

# ECO-THEOLOGY, CLIMATE JUSTICE AND FOOD SECURITY

*Theological Education and Christian  
Leadership Development*

Editors

**Dietrich Werner / Elisabeth Jeglitzka**

**Eco-Theology, Climate Justice  
and Food Security**

*Theological Education and Christian  
Leadership Development*



**Eco-Theology, Climate Justice  
and Food Security**

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Leadership Development*

Dietrich Werner / Elisabeth Jeglitzka (Editors)

Globethics.net Global

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**PART I**  
**ECO-THEOLOGY RESEARCH**



## INTRODUCTION

*Dietrich Werner*

*Resources and Theological Perspectives on Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security – Priorities on ETCF in theological education and Christian leadership development*

The WCC assembly in Busan in November 2013 identified eco-theology and climate justice as two of the key priorities for the next working period (2014 – 2021). Issues like eco-theology and climate justice should remain key components in the global pilgrimage of justice and peace in the ongoing post-Busan working period. Since climate change and ecological destruction are getting more and more menacing for humanity, climate issues provide a global challenge which should be reflected also in theological education and formation worldwide. Specialized ministries and their partners in the global South have shown the links between climate change and food security.

Although much research and project related work has been done already on these topics in some regions in World Christianity, only in a few institutions of theological education and Christian leadership development issues of eco-theology, climate justice and food security form part of the regular curriculum of instruction and training or inform

theological formation processes in an integrated perspective,<sup>1</sup> especially in and in exchange with the global South. A great potential therefore lies in discovering existing resources for the transfer of knowledge and wisdom from all contexts/regions.

In the years between 2014 and 2016 some major ecumenical partners developed a major initiative on issues relating to the ecumenical sharing of resources about eco-theology, climate justice and food security (ECTF) in order to look into the current state of conscientization, training and resource sharing on these issues and in order to strengthen the awareness of the relevancy of ETCF issues and encourage churches and institutions of research and theological education with regard to the importance and urgency of eco-theological formation.

### **1.1 ETCF Study Project**

The collaborative project between Globethics.net (Geneva), Bread for the World (Berlin), United Evangelical Mission (Wuppertal) and the World Council of Churches in cooperation with the Orthodox Academy of Crete and Volos Academy for Theological Studies in Greece a working and research project was started which followed an agreed set of strategic goals:

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<sup>1</sup>While some substantial mapping of resources has been done by some outstanding scholars and research centres, (e.g.see bibliographies on eco-theology from Prof. Ernst Conradie in: Conradie, Ernst M.; *Christianity and ecological theology: Resources for further research*, Study Guides in Religion and Theology 11, SUN Press, Stellenbosch 2006. 405 pp. and Conradie, Ernst M.; *Christianity and Earthkeeping: In search of an inspiring vision*, Resources in Religion and Theology 16, SUN Press, Stellenbosch 2011,155 pp.) we do not have a survey particularly on resources and best practice models for training in eco-theology, climate justice and food issues developed.

- **Mapping: to highlight and to make visible** the contributions, resources and perspectives of *eco-theology, climate justice and food security particularly (ETCF)* from the churches of the South as often resources and contributions are only known and shared in the North.
- **Mainstreaming: to contribute to mainstreaming eco-theology, climate justice and food security issues (ETCF)** as integral components in Christian leadership formation both in formal theological education as well as in non-formal programmes of Christian and development training in the global South (mainstreaming).
- **Lobbying: to support and foster** the relevance of *ETCF* in the awareness of churches in the global North and the global South in a period when global political negotiations on binding restrictions on CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions reach a certain climax (2015).
- **Networking: to contribute to international networking, exchange** and South-South, North-South, and West-East networking between regional hubs of research and education in issues of *ETCF* issues.

The questionnaire which was developed for the *ETCF* study project was mainly sent and circulated to target groups like

- theological colleges, church-related seminaries, universities with their faculties of theology or religious studies and other church-related training facilities and programmes
- selected Christian or interfaith research centres and lay academies working on issues related to *ETCF*, and Eco-ethics

The results of this two to three years study process were presented to a final concluding working consultation in Volos Academy of Greece from 10-13 March 2016 which brought together some 25 leading experts



on eco-theological education from all parts of the world, with strong participation also from orthodox churches.

