislation in 2019 to align its laws with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>39</sup>

As we read, or hear, Indigenous peoples speak of responsibility to protect the earth and creation, the preservation of the Great Bear Rainforest is a wonderful example of First Nations actions directed toward care for the land.

In February 2016, the Government of British Columbia, First Nations, environmental groups, and forest industry representatives announced their final agreement on how the Great Bear Rainforest would be managed. This agreement will conserve 85 per cent of the forest and 70 per cent of old growth over time. It is interesting to note, I think, that their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge officially endorsed the Great Bear Rainforest under The Queen’s Commonwealth Canopy Initiative. For more information on the region’s ecology and biodiversity, plus the Queen’s Commonwealth Canopy and the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement see an official British Columbia website.<sup>40</sup> An online article by tourism writer Carolyn Ali that gives the location and the development of this natural reserve:

The Great Bear Rainforest is a landmass located 400 km (250 miles) along the central and northern coast of British Columbia, from Knight Inlet to the Alaska Panhandle and is a natural-reserve-stewardship for First Nations...

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38 Knudtson and Suzuki, *Wisdom of the Elders*, xxv.

39 Jason Proctor, “‘Historic’ Aboriginal land title trial to begin in B.C. Supreme Court,” *CBC News*, March 21, 2022, accessed August 31, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/land-title-nuchatlaht-tsilhqot-in-1.6389789>.

40 British Columbia, “Natural Resource Laws, Policies, Standards & Guidance,” last updated February 20, 2019, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/laws-policies-standards-guidance>.

a global treasure, The Great Bear Rainforest covers 6.4 million hectares on British Columbia's north and central coast – equivalent in size to Ireland. All British Columbians have a stake in protecting it. The historic agreement that secures the future of the Great Bear Rainforest means more old-and second-growth forest will be protected, while still ensuring opportunities for economic development for local First Nations.<sup>41</sup>

An example of the struggle for self-government lies in the long history of the Nisga'a Final Agreement, 1998. The agreement covers a substantial land mass of Nisga'a territory in northern British Columbia, but it also addresses ' [the] ...right to practice the Nisga'a culture, and to use the Nisga'a language; this, after decades of argument:

...the Nisga'a Nation has sought a just and equitable settlement of the land question since the arrival of the British Crown, including the preparation of the Nisga'a Petition to His Majesty's Privy Council, dated 21 May, 1913, and the conduct of the litigation that led to the decision on the Supreme Court of Canada... in 1973... Whereas Canadian courts have stated that the reconciliation between the prior presence of aboriginal peoples and the assertion of sovereignty of the Crown is best achieved through negotiation and agreement....<sup>42</sup>

Another land agreement worth noting, I think, may be found in the wording of the Taku River Tlingit First Nations Constitution 1993. Located in the farthest North West corner of British Columbia, the Taku River Tlingit First Nation were quick to cite section 35 of the Canadian Constitution Act 1982; this, to affirm their Aboriginal rights and title to lands, waters, resources, and the inherent right to self-determination. Their own Constitution clearly follows ancient customs regarding care and thoughtfulness toward nature:

...from the foundation of an environmental and cultural value system... passed from ancestors to elders and from elders to present day generation... As Tlingit, we accept that we are part of and responsible to our land. Everything that is a part of our land has life and spirit. Thus, we respect, protect

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41 This online article has photographs and tourist information: Super, Natural British Columbia, "How to Visit the Great Bear Rainforest in BC: Where to Go and What to Do," accessed August 30, 2022, <https://www.hellobc.com/stories/how-to-visit-the-great-bear-rainforest-in-bc-where-to-go-and-what-to-do/>.

42 Nisga'a Final Agreement. 1998. QP 852364 Canada, 1.

and preserve all life and land... We are Tingit because we know that this place, this land, is our traditional territory. We have an eternal spiritual relationship with this land, this place.<sup>43</sup>

Similar actions in the northern and central areas of British Columbia have often been overshadowed by “ecological world views” but it is important to note that the Constitution Act 1982 sets precedent for long argued and long-awaited First Nations self-government and control over traditional territories. More to the point: with the signing of the Canadian Constitution and under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a framework for the practice of reconciliation has been set in place.<sup>44</sup>

David Suzuki, geneticist, environmentalist, nature writer, and host of the long running television series *The Nature of Things* strongly supported the 1980 environmentalists’ actions to protect the entire Stein Valley, “...the last untouched watershed... in the southwest corner of British Columbia that belongs to the Nlaka’pamux Nation.”<sup>45</sup>

Rich in Indigenous history and with the rock walls of the Stein River Valley dotted with ancient “red ochre writing” there is little to contest Aboriginal occupation of this land since time immemorable. John Corner, a dedicated rock-art researcher from Vernon, B.C., was attracted to the Stein River area. Within his book, *Pictographs in the Interior of British Columbia*, Corner carefully notes references to description of the drawings and where they were displayed. After a visit to Nicola Lake region in southcentral British Columbia Corner wrote:

Site no. 12 Monck Park: The main panel faces South. [on] a Granite outcrop. In the area of the Interior Salish language group.... the site may be reached travelling past Monck Provincial Park [Nicola Lake, B.C., via] a rough road. The pictographs are painted in red on a large granite outcrop on the north-west side of the road... as the rock is soft there is much weathering.<sup>46</sup>

More significantly, and well before any public interest in rock painting (pictographs) came about, John Corner had carefully documented a

43 Taku River Tlingit First Nation (TRTFN), Taku River Tlingit First Nation Constitution Act, March 30, 1993, i, <https://trtfn.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/TRTFN-Constitution.pdf>.

44 TRC, *Final Report*, 21.

45 Knudtson and Suzuki, *Wisdom of the Elders*.

46 John Corner, *Pictographs (Indian Rock Paintings) In The Interior Of British Columbia* (Vernon: Wayside Press, 1968), 49.

significant number of ancient works on the rock walls of the Stein River Valley; this is close to the confluence of the Stein River and the Fraser River. Here Corner writes again:

...one site of more than usual archaeological importance is... site No. 7, one of four located on the southside of the Stein River about eight miles from the confluence of the Stein and Fraser Rivers and... on the old Indian trail Between Pemberton and Lytton. Site number 6 is a panel of about 100 feet long... the pictographs are painted red, are scattered along the base of the cliff.<sup>47</sup>

To date the Stein, "...is the largest survey of rock writings in the province" writes Chris Arnett, an art Historian who, in 1998, was working on the Stein Valley Archaeology Assessment Project. The "rush" to save those very ancient sites came under the threat of logging operations, Chris Arnett explains:

...the logging industry was building roads into every watershed surrounding the Stein River Valley, and was removing trees from all these areas. At this time the provincial Forest Service began studying the feasibility of logging the Stein Valley itself. A debate ensued, which found logging interests lined up against preservationists and aboriginal peoples.<sup>48</sup>

By the time that disturbing news of logging operations pending, from 1972, were being circulated, an intense controversy was stirring.<sup>49</sup> There's little doubt as to why these encounters were taking place. In one sense the rock writing shows an ancient connection between human encounters with nature that ought to be preserved. On the other, when news of road building close to – and in one case directly along – the 'old Indian Trail' it clearly meant the destruction of an entire rock wall of paintings. When this information reached the general public – about the historical richness of the Stein Valley – action toward preservation and to bring wider recognition, "...to the Stein as a world-class heritage site" began in earnest.<sup>50</sup> Ruby Dunstan, former First Nation Chief of Lytton, is quoted as saying, in the strongest possible words:

.....  
47 Ibid.

48 Annie York, Richard Daly, and Chris Arnett, *They Write Their Dreams on the Rock Forever: Rock Writings in the Stein River Valley of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1993).

49 Chris Arnett, "The Archaeology of Dreams: Rock Art and Rock Art Research in the Stein River Valley," in *They Write Their Dreams on the Rock Forever Rock Writings in the Stein River Valley of British Columbia*, ed. Annie York, Richard Daly and Chris Arnett (Vancouver: Talon books, 1993), 19.

50 Michael M'Gonigle and Wendy Wickwire, *Stein: The way of the River* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1989).

We have declared the Stein Valley a park – the Stein Valley Tribal Heritage Park, a living museum of nature and cultural history – and any government or corporation that does not extend this park the recognition and respect it should do so at its own peril....<sup>51</sup>

Later, not only in praise of the work by Wendy Wickwire and Michael M’Gonigle in helping to preserve the Stein, Ruby Dunstan had this to say about the Aboriginal relationship with the land:

...the responsibility to protect and nurture the Stein Valley, passed on to me by my ancestors, is a load I’ll never put down. Nor will I fall, no matter how heavy my burden, no matter how far the Stein Trail seems to stretch toward the horizon. Our task is made easier because as our elders are fond of telling me, the river nurtures us in return....<sup>52</sup>

These are just a few stories; there are many more that contain the same information. Indigenous peoples have occupied the land since time immemorable and in this sense, “Aboriginal title is a right to the land itself” and this right is protected by Section 35 (1) of the Canadian Constitution. The way forward, and toward reconciliation, to quote from The Elders Statement, is:

As Canadians, we share a responsibility to look after each other and acknowledge the pain and suffering that our diverse societies have endured... we need to right those wrongs.... How do we do this? Through sharing our personal stories, legends and traditional teachings, we found that we are interconnected through the same mind and spirit.... We invite you to search in your own traditions and beliefs, and those of your ancestors, to find these core values that create a peaceful harmonious society and a healthy earth.<sup>53</sup>

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51 Knudtson and Suzuki, *Wisdom of the Elders*. See Ruby Dunstan, “Communicating a Sense of the Sacred,” her speech presented at Globe 90 Conference on Business and the Environment, Vancouver, March, 1990 in Peter Knudtson and David Suzuki, *Wisdom of the Elders* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 188–189.

52 Chief Ruby Dunstan, quoted in M’Gonigle and Wickwire, *Stein: The way of the River*, 15.

53 See A Shared Tomorrow, the statement and a video recording of the Elders circle at Reconciliation Canada, accessed July 25, 2022, <http://reconciliationcanada.ca/our-story>.



## Part Two: Coming into the present

*The attitude of the Indian Department is now that the Indians have no rights... James Teit...*<sup>54</sup>

While the 1876 Indian Act defined who was and who was not an Indian under Canadian law, banned the Potlatch ceremonial activities such as the acknowledgement of, "...births, wedding funerals, and other rites of passage..."; 1920 marks an ominous era for all of Canada's Indigenous children. For in that year and under a new Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, revisions to the Indian Act made attendance to Indian Residential schools mandatory! Albeit the residential school system had been in place since the 1880s, but it was not until forty years later that parents and guardians of school age children could be charged for non-compliance:

In his new role as head of Indian Affairs [Duncan Charles] Scott ...sent circulars to Indian agents across the country demanding more stringent policing on reserves, heftier fines and longer prison sentences [including] for possession of liquor and for holding potlatches... and increased surveillance of Indian schools...<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, it has been quoted and said that Scott firmly believed in assimilation and the final, "...absorption into the general population..." through childhood education.<sup>56</sup>

While I have left huge gaps in my narrative, it is important to reiterate that the purpose of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission is, "...about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples...[and] for this to happen, there has to be awareness of the past".<sup>57</sup> In this part I will draw more references from the TRC with regards to the Indian Residential schools but first, I want to tell a story from my own childhood:

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<sup>54</sup> See Wendy Wickwire, *At The Bridge James Teit and an Anthropology of Belonging* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019), 215.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>57</sup> TRC, *Final Report*, 6.

It happened one afternoon in the fall of 1950. I saw a huge cattle truck draw up and stop at Johnny Bann's garage on Quilchena Avenue. Then I saw child after child after child scramble down from the back of that high sided truck. I stood mesmerized. Immediately the children were off that truck, they were herded, like cattle, into a large bus waiting at the station.

Eventually I was told that the children were going off to a 'private' school in the nearby city of Kamloops, B.C. Little did I know, what would become of them there. Stories began to circulate and by the 1960s I became well aware of the painful disruption to the home life and Indigenous communities.

Writing about his "devastating" experiences at that school, that is to say the Kamloops Indian Residential School,<sup>58</sup> First Nations poet Dennis Saddleman, describes the doors of that large red brick building as being like:

...the mouth of the monster. The doors opened. Some black creatures walked out; I was very frightened.... I was scared. My parents walked away without saying goodbye. I tried to run after my parents but someone in a black robe grabbed me and held me back. I was dragged through the doors. I wiggled and struggled to get away but I wasn't strong enough. The moment I entered the big red building, I was eaten by the monster. The monster ate my native culture....<sup>59</sup>

Over the years, I have learned that tens of thousands of Aboriginal youth and very young children from across Canada (and the United States) would have been collected up each September and sent off to residential schools. Larry Loyie, First Nations author and playwright offers this account of his own lived experience:

A big brown truck with high sides pulled up. Two men got out. They both wore black and looked like giant crows.... The strange men lifted the crying

.....  
58 Kamloops Indian Residential School, established 1893, closed 1978. At its peak, in 1950, 500 Indigenous students were enrolled. On May 27, 2021 the CBC news media reported: The former Kamloops Indian Residential School is located on Tk'emlups te Secwépemc First Nation in Kamloops, B.C. Canada. Where in 2021 the remains of 215 children [unmarked graves] have been found buried on the site... (foto Andrew Snucins/The Canadian Press, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-remains-of-215-children-found-at-former-residential-school-in-british/>)

59 Dennis Saddleman, *Wordwarrior Poems by Dennis Saddleman* (Lytton: Freedom Graphics Press, 2019), 13.

children one by one onto the truck.... Lawrence began to cry too.... The sides of the truck were high. He couldn't see his family....<sup>60</sup>

Like thousands of Canada's residential school survivors when Larry Loyie returned home, to a changed and strange family life. Changes so vast had taken place so that, "...at age fourteen he felt like a stranger."<sup>61</sup>

"There is nothing more suitable for care of the soul than family" writes art therapist Thomas Moore.<sup>62</sup> But after ten or eleven years at residential school, Dennis Saddleman, like thousands of other Aboriginal children, returned home to new trauma; no one there to greet him, a broken home, and family life in disarray.<sup>63</sup>

As an artist and teacher, I often procured grants to bring visiting artists to my community. One such grant came from the Canada Council for the Arts, which allowed me to invite the late internationally known First Nations artist, Joane Cardinal-Schubert. Through a series of telephone conversations, we arranged for my student group to prepare a background for her art-installation performance.<sup>64</sup>

Joane Cardinal-Schubert instructed the students to collect and paint several "kitchen" type wooden chairs black, and to prepare and paint black, a four foot by eight-foot board. Prior to the agreed upon date these were assembled, within the art gallery space, to resemble a typical classroom. All in time for her presentation, titled "The Lesson." A statement about the artist's work appears in *The INDIGENA Project*:<sup>65</sup>

An approach to Native issues is sensitive to the value of individual expression. Working in a variety of media [Cardinal - Schubert] unites Indian spiritual symbolism and political issues to make contemporary statements.<sup>66</sup>

60 Larry Loyie and Constance Brissenden, *As Long as the Rivers Flow, A Last Summer before Residential School* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2002).