This booklet published by Globethics.net brings together major papers presented to the Volos study consultation, the main working papers and final results report from the ETCF study process and few additional papers from participants from Volos, produced and finalized after the Volos consultation.

This publication was made possible by the collaboration of many different experts, most of this done in addition and voluntarily besides the main job assignments.

First of all we would like to express gratitude to the members of the Steering committee for the ETCF process who inspired, guided and evaluated the whole process:

- *Dr. Dietrich Werner* (until April 2014 International Programme Coordinator *ETE/WCC*; from early 2014 onwards Senior Theological Advisor, *Bread for the World*, Berlin)
- *Dr. Stephen Brown* (Programme Executive, *Globethics.net/Global Digital Library for Theology and Ecumenism*, Geneva)
- *Dr. Guillermo Kerber* (*WCC* executive staff for care for creation and climate justice, Geneva)
- *Rev. Andar Parlindungan* (Executive Secretary for Training and Empowerment, United Evangelical Mission, Wuppertal)

Secondly we would like to express gratitude for all those who prepared the ETCF consultation in Volos and facilitated good ecumenical cooperation and funding for its completion:

- Victoria Koczian, Theologian, formerly CEC and Globethics, now doctoral student in Budapest, Hungary
- Dr. Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Director of Volos Academy for Theological Studies

- Dr. Nicolaos Asproulis, Lecturer Volos Academy for Theological Studies
- Prof. Christoph Stückelberger (Founder and President Globethics)
- Dr. Jochen Motte, Director of the Department for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in United Evangelical Mission
- Raphael Sartorius, Theologian and Doctoral candidate, Berlin who prepared the final reports on the ETCF project during an internship in Bread for the World

Finally we would like to express our gratitude for all those who have facilitated editorial and proof reading work for this publication

- Elisabeth Jeglitzka, Bread for the World, Department for Policy, Dialogue and Theology
- Dr. Ignace Haaz, Globethics Publications Manager
- Samuel Davies, Assistant Editor, Globethics.Net

We also acknowledge gratefully financial support for this project which has been made available by Bread for the World, WCC-EET, UEM and Globethics and for the generous hospitality which we enjoyed in the Academy of Volos.

The publication will be released and presented to the annual Advisory Board meeting of the GlobeTheoLib-Consortium in Geneva early September 2016 and will hopefully provide an incentive and motivation for broader sharing and ecumenical learning on eco-theology, climate justice and food security in many institutions for theological education and training in the years to come.

Many of those who were related to this project have been encouraged by the visionary and critical Encyclica of Pope Francis “Laudato Si” which has put crucial emphasize on the strategic relevance

of a new paradigm of eco-theological education within Christianity and much beyond within humanity as a whole:

*“Environmental education has broadened its goals. Whereas in the beginning it was mainly centered on scientific information, consciousness-raising and the prevention of environmental risks, it tends now to include a critique of the “myths” of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mindset (individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, the unregulated market). It seeks also to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God. Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care.”<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Encyclica “Laudato Si”, page 210; accessed in: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_4\\_eniclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_4_eniclica-laudato-si.html)

# **THE GLOBAL SURVEY ON ECO-THEOLOGY, CLIMATE JUSTICE AND FOOD SECURITY**

*Dietrich Werner, Stephen Brown, Pantelis Kalaitzidis,  
Andar Parlindugan*

*Global Survey on Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security  
(ETCF) in Theological Education and Christian Leadership  
Development 2014-2015 (ETCF Study Project)*

A project of Globethics.net, Bread for the World, United Evangelical Mission and the World Council of Churches in cooperation with the Orthodox Academy of Crete and Volos Academy for Theological Studies.

## **2.1 Background**

The last WCC assembly in Busan in November 2013 identified eco-theology and climate justice as two of the key priorities for the next working period (2014 – 2021). Issues like eco-theology and climate justice will be among the key components in the global pilgrimage of justice and peace for the post-Busan working period. Since climate change and ecological destruction are getting more and more menacing

for humanity, climate issues provide a global challenge which should be reflected also in theological education and formation worldwide. Specialized ministries and their partners in the global South have shown the links between climate change and food security. Churches, ecumenical organizations, specialized ministries and institutions for theological education and research worldwide will be asked to contribute to the pilgrimage of justice and peace as no major working project in the WCC in the post-Busan working period will be possible without vital strategic cooperation, connectivity and common ownership with ecumenical partners in the global ecumenical movement.

According to preliminary data, although much research and project related work has been done already on these topics in some regions, only in a few institutions of theological education and Christian leadership development do they form part of the regular curriculum of instruction and training or inform theological formation processes in an integrated perspective,<sup>3</sup> especially in and in exchange with the global South. A great potential therefore lies in discovering existing resources for the transfer of knowledge and wisdom from all contexts/regions. The ecumenical sharing of resources about these issues could be a benefit for all. Indeed, sharing resources and exchanging knowledge concerning eco-theology, climate justice and food security (ECTF) can support the acknowledgement, the awareness of its relevancy and encourage churches and institutions of research and theological education to

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<sup>3</sup>While some substantial mapping of resources has been done by some outstanding scholars and research centres, (e.g.see bibliographies on eco-theology from Prof. Ernst Conradie in: Conradie, Ernst M.; *Christianity and ecological theology: Resources for further research*, Study Guides in Religion and Theology 11, SUN Press, Stellenbosch 2006. 405 pp. and Conradie, Ernst M.; *Christianity and Earthkeeping: In search of an inspiring vision*, Resources in Religion and Theology 16, SUN Press, Stellenbosch 2011,155 pp.) we do not have a survey particularly on resources and best practice models for training in eco-theology, climate justice and food issues developed.

strengthen the importance and urgency of ecotheological formation. Ecotheology, Climate Change and Food Security are crucial for the future of Christian Leadership, for pastors as well as for church workers around the world.

## **2.2 ETCF Study Project**

Previous discussion with institutions such as the *EMW* commission on theological education, the *WCC* leadership, *Globethics.net* the *United Evangelical Mission* and *Bread for the World (BfW)* have indicated that there is interest in this area which could be brought together in a limited research and working project to be started early in 2014 with young theologians in some of the organisations mentioned. The design of this working and research project, which is described below, follows previous experiences with limited, result-oriented and time-bound research projects both in *WCC-ETE (World Council of Churches-Ecumenical Theological Education)* and in the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions (*Evangelisches Missionswerk - EMW*) research project on the “Role of women in theological education” (1999). In addition a young theologian from Latin America, who has been involved with both *WCC-ETE* and *Globethics.net*, is working already on identifying and collecting Latin American resources in Spanish and Portuguese and could be a contributor to the project. Furthermore, a young theologian working in Berlin, who has studied in Lebanon, could cover the Middle East.

The general goals of the project are:

- **to highlight and to make visible** the contributions, resources and perspectives of *eco-theology*, *climate justice* and *food security particularly (ETCF)* from the churches of the South as

often resources and contributions are only known and shared in the North.

- **to contribute to mainstreaming eco-theology, climate justice and food security issues (ETCF)** as integral components in Christian leadership formation both in formal theological education as well as in non-formal programmes of Christian and development training in the global South.
- **to support and foster** the relevance of *ETCF* in the awareness of churches in the global North and the global South in a period when global political negotiations on binding restrictions on CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions reach a certain climax (2015).
- **to contribute to international networking, exchange** and South-South, North-South, and West-East networking between regional hubs of research and education in issues of *ETCF* issues.

The target groups are:

- theological colleges, church-related seminaries, universities with their faculties of theology or religious studies and other church-related training facilities and programmes
- selected Christian or interfaith research centres and lay academies working on issues related to *ETCF*, and Eco-ethics

The intended outcomes of the project are:

- **the results of a well-designed questionnaire** probably followed by in-depth interviews with selected individuals from institutions of theological education, training and development education and regional associations of theological schools as well as networks to map
  - (1) the current situation of training, teaching and research on *ETCF* in theological education, ecumenical formation and Christian leadership development and

(2) available resources and examples of good practice on ECTF.