61 Ibid.

62 Thomas Moore, *Care Of The Soul-How To Add Depth And Meaning To Your Everyday Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 26.

63 Saddleman, *Wordwarrior Poems*.

64 The public performance was held in conjunction with the Nicola Valley Community Arts Council Art Gallery.

65 See Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin, eds., *INDIGENA Contemporary Native Perspectives* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1992), Acknowledgements.

66 Joane Cardinal-Schubert in McMaster and Martin, *INDIGENA*, 130-135.

The installation performance of “The Lesson” is/was in reference to the harsh discipline of the residential school experience: the suppression of Indigenous languages, broken aspects of family and cultural community life disrupted; this, especially by obligatory attendance of Indigenous children at Indian Residential schools. As Joane Cardinal-Schubert explains:

...to be in a position of powerlessness, to have absolutely no control over your identity... The government declares by number who is Native and who is not... whole families have been decimated for generations... They were nobody... The church and education system had taken them and tried to strip them of their beliefs.... “The Lesson” is in response to the residential schools and the lasting trauma the schools have created in Canada.<sup>67</sup>

With her presentation of “The Lesson” Joane Cardinal-Schubert carefully set the pace using the. “...chalkboard to record and teach about colonialism” so that when she invited students to take the empty school room chairs, some were eager to add their ‘stories’. At the time of Joane Cardinal-Schubert’s visit there was little ‘open’ conversation about residential schools: assimilation practices, or physical and intellectual abuse, were whispered.<sup>68</sup> However, an excerpt from the TRC on residential school experience notes changes were coming:

From the 1960s onwards many people began to re-evaluate both the broader history of the relations between churches and Aboriginal peoples, and the specific history of the residential schools....<sup>69</sup>

The process of, “...healing and reconciling that began in the 1980s followed with church apologies for their treatment of Aboriginal peoples and disrespect of their cultures”.<sup>70</sup> It continued along with the findings of the Royal Commission of Aboriginal peoples, 1996, in which Canadians were

.....  
67 Ibid., 132. To view the art work of Joane Cardinal-Schubert go to <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/joane-cardinal-schubert>, accessed September 10, 2022.

68 Ibid., 132.

69 TRC, *Final Report*.

70 Ibid. Apologies to Aboriginal people began with the United Church of Canada in 1986, The Oblate order in 1991 that also referred to the residential schools, similar apologies came from the Anglicans in 1993, the Presbyterians in 1994, and the United Church in 1998. In 1995 the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School Survivors Association started registering Survivors (TRC, *Final Report*, 129).

"urged to begin a national process of reconciliation".<sup>71</sup> In June 2008 the prime minister of Canada apologised in Parliament, along with all other parliamentary leaders.<sup>72</sup> While many recommendations have been addressed/practiced, there is much more to do such as, "...court recognition of the validity of the Survivor's stories".<sup>73</sup> "More importantly, the process of healing and reconciliation must continue...".<sup>74</sup>

At the time of this writing, July 29, 2022 the long-awaited visit from Pope Francis, to meet with Canada's Indigenous peoples, is unfolding. By all accounts, the visit will mainly focus on an apology for the Catholic Church's role in the Canadian Indian residential school system, and will address reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous peoples.<sup>75</sup>

This historical visit to Canada came as the result of a visit made in 2021 by a delegation of Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Métis leaders to Rome: there, to meet Pope Francis at the Vatican.<sup>76</sup> Reporting for the CBC news, Olivia Stefanovich, noted that the visit, which took place between March 28 and April 1, 2021, was in part to invite Pope Francis, in return, to visit Canada. Her report also included information about the purpose of the delegation:

The delegation of Indigenous leaders will push the question of compensation at the Vatican meetings, said Perry Bellegarde, national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Canada's largest Indigenous organization. However, their focus will be on persuading the pope to come to Canada to apologize.<sup>77</sup>

The question of apology and reconciliation has a long and tedious history. To be concise the issue in Canada begins with the institution of the Indian Residential School system early in the 1880s and continues into the 1990s. The long-awaited apology is hopeful. Both as a physical and intellectual act

.....  
71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 See Anisha Kohli, "What to Know About the Pope's Visit to Canada and Apology to Indigenous Communities," *Time*, July 23, 2022, <https://time.com/6199934/pope-canada-indigenous-apology/>.

76 See Olivia Stefanovich, "Picking up the pieces: Indigenous delegates go to Rome to press Pope for residential school apology," *CBC News*, March 27, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/indigenous-delegations-set-to-meet-pope-francis-vatican-1.6394450>.

77 See Sarah Turnbull, "Meeting with Pope an 'opportunity' to begin handover of residential school records: former AFN chief," *CTV News*, March 26, 2022, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/meeting-with-pope-an-opportunity-to-begin-handover-of-residential-school-records-former-afn-chief-1.5835241>.

toward reconciliation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission listed this as a foremost call to action:

We call upon the pope to issue an apology to Survivors, their families and communities for the Roman Catholic Church's role in the spiritual, cultural, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children in Catholic run residential schools. We call for that apology to be similar to the 2010 apology to Irish victims of abuse and to occur within one year of the issuing of this report and to be delivered by the Pope in Canada.<sup>78</sup>

Through media accounts, Pope Francis' arrival in Canada is/was meant to do just that: to offer his apology.<sup>79</sup> At the final day of his prestigious visit Pope Francis met Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Canada's representative to the Queen, Mary Simon.<sup>80</sup> The meeting took place at the Citadel of Quebec.<sup>81</sup> The aftermath of Pope Francis' visit was followed closely by the news media. This report, from Thomas Reese, of Religion News Service, noted:

...the six-day visit was a great success...Francis, in Canada on what he called a penitential pilgrimage, apologized to the Indigenous peoples of the country for the Catholic Church's cooperation in their forced assimilation to colonizing European's culture over the centuries, especially in residential schools run by the church.<sup>82</sup>

Other news report offered confirmation of success from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to say the visit as being, "...a significant milestone on the path of healing and reconciliation...[and] that Francis called on

78 TRC, *Final Report*, 223.

79 Pope Francis arrived in Canada July 24, stopping first in Edmonton in the province of Alberta, then to journey to the territory of Nunavut.

80 Her Excellency the Right Honourable Mary May Simon was sworn in on July 26, 2021, as Canada's first Indigenous governor general. She is the 30th governor general since Confederation. <https://www.gg.ca/en/governor-general/governor-general-mary-may-simon/biography>, accessed July 30, 2022.

81 The Citadel is an active military installation. It is also the official residence of both the Canadian monarch and the governor general of Canada. Adjoining the Plains of Abraham, the site of the final battle between the French and British, see The Seven Years War, it is the oldest military building in Canada.

82 See <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/pope-francis>, accessed August 21, 2022.

the bishops to continue to help residential school survivors and their families in healing from the traumas they have suffered.<sup>83</sup>

As I pointed out earlier, after holding national, regional, and local hearings on the impact of Indian Residential School era on students, their families and all of Canadian society, "...the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released 94 Calls to Action; not only to address the legacy of residential schools, but also a myriad of social political, and eco-justice issues all to advance Canadian reconciliation.<sup>84</sup> These 94 Calls to Action are primarily focused on actions that can be taken by Federal, Provincial and Territorial governments but are also designed to provide direction to all sectors of society on actions that can be taken toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples."<sup>85</sup>

The history of residential schools in Canada, is often painful and difficult to discuss. Here, in an excerpt from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, is a brief account of the impact of the residential school system:

...As settlement moved westward in the 1870s, Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries established missions and small boarding schools across the Prairies, in the North, and in British Columbia.... In 1883, the federal government moved to establish three large, residential schools for First Nation children in western Canada, in the following years the system grew... 139 residential schools.... The federal government has estimated that at least 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students passed through the system.<sup>86</sup>

As noted in previous parts of this paper, 1920 marks the year that compulsory attendance at residential schools for aboriginal children in Canada became law. The Truth and Reconciliation report confirms that with this order, "...children were torn from their parents, who often surrendered them only under threat of prosecution. Then, they were hurled into a strange and frightening place, one in which their parents and culture would be demeaned and oppressed."<sup>87</sup>

83 See The Canadian Press, "The Latest on the Pope's visit to Canada," Toronto Star, July 29, 2022, [https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/the-latest-on-the-pope-s-visit-to-canada/article\\_f477fb61-a810-5f10-a7c9-9b5c18b25551.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/the-latest-on-the-pope-s-visit-to-canada/article_f477fb61-a810-5f10-a7c9-9b5c18b25551.html).

84 The first call to action is 'Child welfare' followed by "Death and abuse of children in care." TRC, *Final Report*, 137-142.

85 TRC, *Final Report*.

86 TRC, *Final Report*, Introduction, 3.

87 TRC, *Final Report*.

## Part Three: Looking toward the future

Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*—

On Care for Our Common Home

“...*Local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to instill a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the land...*”<sup>88</sup>

Moving now from my discussion of the long-awaited call to apology to action, I shall turn to report on some achievements directed toward reconciliation through various developments that are directed toward a healthy future for humanity and the earth.

At the top of my list are the Indigenous Justice Strategy Programs. Although I point out actions that are ongoing in British Columbia, such programs directed toward reconciliation exist across Canada. Briefly, drawing from the TRC report, on “Calls to Action” and under the heading *Justice*, I note below two recommendations that are being addressed:

3.1) We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to provide sufficient and stable funding to implement and evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment Aboriginal offenders and respond to the underlying causes of offending.

3.2) We call upon the federal government to amend the *Criminal Code* to allow trial judges, upon giving reasons to depart from mandatory minimum sentences and restrictions on the use of conditional sentences.

Calling for the provision to provide alternatives to the “mainstream justice system” the province of British Columbia offers several programs of service explained under the heading Indigenous Justice Strategy:

...there are 30 Indigenous justice programs...community programs involve alternative dispute resolution in a variety of community contexts. In particular the restorative justice approaches employed...promote a holistic environment and serve as a valuable alternative to formal court processes ...these approaches include: Peacemaking, healing or sentencing circles;

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88 Pope Francis, *The Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' On Care For Our Common Home* (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 106.



Community justice committees; Elder's councils; Diversion protocol; Conflict resolution; and Mediation.<sup>89</sup>

In Merritt, B.C. the Indigenous Court meets once month, on a Wednesday in a spacious section of the Civic Center put aside for that purpose for the entire day. A well-known First Nations Elder explained the proceeding as being significantly traditional: this, in that the defendant and the plaintiff must directly face members of the Elder's council to be judged as it were: by members of the community as they are seated in a circle just below Judiciary/Magistrate. By many accounts the process is, "...working to lower the high rates of victimization, crime and incarceration among Indigenous people in their communities."<sup>90</sup>

From the Lower Nicola Band Community Profile, I note that, "The five Nicola Bands have come together [in agreement] establishing the Scw'εmx Child and Family Services Society". And aside from the earlier mentioned land issues, which have set precedent for self-government for First Nations peoples, current developments directed toward a healthy future for communities and for sustainable development are underway in the First Nations communities of the Nicola Valley, British Columbia. These include long term projects such as a "clean energy" project undertaken by the Upper Nicola Sylix Nation in the form of a wind farm. An article in the Kelowna Courier notes that:

Once the turbines start moving, the project will generate six per cent of all wind power currently produced in B.C. Five of the turbines, near the Pen-nask Summit, will be visible from Highway 97C, while the other five are in a more remote location. The project has been undertaken with Zero Emissions Energy Developments in collaboration with Pentiction Indian Band, Upper Nicola Indian Band, and Westbank First Nation.<sup>91</sup>

Developmental agreements between the provincial government and First Nations groups, throughout the Province of British Columbia, are sanctioned by the crown in recognition. These factors stipulate that, "...all executive authority is vested in the sovereign, royal assent is required to allow for... orders to have legal effect." Albeit a complex system. Enough to say that as constitutional monarchy, Canada upholds the crown's role in, "...safeguarding the

89 <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/content/justice>.

90 Ibid.

91 See <https://www.kelownadailycourier.ca/news/article>, accessed June 15, 2022.

rights, freedoms, and democratic system of government of Canadians”. The Canadian Constitution also upholds First Nations rights.

While governments have accepted the responsibility of reconciliation, directed toward a healthy future for all of Canada, it is important to note as of November 2019, “...British Columbia, became the first province in Canada to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through legislation developed in collaboration with First Nations partners”.<sup>92</sup> The commitment to work with First Nations peoples must be stated:

During the past three years, the province’s [British Columbia] commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in British Columbia has remained strong. The provincial government and Indigenous peoples continue to explore new ways to work together – to listen and learn about what matters most to Indigenous peoples, and how this partnership can grow for the benefit of all British Columbians. The Province and Indigenous peoples are committed to building on these accomplishments and to continuing to create the important foundations that will fulfill a shared vision of self-determining, healthy and prosperous Indigenous communities throughout British Columbia.<sup>93</sup>

While governments are committed to promoting development projects on First Nations lands, it is important to note that agreements most often include a mission statement drawn from ancient Indigenous guiding principles: deep abiding spiritual care for the land, attention for the people and generations to come, and storytelling. I gleaned the following from the Lower Nicola Band Community Profile:

Our culture, language and traditional knowledge and practices is what makes us Swx’emx...Traditional knowledge...is unique and was passed from one generation to the next through ...storytelling, ceremonies, dances, arts and crafts, food gathering, hunting, trapping food preparation and storage, medicines, teaching beliefs and spirituality.<sup>94</sup>

92 See Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, “Indigenous Peoples and B.C. lead the way forward together,” BC Gov News, November 28, 2022, <https://news.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/indigenous-peoples-and-bc-lead-the-way-forward-together>.

93 See British Columbia, “Reconciliation & Other Agreements,” accessed June 20, 2022, <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/first-nations-negotiations/reconciliation-other-agreements>.

94 Lower Nicola Indian Band Community Profile December 2015. The entire ‘Community Profile’ can be read online at <https://lnib.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/LNIB-Community-Profile-December-2015.pdf>, accessed July 24, 2022.

The Lower Nicola Band – Swx'exmx – belonging to the Nlaka'pamux Nation, have completed a wide range of sustainable projects. The Community Profile lists, Public and Capital works, Child and Family Services, and construction projects. Career Development Centre; Housing; and ceremonial and recreation facilities: an arena ice surface; a traditional arbor to facilitate ceremonial events. Finally, the education facilities have solar power heating. Together with economic interests the Lower Nicola Band calls for:

Social responsibility, respect for community values...sustainability that recognize the environmental footprint; environmental stewardship – conserve land, water and fresh air; protect and enhance natural eco-systems; save energy; prevent pollution; implement recycling and monitor long-term cumulative impacts.<sup>95</sup>

As being part of the wider five “Nicola Bands”<sup>96</sup> the Lower Nicola Band is a joint signatory to The Nicola Watershed Pilot Memorandum of Understanding (NWPMU). This monumental agreement asserts care and responsibility for the land and, “...for the benefit of future generations.”<sup>97</sup>

Examples of “Reconciliation in action” may be found at [www2.gov.bc.ca/content/environment](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/content/environment). Page 1 of 9 of this legal agreement, states: ...both parties are committed to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples;<sup>98</sup> Whereas the Nlaka'pamux and Sylix peoples have inherent rights to self-government and self-determination...<sup>99</sup>

The full pages of this agreement – a project in my nearby First Nations community – clearly state that action is directed toward reconciliation and a healthy future. By scrolling through the many topics and impressive First Nations' projects that may be found on the government website many projects, ongoing throughout the province, are directed toward sustainability, such as the Nicola Watershed project. Here I have provided a brief illustration of the afore mentioned Nicola Watershed Pilot Memorandum of Understanding:

95 Ibid.

96 Upper Nicola Band of the Okanagan (Sylix Nation and the Lower Nicola, Coldwater, Nooaitch and Shackan Bands of the Nlaka'pamux Nation).

97 Nicola Watershed Pilot Memorandum of Understanding (NWPMU), end note, xl

98 [and continues... (NWPMU, 2).]

99 To read this agreement online go to British Columbia, “Reconciliation & Other Agreements,” <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/consulting-with-first-nations/first-nations-negotiations/reconciliation-other-agreements>, accessed June 20, 2022.

BETWEEN: The Upper Nicola Band of the Okanagan (Syilx) Nation and the Lower Nicola, Coldwater, Nooaitch and Shackan bands of the Nlaka’pamux Nation, (collectively the “Nicola Bands”) as represented by their Chief and Councils (“Nicola Chiefs”).

AND: Her Majesty the Queen in right of the Province of British Columbia (“The Province”) as represented by the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.<sup>100</sup>

After a long introduction which includes a statement of commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the ‘agreement’ continues with a statement on responsibility to the environment:

Recognizing the importance and interconnection of water to the health of human communities, ecosystems and the economy, the Province and the Nicola chiefs will work in Partnership, and through engagement of stakeholders, to sustainably govern the water resources in the Nicola watershed using a collaboration, innovation, and creativity for the benefit of future generations.

The following statement introduces the history of Indigenous thought: which goes toward caring for nature and ecology for future generations. The Nlaka’pamux and Syilx peoples of the Nicola Valley strongly uphold:

...Our peoples recognize water as a sacred and relative that connects all life.... We thus have a duty and responsibility to ensure that the water can maintain all of its relationships, known and unknown, ... through our oral histories and creation stories. These are imbedded in our culture, our language and play a vital role.... our laws include.... principles regarding the relationship of humans to the non-human world.

The agreement also mentions how the collaborative water governance will carry out responsibilities: to respect the parties involved, and to respect Indigenous knowledge. The lengthy document ends with the affirmation that water sustainability is “...not just to meet our needs but for generations to come”.

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100 See NWPMU.

The provincial website offers a long list of agreements that follow the format.<sup>101</sup> These and other agreements not only cite the need for reconciliation between parties, respect between peoples, and respect for ancient indigenous knowledge, but also to refer to the critical need to care for the land and future generations. The website for the Upper Nicola Band, for example, offers an adamant statement that their ancient oral histories and stories must continue for a healthy earth. The statement includes a 'story' of how future humans will be fed and cared for. "How Food Was Given" is an ancient story when animals in human form decided collectively to provide food for the "People-To-Be":

In the world before this world, before there were people, and before things were like they are now, everyone was alive and walking around like we do. All creation was talking about the coming changes to their world. They had been told that soon a new kind of people would be living on this earth. Even they, the Animals and Plant people, would be changed. They had to decide how the People-To-Be would live and what they would eat.<sup>102</sup>

In other words, the world is changing, and if we are to survive economic and ecological shifts, we must pay attention to care for the wellbeing of humanity, to care for the needs of land, water, plant and animal species, and to pay attention to ancient traditional knowledge to come to take responsibility for reconciliation.

Turning to address global warming/climate change and to draw attention past and recent ideas, I want to highlight social engagement within the greater ecological whole and to draw attention to nature focused art. The world is changing, and if we are to survive ecological shifts, we must pay attention to care for the needs of land, water, plant and animal species; we must pay attention for the wellbeing of humanity; and to acknowledge ancient traditional knowledge as we come to take responsibility for reconciliation.

To highlight social engagement within the greater ecological whole, I draw attention to noted Canadian photographer, Edward Burtynsky, who had

101 The format for most agreements opened with the notice of an agreement between the Band and Her Majesty the Queen (since September 8, 2022, is King Charles III). A brief mention of agreements ongoing in my community include: the Upper Nicola Band Forest Tenure Opportunity Agreement - 2011 (PDF), Upper Nicola Band Mountain Pine Beetle Agreement - 2007 (PDF), Upper Nicola Band, Forest and Range Agreement - 2005 (PDF) Amendment - 2005 (PDF), and Shackan Indian Band First Nations, Clean Energy Business Fund Revenue Sharing Agreement (Kwoiek Creek Hydro Project) – 2014.

102 See Upper Nicola, "Upper Nicola Band," accessed August 20, 2022, <https://uppernicola.com>.

dedicated his life's work to environmental issues. With films such as, *Manufactures Landscapes* (2006), *Watermark* (2013), and most recently he writes:

As a collaborative group [we] believe ...our work can shift the consciousness of those who engage with it, helping to nurture a growing environmental awareness of the normally unseen result of civilization's cumulative impact on the planet.<sup>103</sup>

Burtynsky's earlier large-scale images, "...showing how we affect earth in a big way...include rail cuts, homesteads, quarries, mines..." these were simply photographed from an elevated area. [Ibid. P. 190] Some images of an open pit mine and a rail cut were all shot in the Nicola Valley. My photograph, Figure 6, was also taken from an elevated area and is of the same open pit mine as a Burtynsky photograph. This mine site is in the Highland Valley next to the Nicola Valley.

To continue to highlight artists that direct their focus on the environment, I want to mention Lawrence Yuxweluptum and Rebecca Belmore, two influential First Nations Canadian artists who have been providing art as a backdrop to address industrial and economic developments.<sup>104</sup> With his large painting, *Red Man Watching White Man trying to Fix Hole in Sky* (1990), Paul offers a hard-hitting visual commentary on Indigenous Rights, appropriation of natural resources on ancestral lands, and consequences of industrial pollution. Rebecca Belmore has transported her large-scale sound installation, *Speaking to Their Mother*, to many First Nations communities in Canada. Initially in response to the 1990 Oka Crisis, in which Belmore has been quoted as saying:

I was particularly interested in locating the Aboriginal voice on the Land... asking people to address the land directly...an attempt to her political protest as poetic action.<sup>105</sup>

My long-time friend, artist and colleague, Mary Longman, is currently working on a sculptural project to commemorate missing and lost children. This work will be installed soon at a location in Prince Albert Saskatchewan. News media reporter, Jaryn Vecchio, writing for sasknow.com explains:

.....  
103 Edward Burtynsky, Jennifer Baichwal and Nicholas De Pencier, *Anthropocene* (Toronto: Art Galley of Ontario, 2018), 194.

104 These and other First Nations' art works may be accessed online at numerous art related sites.

105 Rebecca Belmore, <https://www.rebeccabelmore.com>.

One of the country's first art pieces recognizing the past injustices Indigenous people have faced is close to being created in Prince Albert. The city's council met on Monday for an executive committee meeting where they gave the first approval for the project "Passage Home" which plans to highlight what happened at day schools, residential schools, and during the Sixties Scoop. It will be created by Indigenous artist Mary Longman who's seen her work showcased across Canada, including in Regina and Saskatoon.<sup>106</sup>

As I have pointed out, in Canada, the Indian Act that was amended in 1920, made it obligatory to send Indigenous children to residential schools and it was amended to ban the spiritual ceremonies of the Potlach. Notably, an earlier amendment, in 1876, defined who was and who was not an Indian. Thus, under Canadian Law, an Aboriginal women could lose status simply by marrying a man who did not have status. By marrying a non-indigenous man – while a non-indigenous woman could gain status by marrying an Indigenous man with status. Vital to address reconciliation, change came:

In 1985, Parliament responded to the appeals of Indigenous peoples by changing discriminatory sections of the *Indian Act*. Known as Bill C-31, this amendment reinstated Indian Status to women who had lost it through marriage to men without status. Among other changes, the bill also enabled all first-generation children of these marriages and individuals who had been enfranchised to regain their legal status. More than 114,000 people gained or regained their Indian status because of Bill C-31.<sup>107</sup>

From a feminist viewpoint, the First Nations film maker, Courtney Montour, a Mohawk filmmaker explored issues of Indigenous identity:

In her hard-hitting film, *Mary Two-Axe Earley: I Am Indian Again*, [Montour] share[s] the powerful story of Mary Two-Axe Earley, who fought for more than two decades to challenge sex discrimination against First Nations women embedded in Canada's Indian Act and became a key figure in Canada's women's rights movement.<sup>108</sup>

106 Jaryn Vecchio for SaskNow. 2022, May 4.

107 See also Women and the Indian Act. See The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Bill C-31," May 12, 2020, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/bill-c-31>.

108 Courtney Montour, "Mary Two-Axe Earley: I Am Indian Again," *MFB*, 2021, <https://www.mfb.ca/film/mary-two-axe-earley/>.

Eventually Bill C-31 was passed to meet the demands of women like Mary Two-Axe Early. While this is a defining letter for Indigenous women in Canada, men could also be affected by, "...a process through which a person could lose status as an Indian.... Men could lose statue in a number of ways, including graduating from a university".<sup>109</sup>

From the section on 'calls to action' the TRC report has a long list regarding "education". In Merritt, B.C., many of the recommendations have been ongoing for some time. An important First Nations education programme, focused on language, history and culture, has been instigated at the local public schools. Most recently – August 2022 – the provincial Ministry of Education has approved a province wide requirement for all public-school systems. Jennifer Whiteside, Minister of Education, confirms:

We are deeply committed to lasting and meaningful reconciliation in B.C. [and]guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples.... This will help us to understand the truths of our shared history, while also building knowledge so all students feel a sense of responsibility for our collective future.<sup>110</sup>

Such accomplishments align with the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action are being addressed throughout Canada; and I have illustrated some actions current in British Columbia. In the process, reconciliation calls on society to foster positive change: this, directed toward a lasting commitment to the future of humanity and our hope for a healthy, enduring planet Earth.

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SEYED MASOUD NOORI

# Protecting the Environment through Highlighting the Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa Doctrine and SDGs Connection

## Introduction

In Islamic legal theory, the *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa* doctrine can provide Shari'a-based (or at least non-contradictory to Sharīʿa) responses to the changing needs of our world and emerging issues, including environmental crises. On the other hand, the United Nations, focusing on contemporary needs, encourages the global community to concentrate on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and strive to achieve them by 2030. The main idea of this article is to theorize and establish the legal foundations for the necessity of collaboration among Muslims – the second-largest religious population in the world – in achieving the SDGs, by highlighting the relationship between the *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa* doctrine and the SDGs.

## Background

Traditionally, each religion encompasses numerous scattered topics, beliefs, teachings, and rituals. The theoretical foundations and practical instructions are usually simple and limited at the beginning of the emergence of a

religion. However, over time and with the emergence of new questions and needs, they gradually expand.

The history of Islam also illustrates this pattern. While the early teachings of the Prophet focused on a few general principles, such as monotheism and the Day of Judgment, additional religious beliefs and ordinances were introduced for various reasons, including inquiries made to the Prophet by people. Following the extensive conquests of Muslims shortly after the Prophet's death, vast lands such as Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and later parts of Central Asia and Southern Europe joined the Islamic world. Muslims encountered different civilizations and cultures, which raised numerous theoretical and practical questions. To address these, various schools of philosophy, jurisprudence, theology, interpretation, and the like were established. Consequently, distinguishing the fundamental principles of the Prophet's message from the findings and intellectual achievements of scholars in later centuries became increasingly challenging and almost impossible.

The transformation from basic principles to numerous rules also occurred in the field of Islamic jurisprudence. While jurisprudence during the time of the Prophet was limited to a few simple rulings, over several centuries, it expanded into a multitude of rulings, fatwas, and regulations.

## Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa

This discussion is based on the assumption that Sharīʿa has specific objectives (Maqāṣid) that we aim to discover. In cases of silence or ambiguity in its rulings, or even conflicts in the narrations we have received, we seek to address these issues based on those objectives. However, a fundamental question arises regarding this assumption itself. In other words, why do we assume that Sharīʿa has purposes and goals that we seek to discover in the next step?

In response, without delving into specific details, it can be said that many Quranic verses imply that God's actions and rulings are wise and purposeful. God states, "We did not idly create the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them" (21:16), and "We did not create them without purpose" (44:38). These verses emphasize the intentionality and wisdom behind God's creation. Additionally, the Prophet Muhammad's practice provides further insight into the purposeful nature of Sharīʿa. His actions and teachings consistently aimed to establish justice, compassion, and the betterment of human society. His character and exemplary conduct serve as a model for Muslims

to follow, reflecting the underlying objectives of Shari‘a. Therefore, the belief in the purposefulness of Shari‘a is rooted in both the teachings of the Quran and the practice of the Prophet Muhammad.

One of the efforts made by scholars to articulate the overall objectives of Islamic laws and regulations is the “*Maqāṣid al-Shari‘a*” (literally, “the aims or purposes of the law”) Doctrine. It is notable that this term is not found in any verse of the Qur’an or any hadith but is derived from those primary sources.