This global and regional survey will be accompanied by other documents and sent to a selected number of the institutions mentioned above and as identified by partners of the project (possibly limited to 20-30 countries).

- **a list of resources identified** which would include monographs, journal articles/essays, key church statements), curriculum models and training tools (specific courses) are developed and practised in the global South related to *ETCF*, as well as examples of good practice in relation to ECTF (green churches, eco-congregations, etc. ).
- **a directory** of major hubs and research institutes in the global South working and providing education or innovative projects in the area of *ETCF* and published on a common **web-platform** within *GlobeTheoLib* on *ETCF* resources.
- **a printed and digital global research report** on resources and educational tools/models for *ETCF* will be developed and contribute to the process of the WCC pilgrimage of justice and peace which has started after Busan assembly.
- **a special thematic collection with digitized resources for theological training on *ECTF*** to be launched in early 2015 within the Globethics.net Libraries and its *Global Digital Library on Theology and Ecumenism (GlobeTheoLib)*. It will include **a limited list of good practice examples with curriculum models on *ETCF*** and a limited compilation of core publications and teaching resources which can be recommended as significant and



crucial to highlight the voices of Christian churches from the global South on *ETCF*.<sup>4</sup>

## 2.3 The Benefit

Individual persons and institutions of theological education participating in the *ETCF* project will gain access free of charge to the new *ETCF* resources website and will be linked to the emerging network of research and educational hubs engaged in *ETCF* projects.

### 2.3.1 Project Ownership and Accountability

The formal project owner is the *Global Digital Theology for Theology and Ecumenism* in Geneva, which is part of the *Globethics.net* Foundation. This research project will be accompanied by a steering group, which is composed of:

- *Dr. Dietrich Werner* (until April 2014 International Programme Coordinator *ETE/WCC*; from early 2014 onwards Senior Theological Advisor, *Bread for the World*, Berlin)
- *Dr. Stephen Brown* (Programme Executive, *Globethics.net/Global Digital Library for Theology and Ecumenism*, Geneva)
- *Dr. Guillermo Kerber* (*WCC* executive staff for care for creation and climate justice, Geneva)
- *Rev. Andar Parlindungan* (Executive Secretary for Training and Empowerment, United Evangelical Mission, Wuppertal)

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<sup>4</sup> Such as Michael Northcott's *A moral climate*, or contributions from McFague, Primavesi and Ernst Conradie and several edited volumes, see also standard bibliography from *WCC-E TE* for teaching Social Ethics and Ecumenism, section on creation.

and an international advisory group, based on correspondence with experts which are involved in some of the thematic fields related to this project.

Steering Group ETCF Project, 28 April 2014



## ETCF – FINAL DATA (QUANTITATIVE) REPORT

*Raphael Sartorius*



*in Cooperation with the Orthodox Academy of Crete  
and Volos Academy for Theological Studies*

*More information: <http://www.globethics.net/web/gtl/ecotheology>*

### **Interim Full Quantitative Report on Results (2014-2016)**

**Final results 31 October 2015**

(Question numbers refer to survey questions. In questions with personally identifiable data, those were made unidentifiable).

**Total respondents: 310**

**Contents:**

- Section I Information about Respondents and Institutions
- Section II Environment, Ecology, Climate Change and Food Security
- Section III Questions for Theological Education Institutes
- Section IV Institutional Involvement in Issues related to ETCF
- Section V Resources and Projects
- Section VI International Partnerships
- Section VII Visions for the Future
- Section VII Available Resources
  
- Appendix XY

*Notes: Not all questions from the questionnaire will be found in the following quantitative part. Several questions have been pointed out in the qualitative part.*

**Section I**  
**Information about Respondents and Institutions**  
(without Personal Data)

***1. Family Names:***

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	87,7%	272
No response	12,3%	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

**2. First Names:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	88,4%	274
No response	11,6%	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

**4. Position at School, Organization etc.**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	82,9%	257
Skipped question	17,1%	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

**5. Country of Respondent Overall:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	90,3%	280
No response	9,7%	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Afghanistan	0,3%	1
Argentina	4,5%	14
Australia	1,6%	5
Bangladesh	0,3%	1

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Belgium	1,0%	3
Benin	0,6%	2
Bolivia	0,3%	1
Botswana	0,3%	1
Brazil	1,6%	5
Burma	0,3%	1
Cameroon	0,6%	2
Canada	3,5%	11
Chile	2,6%	8
Colombia	3,2%	10
Congo (Democratic Republic)	0,6%	2
Costa Rica	1,9%	6
Czech Republic	0,3%	1
Denmark	1,0%	3
Ecuador	1,0%	3
Ethiopia	0,6%	2
Fiji	0,3%	1
Finland	0,3%	1
France	0,3%	1
Germany	2,3%	7
Ghana	0,3%	1
Grenada	0,6%	2
Guatemala	0,6%	2
Honduras	1,3%	4
Hungary	1,6%	5

India	3,2%	10
Indonesia	6,5%	20
Ireland	0,3%	1
Japan	0,3%	1
Kenya	6,1%	19
Lebanon	1,3%	4
Mexico	1,6%	5
Mozambique	0,3%	1
Netherlands	0,3%	1
New Caledonia	0,3%	1
Nicaragua	2,9%	9
Nigeria	1,3%	4
Palestinian territories	0,3%	1
Panama	0,3%	1
Paraguay	0,3%	1
Peru	1,0%	3
Philippines	1,6%	5
Poland	0,3%	1
Czech Republic	0,3%	1
Rwanda	1,6%	5
South Africa	1,6%	5
Switzerland	2,3%	7
Taiwan	0,3%	1
Tanzania	0,3%	1
Trinidad and Tobago	0,3%	1
<b>Uganda</b>	1,3%	4

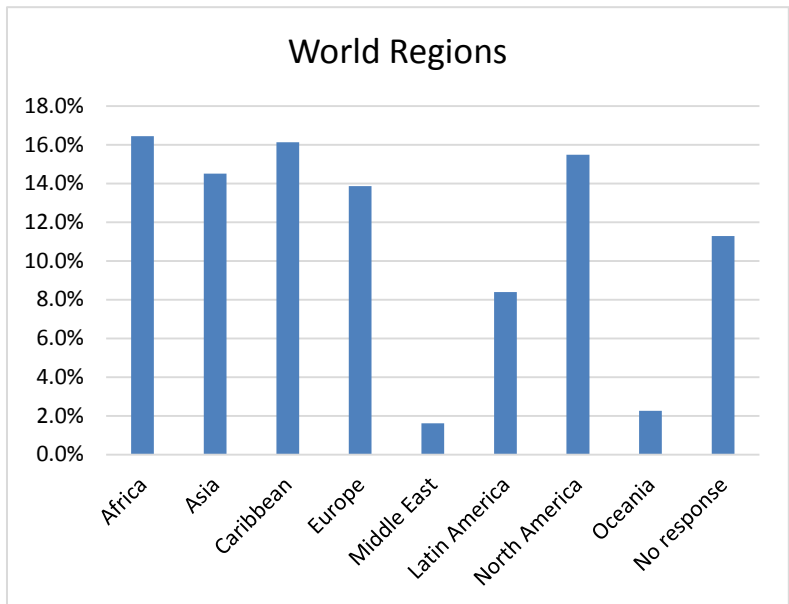
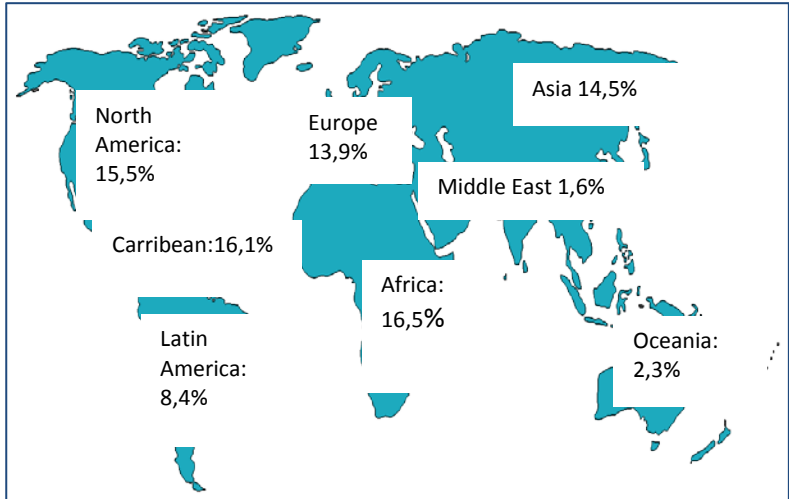