According to this doctrine, each law and regulation in Islamic jurisprudence aims to fulfill at least one of these five objectives and interests, and as a result, every religious fatwa and ruling must consider them. Their five objectives are:

- **Protection of Faith (*al-Din*):** This encompasses beliefs, worship, and rulings that Allah has established to regulate people’s relationship with Him and their relationships with each other.

- **Preservation of Life (*al-Nafs*):** Based on this objective, any action or omission necessary for saving our own or others’ lives is obligatory, while anything that endangers lives is prohibited. Thus, murder and suicide are prohibited.

- **Protection of Mind and Intellect (*al-Aql*):** This objective mandates taking any necessary measures to preserve our consciousness, wisdom, and intellect. Conversely, any actions that undermine our intellect are religiously forbidden. For instance, this principle is invoked to prohibit the consumption of alcohol, among other substances. Additionally, the prohibition of certain psychoactive substances such as industrial drugs, which did not exist during the time of the Prophet, aligns with the broader goal of preserving human intellect.

- **Preservation of Lineage (*al-Nasl*):** Several Shari‘a rules and regulations aim to safeguard the family and future generations. Prohibitions on sexual relations outside of marriage, adultery, and incest, as well as the responsibilities of parents to protect and educate their children and meet their material and spiritual needs, exemplify rulings aligned with this objective.

- **Protection of Property (*al-Mal*):** This goal necessitates taking any necessary measures to safeguard our possessions, while wasteful use of resources is religiously forbidden. Shari‘a rules that emphasize respecting the property of others, prohibiting theft, usury, fraud in transactions, and similar practices, are established to achieve this purpose.

The notion of *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa* was first clearly articulated by al-Ghazali (d. 1111), who argued that *maslaha* was God's general purpose (*maqṣad*, pl. *maqāṣid*) in revealing the divine law, and more concretely this intention was to preserve for humankind the five essential elements for their well-being, namely their religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. (These elements became known in the legal writings as *al-darurat* as *al-daruriyyat al-khamsa*).<sup>1</sup>

*Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah*, as a term is used in works of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and refers to the idea that God's law, the *Sharīʿa*, is a system which encompasses aims or purposes. From such a perspective, the *Sharīʿa* is not merely a collection of inscrutable rulings, rather it is a system that encompasses aims or purposes. If the system is correctly implemented, these aims will be achieved.<sup>2</sup>

*Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa* "is a system of values that could contribute to a desired and sound application of the Sharīʿa." This concept has been employed as a legal hermeneutical tool in premodern Islamic law (or legal theory, *uṣūl ulfiqh*, to be more precise) at last since the third century Hijri. It is based on the idea that Islamic law is purposive in nature, that is, to mean that the law serves particular purposes (e.g., promoting people's benefit and welfare and protecting them from harm) that are either explicitly present in or can be derived from the fountainheads of the sources of Islamic law, namely, the Quran and the Sunna. *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa* is also an umbrella term that includes many other concepts that have been closely linked to it in the premodern Islamic tradition, most notably the idea of public interests (*almasaliḥ al-ammah*) and unrestricted interests (*al-masaliḥ almursala*), as well as other principles such as *istiḥsān* (juridical preference), *istishāb* (presumption of continuity), and avoidance of mischief (*maḥṣada*), all of which are considered to be directives in accordance with God's will.<sup>3</sup>

It is true that classical-era jurists held different views on the role of *Maslaha* and *Maqāṣid* in Islamic law. Some considered them as auxiliary rationales limited by scriptural sources and analogical reasoning, while others regarded

1 Felicitas Opwis, "Islamic Law and Legal Change: The Concept of Maslaha in Classical and Contemporary Legal Theory," in *Sharīʿa: Islamic Law in the Contemporary Context* (Kindle ed.), ed. Abbas Amanat and Frank Griffel (Stanford University Press, 2007), 65.

2 R. M. Gleave, "Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, accessed June 29, 2023, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_8809](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8809).

3 Adis Duderija, ed., *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah and Contemporary Reformist Muslim Thought- An Examination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan United States, 2014).



them as independent sources of law with the potential to override specific textual inferences. Although the latter perspective was held by a minority of classical jurists, it gained more prominence in modern times as scholars sought to adapt Islamic law to changing social conditions.

Prominent scholars expanded the scope of *maqasid* to include aims such as reform, women's rights (Rashid Rida), justice and freedom (Mohammed al-Ghazali), and human dignity and rights (Yusuf al-Qaradawi). They drew upon the intellectual heritage of traditional jurisprudence to advocate for a broader understanding of *maqasid* and its application in contemporary contexts.

In the realm of politics, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak, in a speech on July 10th, 2014, called for an end to the conflict between Shia and Sunni Muslims. He highlighted that Malaysia could serve as an example of a progressive and developed nation based on the five objectives of Shari'a: upholding faith, life, intellect, progeny, and property. He emphasized that the government's policies have always been grounded in these five principles of *maqasid Shari'a*, aiming to demonstrate Malaysia as a developed and progressive Muslim country based on *Maqāṣid al-sharī'a*.<sup>4</sup>

## Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a in Shī Legal Theory

By reviewing the books on Shia legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), it can be understood that the term "*Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a*" is not a common phrase among them. They believe that the sources of deriving religious rulings are the Quran, the traditions of the Prophet, the narrations (*ḥadīth*) of the twelve Imams, consensus (*ijmā*)-with a limited meaning as understood by Shia scholars), and reason.

As Liyakat Takim, says the *maqāṣid* did not receive much attention in the early stages of the development of Islamic legal thought, and, as such, represent a later juristic innovation. Even in modern times, many texts on *uṣūl al-fiqh* (Islamic legal theory) do not include a discussion on *maqāṣid al-sharī'a*. This is probably because rather than engaging in textual and contextual analysis, the apparent meaning of words, and explicating the methodology of

4 Joseph Sipalan, "Najib calls for Muslim unity, months after Shia witch hunt," *malaymail*, July 10, 2014, <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2014/07/10/najib-calls-for-muslim-unity-months-after-shia-witch-hunt/704141>.

reconciling contradictory traditions, the *maqāsid* are largely concerned with discerning and elucidating the purposes of the law.

Due to their close connection, in Shīi legal theory, *Maqāsid al-Sharīʿa* is generally discussed under the rubric of *maṣlaḥa*. Since the objective of the law (*maqṣad*) is in seeking the interest of the Muslim community, in the works on *uṣūl al-fiqh*, the principle of public good is also referred to as *al-maṣāliḥ al-mursala*, that is, in seeking the benefit of the people in the absence of textual evidence. This suggests that laws can be legislated based on the principle of the public good without any textual proof to support its validity. Moreover, because the purpose of *maṣlaḥa* (being or doing good) is discernible by reason, it has God's approval too, because in Islamic theology, there is a correlation between reason and revelation in matters concerning the common good.<sup>5</sup>

However, despite this long history, in recent years, especially after the 1979 revolution in Iran, there has been an increasing use of phrases such as “the role of time (*zamān*) and space (*makān*) in jurisprudence, the necessity of considering practical interests, and principles such as justice and human dignity in the jurisprudential and foundational literature of Shia scholars to address emerging needs and questions (*mustahdathāt*), the new issues.

Based on what has been said, we can develop the objectives of the Sharīʿa as an Islamic theory to organize multiple rulings in various subjects, including personal, familial, and societal matters. This theory can be utilized to formulate Islamic responses to contemporary needs and emerging issues, including - but not limited to -

- the necessity of environmental protection,
- biodiversity conservation,
- promotion of an environmentally friendly lifestyle,
- prohibition of the production and use of weapons of mass destruction that cause mass killings and environmental devastation,
- prohibition of systematic and irreversible environmental pollution.

5 Liyakat Takim, “*Maqāsid al-Sharīʿah* in Contemporary Shīʿi Jurisprudence,” in *Maqāsid al-Sharīʿah and Contemporary Reformist Muslim Thought- An Examination*, ed. Adis Duderija (New York: Palgrave Macmillan United States, 2014), 106.

## SDGs as an Encompassing and Coordinator of the International Human Rights Laws, Ideals and Goals

The main purposes of international law and regulations are to improve human life standards and promote global cooperation and harmony. International bodies, human rights activists, and institutions, particularly those associated with the United Nations (UN) and its various councils and institutions, have proposed numerous ideas, action plans, and solutions to achieve these objectives. The extensive number and diversity of UN approvals and resolutions serve as evidence of the multifaceted nature of their efforts.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse rulings within Shari‘a we talked about *Maqāsid al-Shari‘a* doctrine. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can serve as a framework for categorizing and summarizing the wide array of UN approvals.

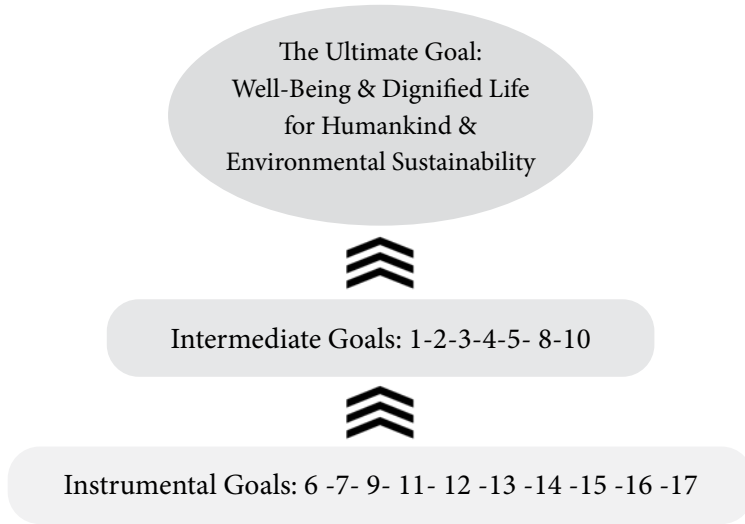
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.<sup>6</sup>

To facilitate study and analysis, the SDGs can be categorized into primary (introductory) goals and higher (superior) goals. The achievement of all these goals collectively contributes to the ultimate objective of attaining a dignified life in harmony with nature. This ultimate goal can be described as the development of material, intellectual, spiritual, and socio-political dimensions, culminating in a Quality-of-Life development index.

In summary, the purposes of international law and regulations, as well as the diverse rulings within Shari‘a and the SDGs, aim to enhance human well-being, promote global cooperation, and create a sustainable and harmonious world.

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<sup>6</sup> “The 17 Goals,” Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, last modified November 19, 2023, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.



## SDGs and Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa:

Based on the objectives of Islamic law (*Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa*), we can classify the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) according to their coordination and adaptability.<sup>7</sup> Here is a classification of the goals based on *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿa*:

### Preservation of Religion, the Spiritual and Governance:

Islam identifies and emphasizes the natural and legal right, freedom, and security to preserve, protect, and develop one's religion, faith, and beliefs – wilfully choosing the object, form, place, and time of worship without any undue obstacles or fear from any individual, group, or authority. Aligned with these principles, the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be highlighted:

SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)

<sup>7</sup> “Religious Diplomacy-Based Advocacy Framework,” Our Advocacy Framework, International Interfaith Peace Corps, last modified November 19, 2023, <https://iipcnet.org/our-advocacy-framework/>.

- SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)
- SDG 13 (Climate Action)
- SDG 14 (Life Below Water)
- SDG 15 (Life on Land)
- SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions)
- SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

## **Preservation of Lineage, the Social and Health:**

Islam identifies and emphasizes the natural and legal right, freedom, and security to preserve, protect, and develop one's lineage by procreating, raising a family and providing it with identity, integrity, legitimacy, continuity, and well-being without any undue obstacles or fear from any individual, group, or authority. Through progeny emerges the individual, family, society and a socio-political system.

Aligned with these principles, the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be highlighted:

- SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)
- SDG 5 (Gender Equality)
- SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)
- SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

## **Preservation of Intellect, Intellectuality and Education:**

The natural and legal right, freedom, and security to preserve, protect, and develop one's God-given intellect – the mind, senses, thoughts, opinions – and the capacity to reason and choose between alternatives without any undue obstacles or fear from any individual, group, or authority.

- SDG 4 (Quality Education)
- SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure)

## Preservation of Property, Material and Development:

The natural and legal right, freedom, and security to preserve, protect, and develop one's property and wealth, by acquiring, owning, controlling, and passing it on to progeny, any individual or group of choice without any undue obstacles or fear from any individual, group, or authority.

SDG 1 (No Poverty)

SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)

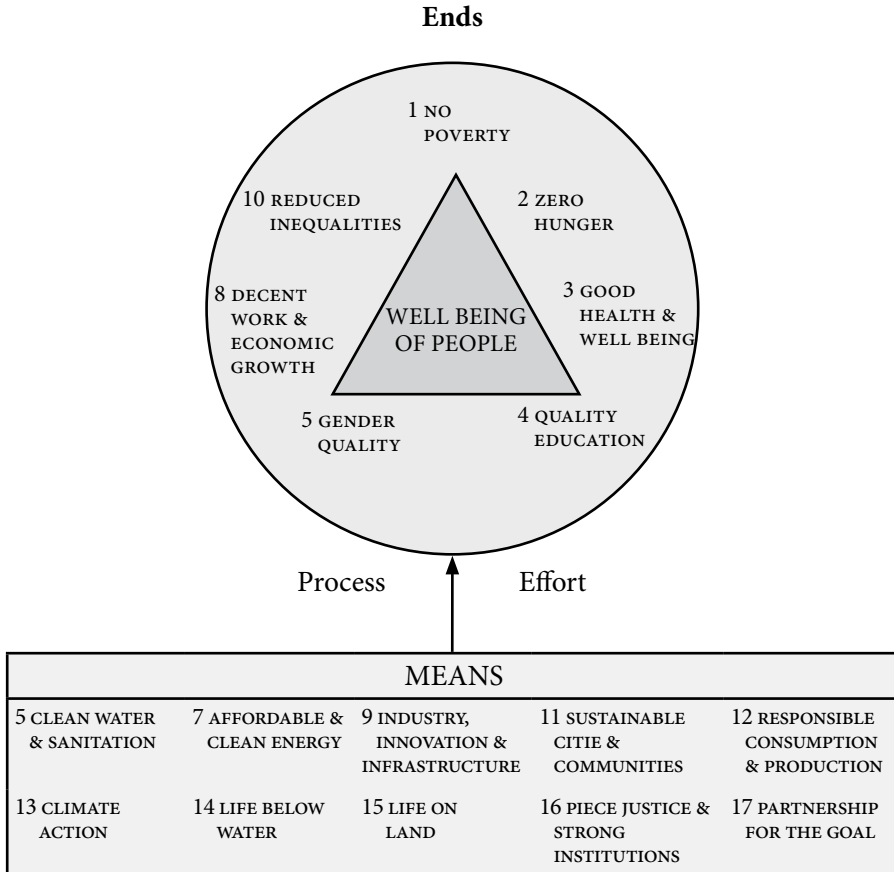
SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)

SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

These classifications align the goals of the SDGs with the objectives of Islamic law, demonstrating their coordination and adaptability. It highlights how each goal contributes to the preservation and well-being of religion, lineage, intellect, and property, which are fundamental aspects emphasized by Islamic law.