United Kingdom	4,5%	14
United States	11,6%	36
Uruguay	0,3%	1
Venezuela	1,6%	5
Zambia	0,3%	1
Zimbabwe	1,3%	4
No response	9,7%	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

**7. World Region of Respondent:**

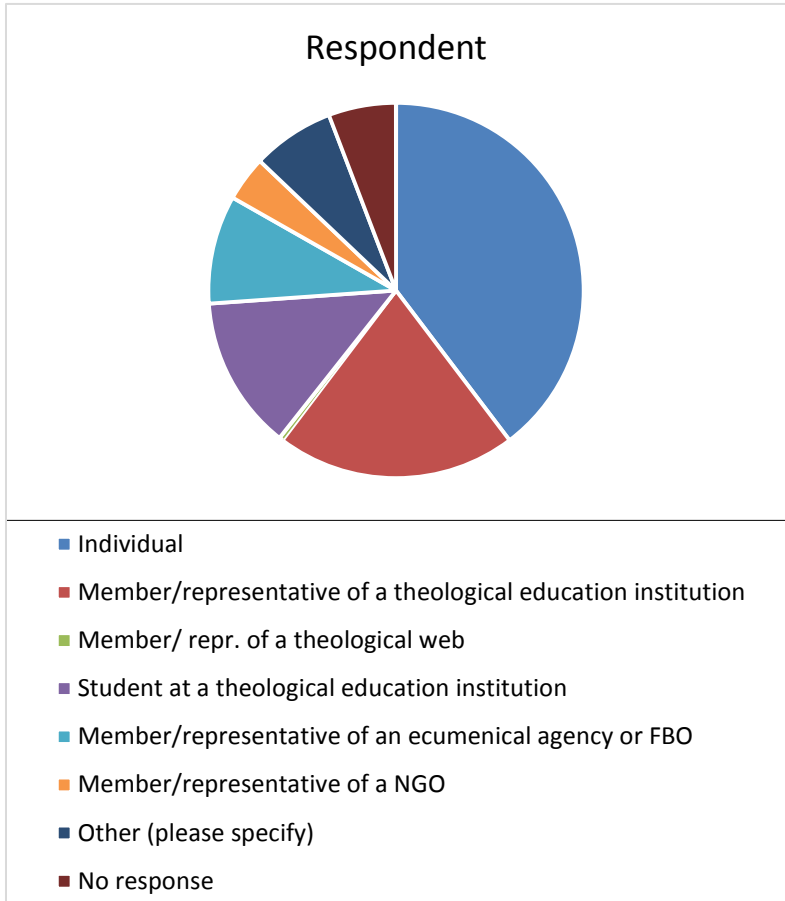
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Africa	16,5%	51
Asia	14,5%	45
Caribbean	16,1%	50
Europe	13,9%	43
Middle East	1,6%	5
Latin America	8,4%	26
North America	15,5%	48
Oceania	2,3%	7
No response	11,3%	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>310</b>

<b>Answered question</b>	88,7%	275
No response	11,3%	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>



**8. Respondent is Completing the Questionnaire as an:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Individual	39,7%	123
Member/representative of a theological education institution	20,6%	64
Member/ repr. of a theological web	0,3%	1
Student at a theological education institution	13,2%	41
Member/representative of an ecumenical agency or FBO	9,4%	29
Member/representative of a NGO	3,9%	12
Other (please specify)	7,1%	22
No response	5,8%	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>310</b>