The Islamic Jurisprudence of Life model highlights 4 principles of the preservation, promotion and development of Property, Intellect, Religion and Progeny, which provide support to a 5th and central principle of the preservation, and promotion.

# Mapping the concept to the application of the SDGs



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JOSÉ CARDOSO DUARTE

# From Our Father in Heaven to Our Daily Bread: For a Radical Ecotheology

## Introduction

Ecology and environment are conditions of the world, our living world, that are impacting on our way of living. We live in a physical world of finite resources, some that can become exhausted or unavailable – e.g. some essential minerals, and other that although renewable, such as water and food constituents – mainly Carbon, Nitrogen and Oxygen, are included on materials and energy cycles that can be disrupted with serious impacts on the normal conditions of living, such as environmental pollution, biodiversity loss and the climatic changes that we are facing. Ecology and environment are on a dynamic state only possible for its position far from equilibrium, on which human ecology is embedded, but that can be menaced by an unbalanced growth by using more resources at a faster rate than the referred materials and energy cycles may support, resulting in excess of entropy production and consequent loss of supporting conditions of healthy living dynamics. The exponential growth of the human population of recent centuries has resulted in a disproportionate impact on these global systems, in such a way that those systems are at the limit of its main goal: to supply the conditions and materials for our own life and to achieve a steady growth of the whole ecological

chain. Therefore we need to re-evaluate our human decisions in relation to their impact on the state of these physical and chemical realities and their relevance for our own survival on Planet Earth. This cannot be achieved without taking into consideration that humans are more than an element, as any other, on the ecology chain, but have a special responsibility for its sustainability and achievement as part of our own reality, of our *being in existence*. How can we answer that and what do we need to change in our relation to the world ecology? These are very general questions, difficult to answer, but on looking for such an answer we must know our place in the world and why we are here.

## About humans and gods

Since the first members of the *Homo* genus appeared on earth and mainly with the emergence of *sapiens sapiens*, the question about the meaning of life and, in particular, the existence of a life after death seems to be present as part of the culture of human societies since pre-historical times. This sentiment called for the existence of a supreme being responsible for the destiny of humanity and the world, a supreme being, invisible, omnipresent and all powerful. That manifested itself on the development of the religious spirit of societies with its rituals and the many gods and goddesses. Human development of this vision of the world led to social and cultural practices based on “natural religion”<sup>1</sup> and on the way how human societies related with those gods. In a way natural religion recognised nature with its powerful manifestations and its importance for the survival of society as a result from the gods will and as such as *sacred* in some way. This was well-reflected in the Jewish Bible, in particular the book of Genesis. In Genesis 1:27 we can read: “So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”<sup>2</sup>. In the following verse, 28, we read that God gave them all that was on earth ordering them “to be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it...”. This duty may be associated with the departure point for the exploitation of the earth resources for the unlimited growth of human society with its justification from the religious point of view, a process that has escalated up to the present. With the emergence of the *new science* with

1 Wolfhart Pannenberg, “The anthropological and theological nature of religion,” in *Systematic Theology, Vol 1* (Brazilian edition, Editora Academia Cristã Lda; Paulus, 2009) 196–216.

2 *The New English Bible* (Penguin Books, 1974) 1–2.

Galileo and Descartes in the 17<sup>th</sup> century followed by Newton's mathematical representation of the universe mechanics, with the so-called law of gravity of 1687, a new way of describing our physical world started, based on mathematics and experimental science, contributing for the technological capacity of exploitation and use of natural resources. This started with the invention of the steam engine and eventually led to a level of unprecedented capacities, with unsustainable exploitation of resources, with the ability to support an exponential population growth. These has led to a critical evaluation of growth with many Christian religious leaders taking positions, in relation to the resulting environmental dangers and social unbalances, from Patriarch Bartholomew to the Pope, to take a fresh look to the Genesis instructions for dealing with earth resources taking into account the ecological impacts and environmental pollution growth. This climaxed with the 2015 *Laudato Si'* Encyclical<sup>3</sup> publication. Earth Ecology and Environment are reinforced as God's creation for human satisfaction, but they gain a right of their own to be maintained in a kind of "holy state" plenty of divine origin. Ecology becomes, in its own right, essential for considering a new theology for our world.

## A phenomenological view of Life

When we talk about *life* we think mainly of biological life, the system of biochemical reactions and structures that sustain the growth and multiplication of the different forms of life on earth, including our own biological life. This kind of life is shown to us as an experience, exterior to our oneself or on *husserlian* phenomenology to conscience. Recognizing this exteriority puts the problem of from where our inner ego comes from? As Michel Henry puts it "where do we get the concept of the subject from, if it is not from a metaphysics of representation which instead presupposes something that its own phenomenality, the phenomenality of the outside, does not contain?"<sup>4</sup> For Michel Henry the ego originates from its transcendental birth in life. But what is this life? Has Henry writes "only appearing itself in its own phenomenality, can recognize and thereby distinguish between the appearing that belongs to the coming into being of the birth of the living, from that to which all

3 Pope Francesco, *Laudato Si'*: *Lettera enciclica sulla cura della casa comune* (Ancora Editrice, Milan, 2015).

4 Michel Henry, "The Phenomenology of Birth," in *The Michel Henry Reader*, trans. Scott Davidson and Frédéric Seyler (Northwestern University Press, 2019), 29–45.

the beings of the world and even this world itself owe their being”<sup>5</sup> True Life, the absolute Life, it is the one that creates itself, sees itself, in a continual, perpetual, or eternal movement, without any dependence from outside sources or causes. And this Absolute Life we call God. Our own true life is auto-engendered as myself. “The generation of the singular Self, that I myself am, in the auto-engendering of absolute life is my transcendental birth... I am given to myself without this givenness being derived from myself in any way”<sup>6</sup> In fact our Self is engendered in the auto-engendering of absolute life. Michel Henry goes on to write: “We are thus not born on just one day; instead we are constantly engendered in the absolute auto-engendering of life and in it alone. That is why birth is not an event but a condition. This condition of ours turn us into Sons –the transcendental Sons of absolute Life and not the sons of human beings, of these empirical selves who are only the objectification of transcendental selves, who are Sons”<sup>7</sup> If we take this concept of God as the source of Life and of our life too, we are in a new position to re-evaluate our life and our inception into an ecosystem accordingly to the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Here I will address only the most important prayer that he taught us,<sup>8</sup> and will try to deduce some consequences for a fresh look at a new theo-ecological consideration of humanity’s place in the world.

## Our Father

In fact we do not pray *my* Father, but we say *our* Father and by saying that we recognise that we are just one among the many “sons”, as Michel Henry’s radical phenomenology established, the transcendental sons of Absolute Life, that is God. Therefore God is truly a father for us, but it does not matter whether we wish it or not whether we want it or not. Each one is a son, on his own right, and unique, but also a son among many other sons that are identical by birth. It is based on this character of the universal transcendence of our birth and by the same root on the Absolute Life that we can talk of a Brotherhood of Men, in fact of God’s Sons. Only Jesus could pray “My Father” as the primogenital, archi-son of God the first to be generated, congenital, to the

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5 Henry, “The Phenomenology of Birth,” 30.

6 Ibid., 38.

7 Ibid., 41.

8 Matthew 5:7-15, (*The New English Bible*, Penguin Books, 1974). Luke 11:1-4.

eternal movement of Life that engenders itself to itself, sees itself, loves itself on the first born. It is because of this relational movement that we may say that God is Love, Love is God on this absolute immanence of Life in itself. Another consequence of this phenomenology of life it is that although rooted on the Life continuum movement of creation we are not able to create ourselves and so our birth is given to us by the Absolute Life: in fact God is our father. Therefore Jesus the first born, the Word of God, can and it is the only one, that can teach us to pray to the Father, His father and our father. In this we accept that the teachings of Jesus, are in a way consistent with the basic principles of a radical phenomenology of Life as developed by Michel Henry that establishes a framework to fully understand the *Words* of Jesus.<sup>9</sup> It gives us a clue to better understand why John calls Jesus, the Word of God - *Logos*, as written in the Prologue of John.<sup>10</sup>

## In Heaven

We pray to our father *in heaven*. Where is located the *heaven*? We immediately think of somewhere in the sky or elsewhere in the universe but that is simply a human vision of a celestial home for God, the same way that the ancient Greek gods were living on the Olympus, with a physical location at the Mount with the same name. So, where is the *heaven* located? Our difficulties are based on a phenomenology of the world with its conditions of time and space: only in this physical world we must look for of a location with fixed coordinates of time and space. This is not applicable to God to whom we attribute the properties of *infinite* and *eternal*, meaning that the notions of time and space do not hold for God. That is consistent with Michel Henry's Phenomenology of Life,<sup>11</sup> which I have summarised above. Life has no *beginning* neither will it have an *end*. Life engenders itself on an eternal movement, as a "pathos" that feels itself. It does not need to be seen from outside, better there is no outside or inside to it: Life is *itself*. Therefore space and time do not apply to a Phenomenology of Life. Heaven in such a phenomenology it is coincident with Life and in fact *in heaven* is a tautology concerning *our Father*. Because there is no other possibility for the father than to be in Life.

9 Michel Henry, *Paroles du Christ* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002).

10 John 1:1-14.

11 Michel Henry, *Phénoménologie de la vie - Tome IV: Sur l'éthique et la religion* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2004)

Again this tautology on Jesus' prayer meant that we should not look for God anywhere in the earth or in the sky or any other physical or temporal location, such as in the Temple or anywhere else but only in "Life". It is opportune here to remember some other words of Jesus where he claimed precisely to be the "Life".<sup>12</sup> We must therefore conclude that he was teaching His disciples, and teaching us today, that our Father was "in Him", was Himself, the *Logos is God*.<sup>13</sup> He was acting as the Word of God is in fact meaning that he is the Word of God. When we pray to Our Father we are listening to the Word of God. Therefore the prayer to Our Father is a way to "connect" to the Word of God, listen to it and actualise our "Sonship", a son among many others. In this respect we reassume our true nature of beings not only in the world but rather and mainly as *beings* whose essence it is rooted on the Absolute Life of God. We may now question where is this Life *manifested* if it is not in the world? Is it possible to have access to this Life, to listen to it, to dialogue with it, other than listening to the Word of God in Jesus Christ? The answer was given by the same Jesus Christ: God talks to us in the *secret*<sup>14</sup> and *sees on the heart*<sup>15</sup>. The dialogue with God is possible through our transcendental birth on the absolute Life of God that resonates in our own life through our "pathos". As Descartes put it, at the precise moment when the phenomenality of the world is disqualified by the dream hypothesis, nonetheless the absolute certainty of the experienced *fear* in the dream is real<sup>16</sup>. For Henry, the fact that the fear is real although in a dream when the appearing of the world is false it means that the phenomenality through which the fear is given to itself has nothing to do with the doubtful phenomenality of the world.<sup>17</sup> Suffering and joy are the tonalities of our pathos and it is by these tonalities that God talks to our heart.

12 John 14:6.

13 Jean-Yves Leloup, *L'Évangile de Jean* (Éditions Albin Michel, 1989), 195.

14 Matthew 6:4-6.

15 1 Samuel 16:7.

16 René Descartes, *Les passions de l'âme* (Athena.unige.ch) article 26.

17 Michel Henry, "Le Christianisme: une approche phénoménologique?" in Henry, *Phénoménologie de la vie*, 100.

## Give us today our daily bread

Then we come to the second half of the prayer of Jesus, probably most important for our daily life but also the most mysterious. It is not my intention to discuss here the different translations and meaning of the Greek original, namely that proposed by Lourenço<sup>18</sup> in his translation of the Bible that reads: “Give us today our bread for tomorrow...” in relation to the meaning of the Greek adjective *epiúsios*. I will remain for our discussion here with the traditional translation: “Give us today our daily bread”, avoiding adding more complexities into my discussion. What looks the most evident and easy to understand this sentence of the prayer that Jesus taught us, is probably telling us to ask God, our Father, for the food that we need each day for survival on earth. And that is correct if we believe that all that exists on earth has been created through the power of God. That is very much in agreement with the Genesis description of the Creation and that God put at the disposition of humanity for food every living thing that exists upon earth. Therefore nothing strange on this demand for “our daily bread” that is probably the most important of the prayer concerning our existence on our human ecological system on Earth. Humans need to seed the plants and trees for harvesting cereals, other vegetables, fruits and wood for housing and energy and to raise the cattle that will supply them with milk, meat and even clothing. “Bread” may be considered a general description for the needs for food of humanity; it is a specific and important food of survival for the poor. But it is strange to acknowledge that Jesus is telling us to ask for something that God already gave us from the beginning of creation. From the four gospels, we learn that Jesus multiplied the *loaves* and the *fishes* to feed the crowd in an *impossible* miracle just to demonstrate that the Father never abandon us when we look for the Word of God and His kingdom: “Set your mind upon his kingdom, and all the rest will come to you as well.”<sup>19</sup> Bread, food, is secondary to the Word of God that is our true food. This was the conclusion that Jesus drew for the crowd: “I am the bread of Life. Whoever comes to me shall never be hungry and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty”.<sup>20</sup> And Jesus explains to the crowd that was willing to proclaim him as king: “I am that living bread which has come down from heaven; if anyone eats this bread he shall

18 Frederico Lourenço, *Bíblia, Vol. I: Os quatro evangelhos* (Lisbon, Quetzal, 2016), 79.

19 Luke 12:31.

20 John 6:35.

live for ever. Moreover the bread which I will give is my own flesh; I give it for the life of the world”,<sup>21</sup> discarding them because they came looking for him just for miracles to satisfy their hunger. And Jesus advises them to work not for the perishable food but for the food that lasts, the food of eternal life. The standing of Jesus corroborates the fact that we must not think of the *bread* in the prayer to *Our Father* as the bread that we need to eat each day to survive in the world but as the bread that Jesus offers us: his Word, that it is also his flesh, the true food for nourishing our divine life, our sonship of the Word. Without this spiritual nourishing food it is not only the life of each one of us that is in danger, it is the life of the whole world. How can this be?