***11. Faith, Denomination or Tradition (Optional; Multiple Answers Possible)***

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Adventist	0,3%	1
African Instituted	0,3%	1

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Anabaptist	1,3%	5
Anglican	9,7%	38
Baptist	4,8%	19
Evangelical	8,1%	32
Independent	3,1%	12
Lutheran	11,2%	44
Methodist	6,4%	25
Pentecostal/ Charismatic	3,1%	12
Eastern Orthodox	1,5%	6
Oriental Orthodox	0,3%	1
Post-denominational	1,0%	4
Presbyterian/ Reformed	12,2%	48
Roman Catholic	13,5%	53
United & Uniting	4,1%	16
Other (please specify)	6,6%	26
No response	12,7%	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>393</b>

<b>Answered question</b>	87,3%	343
No response	12,7%	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>393</b>



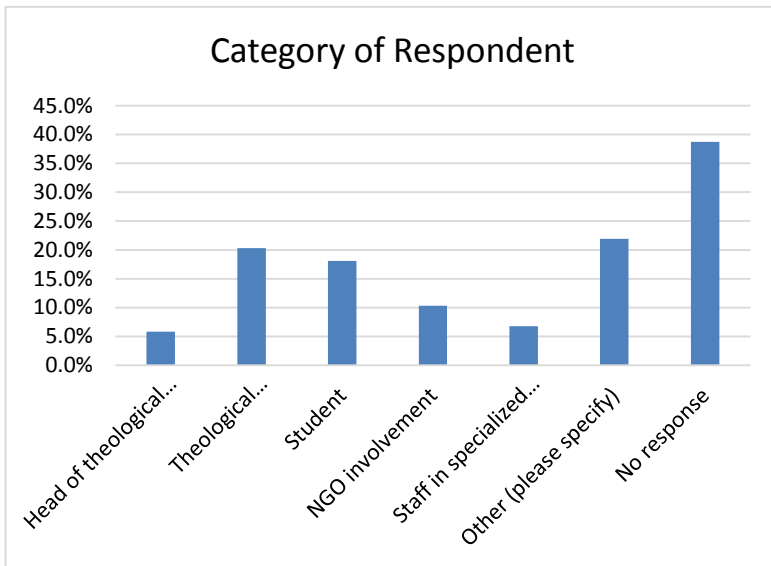
\*For “Other”, please see appendix section I, question 11.

**12. Category of Respondent:**

Answer Option	Response Percent	Response Count
Head of theological school/faculty/seminary	5,8%	18
Theological teacher/professor	20,3%	63
Student	18,1%	56
NGO involvement	10,3%	32
Staff in specialized ministries (agencies)	6,8%	21
Other (please specify)	21,9%	68

No response	38,7%	120
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

<b>Answered question</b>	83,2%	258
No response	16,8%	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>



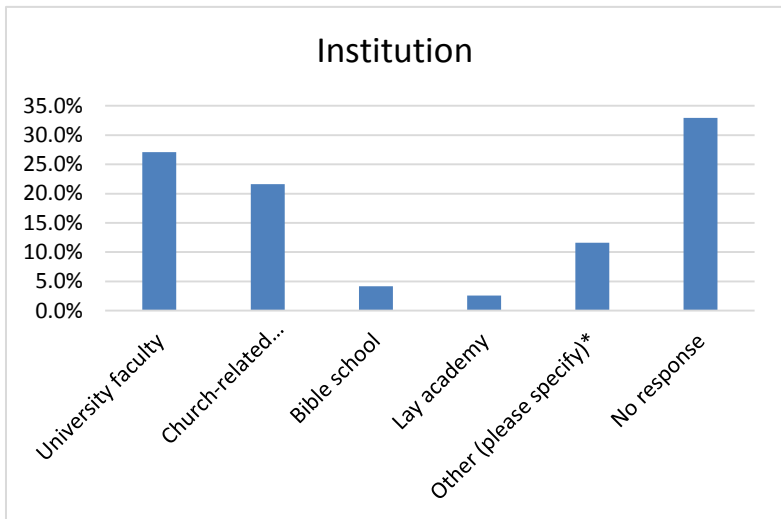
\*For “Other”, please see appendix section I, question 12.