## For a Radical Ecotheology of the World

In a recent paper<sup>22</sup> I developed a theory that I called the two-world theory, whereby I assume that the physical world of entropy must be controlled by the way of living our true Life in God. That will be essential to delay the ecological crisis. In this paper, a life phenomenology interpretation of the *Our Father* prayer of Jesus, confirms the truth of Jesus’ claim that He is the only one that can give life to the world. This can only be understood as a radical change of our viewing of the world: we cannot see anymore the world as a place where our actions are shown but void of any impact, a dead place of objects, but through Jesus’ action it may become a world of life. That is probably one of the most mysterious things that Jesus claimed, He that always affirmed that He neither belonged to this world nor did we. How can then it be, how can we understand this statement that He can bring life to the world? In an ecstatic world, outside of our real phenomenological life, no life exists, only causal relations on a three-dimensional space are present to our reasoning. How can we conciliate this world phenomenology, of the intentional conscience, with the one that delivers the appearing to Life itself, to the only one that feels itself without no intermediate or distance, whose phenomenality it is the pure appearing itself, coincident with the only one that reveals to itself, the absolute Life? The only one that can give life to other beings by bringing them into existence on its own absolute Life? How can these two

21 John 6:45.

22 José Cardoso Duarte, “Laudato Si’ Encyclical: Entropy, Life and the Revelation of John,” in *Contemporary ecotheology, climate justice and environmental stewardship in world religions*, ed. Louk Andrianos and Tom Sverre Tomren et. al. (Embla Akademisk, 2021), 140–154.



radically different phenomenologies of being, be reconciled? Will it be possible to bring Life into the World? And if this will be possible, how can it be? Is it possible to bring Life to what is dead to something that exists only on an outside of a vision? In a religious language “can we communicate the Life of God into beings that exist in a world”? This can be paraphrased as “is it possible that ecology of the world may become an ecotheology”? We depend on the ecology of the world for food to support our biological system of life but more importantly we depend on the “bread” of Jesus to support our true life, the only one that can save us for an eternal life of God. We can interpret now in a radical way the claim of Jesus that only his flesh can save the world by transforming the world of matter into a world of life, of spirit. Imitating the poet that wrote: “the rose is without why; it flourishes because it flourishes, / Does not care about itself, does not ask if we see it”.<sup>23</sup> This aphorism that deserved a proper lecture by Martin Heidegger, may also be used to interpret the “world” in a similar way. As the rose it doesn’t care if we see it or not, if we live in it or not. But like the rose, it doesn’t appear until we see it. Who “sees” our life in the world to bring us into existence? Only God can “see” us in the world to give us of his own life, the bread that comes down from heaven! God/Jesus Christ, his Word, give life to us and for this we also communicate this life to the world, a radical beginning for an Ecotheology. In fact a universal *Brotherhood* can only be established through our common Father.

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23 Angelus Silesius, *A rosa é sem porquê* (Portuguese edition, Vega Lda., 1991), 49.

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LINDA VOGT TURNER

# Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage

## Introduction

The black rock we call coal can be faithfully viewed as a gift of God, at least if one considers how important coal was for the ancient Hebrew prophets Moses and Isaiah. According to Midrash Rabba, Exodus 1:26, the Baby Moses chose a live coal over a shiny piece of gold and by doing so saved his life.<sup>1</sup> The Book of Isaiah records how Isaiah's "iniquity was removed" and his "sin was atoned for" when a live coal kissed his lips and how then the King the Lord of Hosts sent him to call people to turn back to God and believe the "earth is full of

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<sup>1</sup> And some of the observers sitting among them were the magicians of Egypt that said, "We are wary of this, that he is taking your crown and placing it on his head, that he not be the one we say (i.e. prophesy) that will take the kingship from you." Some said to kill him, and some said to burn him. And Jethro was sitting among them and said to them, "This child has no intent [to take the throne]. Rather, test him by bringing in a bowl [a piece of] gold and a coal. If he outstretches his hand towards the gold, [surely] he has intent [to take the throne], and you should kill him. And if he outstretches his hand towards the coal, he [surely] does not have intent [to take the throne], and he does not deserve the death penalty." They immediately brought the bowl before him (Moses), and he outstretched his hand to take the gold, and Gabriel came and pushed his (Moses') hand, and he grabbed the coal. He then brought his hand along with the coal into his mouth and burned his tongue, and from this was made (Exodus 4:10) "slow of speech and slow of tongue." (Rabbah 1 Shemot, *Sefaria Community Translation of the Child Moses Tested with the Choice of Gold or Coal*, 2023, [https://www.sefaria.org/Shemot\\_Rabbah.1.31?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en](https://www.sefaria.org/Shemot_Rabbah.1.31?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en))

His glory” (Isaiah 6: 1-10).<sup>2</sup> For people of faith, that should mean, every child, every adult and every rock, even the black rock is a gift of God. Furthermore, anthracite is a dark black form of old coal, “having formed from biomass that was buried 350 million years ago” and this old dark black coal is one of the cleanest types of coal to burn – producing less smoke than other types” being that it is almost pure carbon.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, the second most abundant element in the human body is carbon, oxygen is the first<sup>4</sup> and according to scientists, carbon is the backbone and the building block of all life.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper Carbon Capture: Storage and Utilization, I first remind readers of how Christians have viewed Christ as the Rock of Ages that empowered Moses and Isaiah. Moses and Isaiah used live burning coal to speak about God and who they believed sent them out “kissed” to call people to turn back to God. Secondly, with this link between Christ and live coal, I discuss how the rise of secularism appears to be causing many people to have “calloused hearts and deaf ears” as they fail to understand the significance of a live burning coal kissing the prophet Isaiah’s lips and causing him to liken the King, the Lord of Hosts to this live coal (Isaiah 6:10). Thus I call people of faith to reconsider the demonizing of Coal and his oily bride – the fossil fuel industry. I present three videos that explain how Carbon Capture can create a carbon loop: to reduce, reuse and recycle carbon as well as industrial, agricultural and human waste

2 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted; and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him stood seraphim, each having six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling out to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Hosts; all the earth is full of His glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke. Then I said: “Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips dwelling among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts.” Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And with it he touched my mouth and said “Now that this has touched your lips, your iniquity is removed and your sin is atoned for.” Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: “Whom shall I send? Who will go for Us?” And I said: “Here am I. Send me!” And He replied: “Go and tell this people, ‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ Make the hearts of this people calloused; deafen their ears and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

3 Energy Education, University of Calgary, “Coal Types,” accessed December 30, 2022, [https://energyeducation.ca/encyclopedia/Coal\\_types](https://energyeducation.ca/encyclopedia/Coal_types).

4 Anne Marie Helmenstine, “What Are the Elements in the Human Body?,” Thought.Co, Last updated February 24, 2020, [https://www.thoughtco.com/elements-in-the-human-body-p2-602188?utm\\_source=emailshare&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=shareurlbuttons](https://www.thoughtco.com/elements-in-the-human-body-p2-602188?utm_source=emailshare&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=shareurlbuttons).

5 Ara Austin, “Carbon Molecules: The Building Blocks of Life,” Arizona State University, accessed November 9, 2023 <https://sparks.learning.asu.edu/videos/carbon-molecules-the-building-blocks-of-life/>; S. M. Dirk and L. N. Irwin, “Building Blocks of Life,” *Life in the Universe. Advances in Astrobiology and Biogeophysics* 3 (2005): 77–100.

to cleanse, restore and sustain the earth so that everyone will eventually see, believe and declare the “earth is full of God’s glory”. In conclusion, I assert that I believe coal and fossil fuel are gifts of God that can be used sustainably to transition world nations from the old Iron Age into a new Carbon Age.

## The Building Block of All Life

Firstly, I would like to remind Christians, the concept of Christ being the Rock, the Stone upon which their Church and faith are built, is biblical and no empty claim. Christians all over the world claim this Rock is a divine gift and that this Rock is the building block of all life and in the fullness of time, according to divine plan, this Rock became human, took human form filled with the building block of all life and will come again at the end of the age so that the faithful will shine like the sun.<sup>6</sup>

Down through the centuries, many people have stumbled over the concept of a rock grasping the nature of God and man. Jesus must have seen Christ the Everlasting Father coming to life in a man called Simon bar Jonah as the prophet Isaiah foretold because upon declaring his faith in Christ as the son of the living God, Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by My Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it”<sup>7</sup>

Later, thinking like a man and not like God, Peter did not want to get behind Jesus and lift up the Cross that would bring an end to Jesus’s life, so Jesus said this Simon bar Jonah a.k.a. Peter had become Satan, a stumbling block.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps Peter did not want Jesus to stop breathing or himself to stop breathing, captured in the “bladder of a fish”<sup>9</sup> or a dark, dank cave because earlier Jesus had said. “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”.<sup>10</sup> In John’s Gospel, after visiting the tomb and seeing for himself that the tomb was empty, Peter perhaps feeling the need to secure an

6 Matthew 13:43

7 Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 18:16-19

8 Matthew 16:23.

9 Dani Rhys, “The Vesica Piscis: An Ancient Symbol in Geometry and Faith,”Symbol Sage, November 12, 2023, <https://symbolsage.com/vesica-piscis-pisces-symbolic-meaning/>.

10 Matthew 12:39-40.

income, returns to fishing. After fishing all night and catching nothing, Peter hears the voice of Jesus, telling him to cast his net on the right side of the boat. Peter does and miraculously nets a great catch of fish numbering 153. When his band of followers bring this catch safely to shore, they roast the catch over hot coals.<sup>11</sup>

The Cross of Christianity and the Golden Lamp Stand of Israel are Holy. For Israel, the Golden Lamp Stand like the Cross for Christians, conveys God's everlasting message and promise of rebirth and restoration.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the Good News, the message of the Cross, is firmly anchored in the faith that comes out of the Hebrew testament that God is the Rock of Salvation<sup>13</sup> and the Rock Eternal whom Christians claim is the anchor of their soul, their eternal breath.<sup>14</sup>

Yet what may not be evident for many is the likely possibility that the hammer Moses used to forge the golden Lamp Stand would have been made by burning coal. Moses and his smiths hammered this Lamp Stand to resemble an amygdala, an Almond Tree.<sup>15</sup> In the first century, this Amygdala, this beautiful flowering Almond Tree, originally forged and hammered to convey the eternal light and the beauty of the "tree of life" Moses encountered on the Lord's Holy Mountain<sup>16</sup> was cut off from her roots and used as a Cross, a non-living stick by the Romans to execute the lawless. Yet even though with this stick this branch Christians preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles...to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles – Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.<sup>17</sup> Standing up on this Tree, Jesus the Light of the World calls those watching and listening to turn back to God [to salvation] and put their trust in God as their Rock...saying "Father into your hands I commend my spirit, my eternal breath".<sup>18</sup>

Today the idea of King Coal, the Black Rock, being a good source of energy is an anathema among many faith groups "greening" their churches

11 John 21:4-17.

12 JJ Travel in Israel, "Almond Blossom and the Golden Lampstand, The Emblem of Israel – *Rebirth and Restoration*," February 24, 2015, <https://www.jjtravelinIsrael.com/almond-blossom-and-the-golden-lampstand/>.

13 Psalm 18:2

14 Hebrews 6:19.

15 Exodus 25; Numbers 17.

16 Exodus 25:40; Psalm 15:1;24:1-3.

17 John 8:12. 1 Corinthians 1:24.

18 Genesis 2:7; Psalm 33:6; Luke 23:46.

by divesting from fossil fuels.<sup>19</sup> Coal mines and coal generating stations are being closed down in western nations even though many scientists agree that coal is an abundant economical source of carbon<sup>20</sup> and that carbon is the building block of all life.<sup>21</sup> The belief that excess carbon in the atmosphere is causing the planet to overheat has some scientists looking for carbon substitutes.<sup>22</sup> Human bodies contain carbon and expel CO<sub>2</sub> with every breath. So it could become very dangerous to think of CO<sub>2</sub> as the big bad wolf that a vast majority of scientists now claim and some claim is a reason to limit human population.<sup>23</sup> There are other so-called pollutants associated with the combustion of coal and fossil fuels such as sulphur, nitrogen and fly ash. These are being addressed and regulations for cost-effective control of these so-called pollutants are helping to clean up the coal and gas industry.<sup>24</sup>

## The Rejection and Demonization of Carbon

The Paris climate talks are based on the premise that CO<sub>2</sub> is the Devil Incarnate, the big bad wolf that must be eliminated and chained up permanently.<sup>25</sup> Environmental activists are even protesting celebrations of Black Pete accompanying St. Nick as he traditionally did in some parts of Europe giving coal to naughty boys and girls. This is an example of how secular values have crept into a Christmas tradition equating poor children who are naughty, who have nothing to wear, nothing to eat and nothing but sugar

19 Monica Tyler-Davies, "A new fossil free milestone: \$11 trillion has been committed to divest from fossil fuels," 350.org, September 8, 2019, <https://350.org/11-trillion-divested/>.

20 Energy at a Glance, "Energy at a Glance: Coal Power," accessed November 8, 2023, <https://energyataglance.com/2023/10/27/energy-at-a-glance-coal-power/>.

21 Austin, "Advanced Materials," Schulze-Makuch Dirk and Louis N. Irwin, "Building Blocks of Life," in *Life in the Universe. Advances in Astrobiology and Biogeophysics*, vol 3 (Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg, 2005), [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/10825622\\_5](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/10825622_5).

22 Dirk and Irwin, "Building Blocks of Life."

23 Population Connection, "Population and Climate Change," accessed November 8, 2023, <https://populationconnection.org/why-population/climate-change/>.

24 Andrew Turgeon and Elizabeth Morse, "Coal," in *National Geographic Resource Library*, ed. Jeannie Evers, Emdash Editing (National Geographic Society, 2022), <https://education.national-geographic.org/resource/coal>.

25 Niall Mac Dowell, "Boundary Dam Unit 3 CCS Facility: Celebrating Success and Sharing Lessons Learned," *International CCS Knowledge Centre Blog*, September 9, 2022, <https://ccsknowledge.com/blog/boundary-dam-unit-3-ccs-facility-celebrating-success-and-sharing-lessons-learned>.

plums dancing in their heads to be viewed as bad children.<sup>26</sup> Yet in Europe where this Christmas tradition originated, a gift of coal would have meant a warm meal and the promise of employment.

Here in Canada, the Boundary Bay Coal Fired Generating Station in Saskatchewan, is still keeping people employed, and supplying homes with heat and light to give children a warm meal at Christmas. This Generating Station is a success story. It has been capturing 90% of all its flu gases since 2014. This success is the equivalent of taking 900,000 cars off the road for a year.<sup>27</sup>

The Boundary Bay Coal Generating Station is just one proven example demonstrating that Coal and Fossil fuels can be retrofitted with abatement technology and trusted as reliable sources of energy capable of delivering safe clean energy. According to research fellows at the Heartland Institute, “coal generated 35 percent of the world’s electricity in 2022...and new advanced technologies “have reduced particulate matter emissions from coal plants by 99.8 percent, nitrogen oxides have been reduced by 83 percent, and sulphur dioxide has been reduced by 98 percent, when compared to older coal plants with no controls.”<sup>28</sup> Vijay Jayaraj a research associate with CO<sub>2</sub> Coalition says, “saving the planet must not mean rejecting fossil fuels to meet such needs. Otherwise, the clarion call of environmental activists is the death knell for the billions they would condemn to energy poverty.”<sup>29</sup> Jayaraj also stresses how Africa is lifting itself out of poverty through the development of coal and fossil fuel and claims Africa doesn’t need western elitist climate policies.<sup>30</sup> Like the Heartland Institute, the CO<sub>2</sub> Coalition seeks to dispel the myths and exaggerations of the so-called “climate crisis and its demonization of CO<sub>2</sub>.”<sup>31</sup>

26 Becky Little, “This notorious Christmas Character is Dividing a Country,” in *National Geographic Culture Online*, December 6, 2018, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/black-pete-christmas-zwarte-piet-dutch>.

27 Mac Dowell, “Boundary Dam Unit.”

28 Energy at a Glance, “Energy at a Glance: Coal Power.”

29 Energy at a Glance, “Energy at a Glance: Coal Power;” CO<sub>2</sub> Coalition, “CO<sub>2</sub> Coalition Research Associate Vijay Jayaraj quoted in The Popular in the Pipeline,” February 23, 2022, <https://co2coalition.org/news/co2-coalition-research-associate-vijay-jayaraj-featured-in-the-popular-in-the-pipeline/>.

30 Energy at a Glance. *Coal Power*; Vijay Jayaraj, “Africa Doesn’t Need Western Elites’ Meaningless Climate Policies,” CO<sub>2</sub> Coalition, November 6, 2023, <https://co2coalition.org/2023/11/06/africa-doesnt-need-western-elites-meaningless-climate-policies/>.

31 Much of what our children are taught about carbon dioxide in school and exposed to outside of the classroom is based on the flawed acceptance that human’s emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> are leading to planetary doom. CO<sub>2</sub> Learning Center, <https://co2learningcenter.com/>.



## Three Selected Videos

The first selected video by CCm Technologies is Reusing Captured Waste: Capturing and recycling carbon dioxide from industrial waste streams.<sup>32</sup>

Here, “CCm Technology’s Chief Executive Officer, Pawel Kisielewski and Chief Technical Officer, Professor Peter Hammond explain how they capture carbon dioxide, ammonia, nitrogen and other waste streams, and either store the captured material or convert it into valuable resources like fertilizer” that can be carbon zero or carbon positive.

In the second selected video,<sup>33</sup> the CEO of LanzaTech, a biotech start-up company explains the goal of her company. LanzaTech wants to reduce global carbon emissions by making everyday consumer products with carbon captured from industrial chimneys. Their primary goal is to capture and use carbon in a circular economy to reduce the need for using “virgin fossil fuel” by reusing it over and over again, rather than burying it underground or in the ocean.

The third video asks why Elon Musk offered 100 million dollars to the first team of engineers who could figure out how best to use and capture carbon. Tommo Carroll, the narrator of the video, suggests that Elon Musk wants to use carbon to make the fuel to put people on Mars and then use and capture the carbon dioxide on Mars to make a human habitat on Mars and fuel their return to earth.<sup>34</sup>

As you watch the videos I have selected, ask yourself. If carbon is the building block of life on earth, why are World Leaders and Global Corporate Elites demonizing Carbon? Did you hear Pawel Kisielewski quote Mahatma Ghandi who said “waste is only a resource in the wrong place.” Did you hear Pawel Kisielewski also say that CCm has found a way to use the “Devil Incarnate, i.e. Carbon” to give farmers the fertilizer they want with a zero-carbon footprint. Thus ask yourself. Why are Christians and other people of faith going along with this demonization? Why aren’t more nice Christians lifting up their voices in support of the Black Rock and poorer nations that have an abundance of coal and fossil fuel? The prophet Isaiah claims his, “iniquity was removed” and his “sin was atoned for” when a live coal kissed his lips.

32 The video can be viewed at <https://www.re-tv.org/articles/reusing-captured-waste>.

33 NowThis Earth, “Startup Turns Carbon Emissions Into Clothing | UpcycleThis,” YouTube, February 22, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTulpfiwG8Y> Jennifer Holmgren.

34 Tommo Carroll, “Why Elon Musk is Actually Obsessed With Carbon Capture,” YouTube, March 25, 2021, <https://youtu.be/Q5KnqowNMUQ>.

Recently, young global leaders reporting from the World Economic Forum disclosed that Africa must pay \$2.8 Trillion dollars to meet its obligations under the Paris Agreement. Yet Africa has the lowest emissions.<sup>35</sup> Is this just? Are not African nations entitled to develop their coal and fossil fuel resources and lift themselves out of poverty – even if this means relying on unabated fossil fuel until such time as they can afford abatement technologies?

## Conclusion

Why have so many Christians and people of other faiths joined in the chorus of secular voices demonizing coal and fossil fuel? The video clips I presented clearly show the need for faithful stewardship of the planet and its precious resources. Are Christians afraid they will be persecuted and censored if they take a stand for Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS)? Or are they simply ill equipped, underfunded and unaware of the science the research fellows and associates from the Heartland Institute and CO<sub>2</sub> Coalition are publishing to educate, the public, world leaders and even children. It is expensive to hire teachers who can connect their congregations with sacred texts showing how people of faith from the three Abrahamic faith traditions and other world religions have historically used metaphors of trees and rocks and even live burning coal to empower prophets to give glory to God and to talk about eschatology.<sup>36</sup>

Carbon Capture (CC) is expensive and many nations are ill equipped and underfunded to take a stand for CCUS at the moment. This is where people of faith can step up and empower underfunded nations richly endowed with coal and fossil fuel. Yet many people insist CC must be generated by renewable power or by planting more trees. They argue a wind farm that can power a Direct Air Capture plant takes a huge amount of land, resources and energy.<sup>37</sup> So does planting crops and growing trees. Thus, to manage the space and cost of CC, it makes sense to capture carbon and other flu gasses of hard to abate industries such as the coal industry.<sup>38</sup>

35 Kulé Galma, "Here's How African Leaders Can Close the Climate Finance Gap," World Economic Forum, November 15, 2022, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/11/heres-how-leaders-close-climate-finance-gap/>.

36 Richard Landes, "eschatology," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed December 30, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/eschatology>.

37 Carroll, "Why Elon Musk is Actually Obsessed With Carbon Capture."

38 CCm Technologies, "Capturing and recycling carbon dioxide from industrial waste streams," video uploaded by RE:TV September 2020, accessed December 30, 2022, <https://www.re-tv.org/articles/reusing-captured-waste>.

Moreover it makes biblical sense to utilize the CO<sub>2</sub>, many environmental lobby groups perceive as the enemy and the Devil Incarnate. With carbon capture and storage technologies and innovative companies such as Clime Works, Carbon Engineering, Lanza Tech, and CCm Technologies, humanity has the potential to redeem and use CO<sub>2</sub> and other so-called pollutants for good to help renewables such as Solar and Wind to provide electricity, especially on cloudy or windless days. With redemption and utilization of what many see as garbage, pollution or waste, people all over the world will realize the Holy City – the New Heaven and Earth, coming down out of heaven John the Divine envisioned two thousand years ago.<sup>39</sup>

The end of the Bronze and Iron Ages has arrived. The Carbon Age is imminent. It is time for the righteous to rise and shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father and their Mother as ONE Son, as ONE DIVINE FAMILY.<sup>40</sup>

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# Abstracts

TOM S. BREDAL-TOMREN AND HANS MORTEN HAUGEN

## **Ecotheology in Different Denominations. A Comparative Review of 50 Years of Environmental Statements from Global Summits and Leaders**

Since 1967, the various denominations have discussed and made statements on environmental ethics and ecotheology through their global general assemblies and global top leaders. Both The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), The Lambeth Conference (LC), the ecumenical Orthodox Patriarch and the Pope have produced declarations on the environmental problems and climate. This implies about 50 years of ecclesiastical ecotheological statements. It is now possible to study the approach in the various traditions and look for patterns, peculiarities, and differences in the different denominations. This analysis shows how the various denominations were initially characterized by their confessional traditional theology. The authors also expose which theological motifs and models characterize the official ecotheology of the various traditions. Finally, they find that as the time

has passed there has been a higher degree of exchange of theology between the various denominations.

**Keywords:** Ecotheology, Confessional, Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox

LOUK AOURELIEN ANDRIANOS

### Ecological Sin, Metanoia (Repentance), and Eco-Conversion: Prerequisite Ecumenical Concepts Towards Reconciliation and Eco-Justice

Current economic development is based on structural greed that promotes unlimited growth, unrestricted trade, over consumption, and individualistic competitive behaviour.

This article explores the concepts of ecological sin, metanoia (repentance) and eco-conversion that need to deepen in order to promote reconciliation and eco-justice for all God's creation. We give special attention to the notion of greed as the most destructive sin according to theological teachings of the past and current biblical findings. The notions of ecological sin, metanoia and eco-conversion deserve more attention in contemporary theological reflections because the whole creation suffers from the compounding consequences of the underestimated three concepts: ecological crisis, climate change and socio-economic injustices.

A distinction of ecological sin, in contrast to spiritual and mental sin, is proposed on the basis of an ecumenical relational view of the body. The goal is to suggest theological and scientific means, to update the notion of sin and to limit structural greed which constitutes the first cause of contemporary ecological degradation.

Reflections on the meanings of the metanoia and eco-conversion concepts are developed in the framework of the struggle for sustainability and eco-justice for all creation. Our focus is on the practical aspects and best practices required to individuals, churches and communities, to achieve global reconciliation between humans, between humans and God, and between the overall creation, living on non-living parts of the natural world.

A method of measuring structural greed, called the “economy of life index” (ECOLIFE), is presented to illustrate aspects of ecological sins and to provide an alternative tool to the secular method of measuring progress towards sustainable development based on GDP and other SD indicators.

**Keywords:** eco-theology, sins, structural greed, fuzzy logic, economy of life, GDP (Gross Domestic Products), sustainable development indicators (SDi)

CLAIRE E. WOLFTEICH

### Sabbath Theology and Practice: Implications for Ecological Spirituality and Ethics

In an era of ecological crisis, how can we mine the wisdom of religious traditions for formative practices that can be shared across traditions? What theological visions and principles inform ways of life that honor and steward creation? This article focuses on one practice – Sabbath keeping – as potentially powerful for ecological spirituality, cultivating a receptive and humble relationship with the created world while resisting cultural and economic systems of dehumanizing work. Three interrelated aspects of Sabbath are particularly relevant: affirmation of the goodness of creation; just rhythms for release and restoration; and a theology of dignified work and liberative rest. Some examples of contemporary movements to reclaim rest and ecological repair are discussed.

**Keywords:** Sabbath, Spirituality, Work, Time, Justice, Ecological, Theology

TATIANA DENISOVA

### On Heraclitus’ Ecological Monism

The problems of man’s relationship with the world, his place in the world, and his role in its existence have been central in philosophy throughout its history. Today, there is no man who does not wonder how to live in harmony with the world, according to human destiny and our idea of the human. One of the

most convincing answers to this question is the philosophical and ecological-ethical viewpoint, which we call “ecological monism”.

Although the concept of “ecological monism” has not yet entered scientific circulation, the idea of the Unity of the world has a long history. One of the most profound thinkers who expressed the idea of ecological monism was the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus. Heraclitus’s key concept of cosmology, ontology and ethics is the Unity of the world and the inclusion of man in this Unity.

According to Heraclitus, the world is harmoniously arranged and reasonably governed by *Logos*. *Logos* is the organising and structure-forming principle or force of the cosmos and the condition and guarantor of its Unity and inviolability. The objective order of things in the world is the standard of morality and the model of correct behaviour.

The term “nature” (φύσις), for the first time, acquires an anthropological dimension, an ethical-existential meaning in Heraclitus’ treatise.

Thus, the monism of his physical picture of the world (“All things are one”) is explicated at the ethical level and, therefore, can be called *ecological (eco-ethical) monism*.

**Keywords:** Cosmos, Heraclitus, Logos, monism, nature, Whole

MAHJABEEN DHALA

### Ecological Theology: An Ecofeminist Reading of the Qur’anic Perspective of the Universe

The Qur’an is replete with narratives of the planetary entities and the more-than-human constituents of the universe. The Islamic sacred text frequently references the magnificence of the heavens and the earth as tools to understand the Magnanimous and Munificent Creator. It presents planetary movements as a powerful demonstration of harmony, constancy, and stability and the universe as a cognizant, competent, and conscious creation that worships God. It focuses on preserving the ecological balance and acknowledging natural resources as blessings and responsibilities. Hadith literature refers to the earth as a nurturing, supporting, and watchful mother. Reading Qur’anic texts allegorically and from an ecofeminist perspective, I present an Islamic understanding of the universe’s



agency, emotionality, and justice-seeking aspect. Drawing on a selection of verses from the Qur'an and hadith, I present the ecosphere as a conscious abode that chooses to serve its human residents as a form of worship of the Divine. I ask: Is the submissiveness of the universe indicative of agency or coercion? Are Qur'anic verses a metaphoric expression of a speaking-feeling universe or a reminder of the real-tangible impact of human actions upon the more-than-human universe? Might human awareness of a grieving universe unearth a deep interconnectedness and inspire environmental justice?

**Keywords:** Qur'an exegesis, Ecological Theology, Ecofeminism, Islamic Environmental Perspective

NADJA FURLAN ŠTANTE

### Cohabitation with-in Nature and Digitality – Christian Ecofeminist vs. Transhumanistic Paradigm

The starting point for the first strand of this paper is Pope Francis' "Laudato Si" (2015). In Chapter 3 Pope Francis considers the human roots of the ecological crisis and suggests that, despite the obvious progress that has been made as a result of technological advances, the power that is now apparently available to the human race is itself a temptation to exercise a dominance over creation which leads to environmental degradation and exploitation. The moral sense and range of values which might be required to temper the excesses of human control have not developed at the same pace as our technological advances. What he calls the technocratic paradigm also tends to dominate economic and political life. The human condition and contemporary theology are confronted and challenged with a threat of ecological crises, on one hand, and comprehensive digitality, on the other.

From this starting point, this article compares the (Christian) ecofeminist ethic of relationality - the interconnectedness of all beings (human and natural non-human) in the web of life (interconnected subjectivity) – with the transhumanist ethic of human enhancement and technological singularity. Moreover, a critique of transhumanism and its (possible) abuse of technological power - over human and nature – is elaborated, as the “new” superintelligence could drive

accelerated technological progress and leave ecofeminist ecocentric egalitarianism behind, while moving towards posthumanism as a goal.

**Keywords:** Christian ecofeminism, transhumanism, posthumanism, human enhancement, nature, technology

LESYA SABADA

### The Cosmic Temple – A Reflection of God’s Love in Eastern Christian Theology

Laudato Si’s observations of the animal kingdom have much in common with ancient Church Fathers theological writings. The use of ancient Christian voices and patristic teachings reinforce several of the writings found in this landmark encyclical *Laudato Si*. The theology of the Byzantine Church, (both Orthodox and Eastern Catholic), including specifically the doctrines of the Incarnation, have less than fully realized implications for the understanding and appreciation of the sacredness of material creation, and the need for a different interpretation of human relations with nature, and particularly with the animal kingdom. Within the framework of the Eastern Church, this presentation explores the practical implications of this Eastern Christian doctrine and theology and the relationship with the animal kingdom. The position of humanity will be explored with the understanding that the human position should not be perceived as one of dominance or superiority, but rather one of service and beneficent love to creation in its many forms. The intrinsic value of all of God’s creation can help the Anthropocene recognize and respect the presence and manifestation of God - a cosmological reflection of thanksgiving to our loving Creator.

**Keywords:** *Laudato Si*, Animal suffering, Animal Kingdom, Animal Ethics, Animal Rights, Papal Encyclical, Anthropocene, Incarnation, Byzantine Ethics, Eastern Church Theology, Orthodox Theology, Eastern Catholic Theology, Nature, and Cosmos

TOM SVERRE BREDAL-TOMREN AND BENEDIKTE CECILIE RENBERG

## The Church of Norway and the Sami Fight against Wind Turbines: A Case Study

The theme of this chapter is the Church of Norway (CoN) and its role in the debate over wind turbines in traditional Sámi grazing areas that the supreme court has verdict as illegal. The article explores the historical background of the conflict, how the different CoN spokespersons acted and the clergy's theological and ethical arguments. The writers shows that the church representatives' interpretation of the situation has been fairly similar: all of the church leaders involved argued that the wind turbines should not have been built. The bishops in the Sámi counties of CoN have all acted as advocates for Sámi rights. In different ways and at different times, they have gone public in support of the Sámi demand that the Norwegian government respect the Supreme Court judgement and implement the verdict. They carried out active advocacy by preaching, chronicling events and, in one case, writing a letter to the government. Several local priests adopted a similar strategy, some proactively writing letters to the Bishops' Synod and the Church Synod and others not responding until the media contacted them. Several of the priests said they used the liturgy and church services as arenas to put the conflict in the spotlight. Trinity Church's approach stood out in a sense that it provided physical care to the youth taking part in the protest.

**Keywords:** Samie theology, land rights, windmills, indigenous people. Climate, Church of Norway

ALAN S. WEBER

## Land Grabbing in Africa: Two Decades of Injustice and the Christian Response

In 2008-2009, international food prices spiked causing world-wide food shortages in developing nations due to a global economic recession and subsequent speculation in food futures (financial contracts based on speculated future agricultural prices). This sequence of events accelerated the process of 'land grabbing' in Africa. The term 'land grab' specifically refers to purchase or

lease of land by wealthy developed nations in developing nations for investment, biofuel production or food security purposes by using deceit, corruption, or by leveraging asymmetrical military power and crony capitalism relationships against smaller nations, communities, and individuals. The recent issues with the 2023 Ukraine-Russia grain deal assuring free passage of Ukrainian agricultural products (Ukraine produces approximately 10% of world grain and sunflower oil exports) will undoubtedly exacerbate the land-grab issues in Africa since transnational corporations in developed nations may accelerate their purchase of African lands to ensure their own food security. Implicit in the term ‘land grabbing’ is the unfairness, illegality, and injustice of these land deals to local landowners, specifically small farmers. These acquisitions frequently involve the violation of individual and community land use rights. The level of overseas land acquisitions peaked at 46 million hectares in 2008-2009 according to the World Bank. One and a half decades later, after the food crisis had partially abated, land-grabbing continues even after lengthy reports by the African Union, the African Development Bank, and Oxfam have clearly exposed the mechanisms and consequences of land grabbing. New areas of large-scale land grabbing in 2023 include Liberia (date palm oil) and Nigeria (sugar cane production). This paper surveys the land grab phenomenon, locates key issues affecting local farming and landowning communities in Africa, and attempts to apply a Christian framework of social justice and stewardship to solve pressing problems of human rights and injustice.

**Keywords:** ‘land-grabs’, international land acquisitions; ecotheology-land policy

EVELYN A. ARMSTRONG

### “We Hold the Whole World in Our Hands” – A Canadian story about political and eco-social issues

Reconciliation is a powerful word. It needs to be carefully examined in its role as a countermeasure to the concepts of sovereignty and domination—the overt use of power and authority over people, nature and the spirit world—that continue to impact human populations and contribute to the devastating impacts of global warming. I introduce facts and recommendations from the 2015

Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. From the ecofeminist paradigm, I discuss education in arts and in literature that have contributed to the environmental conversation. In the process, reconciliation calls on society to foster positive change. Moreover, actions toward reconciliation call for a lasting commitment to the future of humanity and our hope for a healthy, enduring, planet Earth.

**Keywords:** reconciliation, law and eco-justice, ecology, the environment, art and literature

SEYED MASOUD NOORI

### Protecting the Environment through Highlight the Maqāṣid al-sharī‘a Doctrine and SDGs’ Connection

This article highlighting the Maqāṣid al-sharī‘a Doctrine and SDGs’ Connection, explores the intersection of Islamic legal theory, specifically the Maqāṣid al-sharī‘a Doctrine, and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address contemporary environmental challenges.

The Maqāṣid al-sharī‘a Doctrine proposes Sharia-based responses to emerging global issues, including environmental crises. Author argues that by aligning the Maqāṣid principles – Protection of Faith, Preservation of Life, Protection of Mind and Intellect, Preservation of Lineage, and Protection of Property – with the SDGs, Muslims, as a significant global population, can contribute to achieving the SDGs by 2030.

The article traces the historical development of Islamic jurisprudence from basic principles to diverse rules, emphasizing the need to adapt religious teachings to address evolving challenges. Noori introduces the Maqāṣid al-sharī‘a Doctrine, which posits that Islamic laws aim to fulfill objectives such as the Protection of Faith, Preservation of Life, Protection of Mind and Intellect, Preservation of Lineage, and Protection of Property.

While the concept of Maqāṣid al-sharia has roots in classical Islamic jurisprudence, its application has evolved over time. Scholars like al-Ghazali contributed to defining its five essential elements, aligning them with the goals of preserving religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property.

The article delves into the application of *Maqāṣid al-sharia* in Shīī legal theory, noting its discussion under the rubric of *Maṣlaḥa* (public good). Noori acknowledges the increased use of phrases related to justice, human dignity, and practical interests in Shia jurisprudential literature.

Drawing parallels between *Maqāṣid al-sharia* and the SDGs, the author classifies SDGs based on their coordination with the objectives of Islamic law. The SDGs are mapped to the preservation of religion, lineage, intellect, and property, showcasing their alignment with Islamic legal principles.

In conclusion, the author highlights the compatibility of *Maqāṣid al-sharia* and the SDGs, asserting that this framework can guide Muslims in contributing to the global pursuit of sustainable development, environmental protection, and social justice. The article underscores the importance of collaborative efforts between religious principles and international goals to address pressing global issues.

**Keywords:** *Maqāṣid al-sharī'a*, Islamic Legal Theory, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Environmental Protection, Sharia-based Response to Environmental Crisis

JOSÉ CARDOSO DUARTE

## From Our Father in Heaven to Our Daily Bread: For a Radical Ecotheology

Faced with the problematic situation of the ongoing Climate Crisis, Biodiversity loss and Environmental pollution, concomitantly with a problematic sustainability of resources consumption and our way of living, all together deliver a message for “change or die”. The problem it is that no one knows how to change or even worst where to start. The specific thematic of this Ecothee 22 calls for “reconciliation and solidarity to avert ecological crisis”: will this be the path that can leads to “salvation”? Here start difficulties because to define a path we need to know two points, the departure and arrival, otherwise we may be in difficulties and risk to fail the target. As it will always be difficult to define a path for ecological crisis, since ecology has been evolving since the beginning of time and it cannot be fixed or static, the objective it is to concentrate on the actions suggested of “reconciliation” and “solidarity”. From the theological point of view these are

“human” dependent and have for reference the existence of God and as such we have to look for God and God’s will to approach the methodologies that can lead to either reconciliation and solidarity. This approach can be better attained by taking for our starting point the prayer that Jesus taught us (Matthew, 6,9-13). There we will find how to “walk” on Earth to arrive to our destiny.

**Keywords:** Phenomenology of life; Our Father prayer; Ecotheology

LINDA VOGT TURNER

### Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage

Many innovative people are looking for ways to not only keep Green House Gas (GHG) emissions out of the atmosphere. They are trying to find ways to take the accumulated GHG emissions out of the air. Many think the simplest solutions to eliminate GHG emissions are to stop burning fossil fuels, stop the construction of concrete buildings, eliminate the use of fertilizers, electrify transportation, reduce population, curtail the movement of people travelling on jet planes and rid ourselves of our consumer lifestyle that depends on cheap goods produced in and imported from China and other nations that still rely on unabated coal power. Conversely, many people are looking for innovative effective and economical ways to revolutionize fossil fuel power generation to use carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) captured from oil and coal refineries, the cement industry and the air. In my presentation presented at Ecothee 2022 at the Orthodox Academy of Crete I presented an abridged talk based upon the idea presented in full in this paper. With this talk, I introduced and showed selected videos to lift up innovative companies who are committed to finding ways to capture and use GHG emissions to reduce, reuse and recycle Carbon and other GHG to help poor and rich nations transition to a net zero emissions economy and even create human habitats on Mars. With this paper I explain how my Christian faith gives me the foundation and the enthusiasm to promote Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage.

**Keywords:** Carbon, Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage, Christians, Coal, Fossil Fuels, Innovative Technologies, The Black Rock, The Cyclical Economy, Zero Emissions Economy





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## LINDA VOGT TURNER

**Dr. Linda Vogt Turner**, DHA, MA, BGS, has been recognized by Marquis Who's Who Top Professionals for dedication, achievements, and leadership in the field of Arts, Media, and Entertainment. As a lay theologian and expert in written communication, Dr. Vogt Turner has distinguished herself as a professor of practice in creative writing at Intercontinental Open University, a nonprofit university with a connection to Duke University. As an active member and co-organizer of the Institute of Theology and Ecology at the Orthodox Academy of Crete and as a lay member of the United Church of Canada, Linda has previously

participated in spirited discussions at the 6th and 7th Assemblies of the World Council of Churches (WCC). With a keen desire for eco-justice, Dr. Vogt Turner is an advocate for those suffering poverty and eco-justice and is the author of “The Ecumenical Affair,” a true story of faith and redemption that explores a coincidental encounter at two Assemblies of the WCC and the controversy that followed. Her additional published works include “The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: The Forgiven Sinner,” and several Ecothee Volumes. Dr. Vogt Turner initially studied at Simon Fraser University where she earned a Master of Arts Degree with the completion of her thesis project, “Mary Magdalene: Her Image and Relationship to Jesus.” Following this accomplishment, Linda received a Doctor of Humane Arts Degree from Intercontinental Open University. Looking to the future, Dr. Vogt Turner aspires to strive alongside her colleagues toward a future committed to ecumenism and eco-justice.

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**Dr. Claire Wolfteich** is Professor at Boston University School of Theology and Co-Director of the Center for Practical Theology. Her book publications include *Mothering, Public Leadership, and Women’s Life Writing: Explorations in Spirituality Studies and Practical Theology* (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill Publishers, 2017) and *Invitation to Practical Theology: Catholic Voices and Visions* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2014) [ed.]. Her research interests include spirituality; practical theology; theologies of vocation, work and Sabbath; women and religion; and Catholicism.





This book consists of articles developed in the aftermath of two conferences on ecological theology, eco-ethics and sustainable development. The first conference was the 7th International Conference on Ecotheology and Environmental Ethics (ECOTHEE-22), which took place on Crete, Greece, in October 2022; and the second was the 5th international conference on Sustainable Alternatives for Poverty Reduction and Ecojustice (SAPREJ-23), that was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in May 2023.

In 2022 and 2023, the two biannual conference series – the ECOTHEE since 2008 and the SAPREJ since 2012 – brought together many academics, church leaders and activists from different parts of the world. This book is a collection of selected articles presented and written by outstanding participants in Ethiopia and Greece. This book is intended as a scientific anthology showing the diversity of ecotheology found in various religious traditions. It is divided into two main sections: Towards Reconciliation and Justice for All Creation (Eco-Ethical Theological and Philosophical Reflections) and Governance, Politics, Good Practices, and Critical Evaluations of Ecological (In)Justice.

We are convinced that the book and its contributions will help to provide a deeper insight into the diversity that exists within global ecotheology. The book contains 13 articles by the following academics and professionals: Louk A. Andrianos (Greece/Madagascar), Evelyn A. Armstrong (Canada), Tom S. Bredal-Tomren (Norway), Tatiana Denisova (Greece/Russia), Mahjabeen Dhala (USA), José Cardoso Duarte (Portugal), Nadja Furlan Štante (Slovenia), Hans Morten Haugen (Norway), Seyed Masoud Noori (USA/Iran), Benedikte C. Renberg (Norway), Lesya Sabada (Canada), Linda Vogt Turner (Canada), Alan S. Weber (Qatar), and Claire E. Wolfeich (USA).



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