**13. Institution of respondent (if institution related to theological education)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
University faculty	27,1%	84

Church-related seminary or college	21,6%	67
Bible school	4,2%	13
Lay academy	2,6%	8
Other (please specify)*	11,6%	36
No response	32,9%	102
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

<b>Answered questions</b>	67,1%	208
No response	32,9%	102
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>



\*For “Other”, please see appendix section I, question 13.



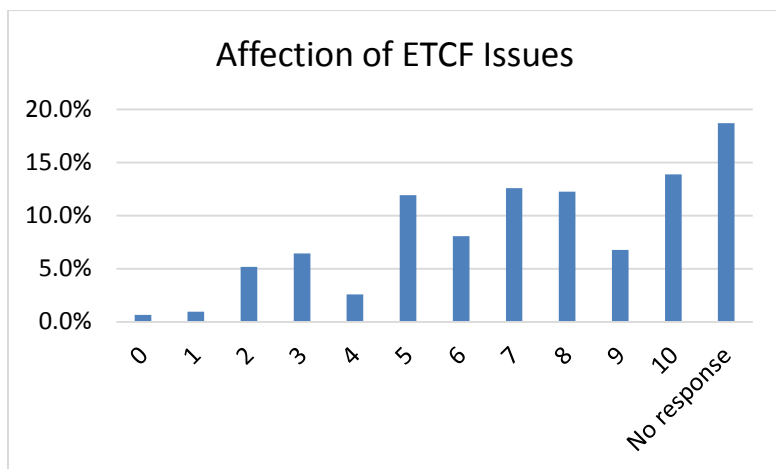
**Section II**  
**Environment, Ecology, Climate Change**  
**and Food Security Issues**

**14. Is your region affected by environmental, ecological, climate change or food security issues?**

*Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is "not at all" and 10 "heavily affected":*

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
0	0,6%	2
1	1,0%	3
2	5,2%	16
3	6,5%	20
4	2,6%	8
5	11,9%	37
6	8,1%	25
7	12,6%	39
8	12,3%	38
9	6,8%	21
10	13,9%	43
No response	18,7%	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

<b>Answered question</b>	81,3%	252
No response	18,7%	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

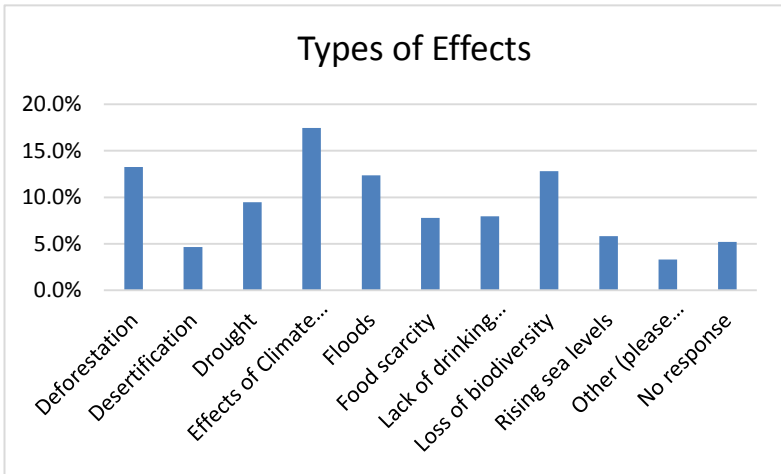


**15. If you believe your region is affected by such problems please indicate which ones (multiple answers possible):**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Deforestation	13,2%	148
Desertification	4,7%	52
Drought	9,5%	106
Effects of Climate Change	17,4%	195
Floods	12,3%	138
Food scarcity	7,8%	87
Lack of drinking water	8,0%	89
Loss of biodiversity	12,8%	143
Rising sea levels	5,8%	65

Other (please specify)*	3,3%	37
No response	5,2%	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1118</b>

<b>Answered question</b>	<b>94,8%</b>	<b>1060</b>
No response	5,2%	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1118</b>

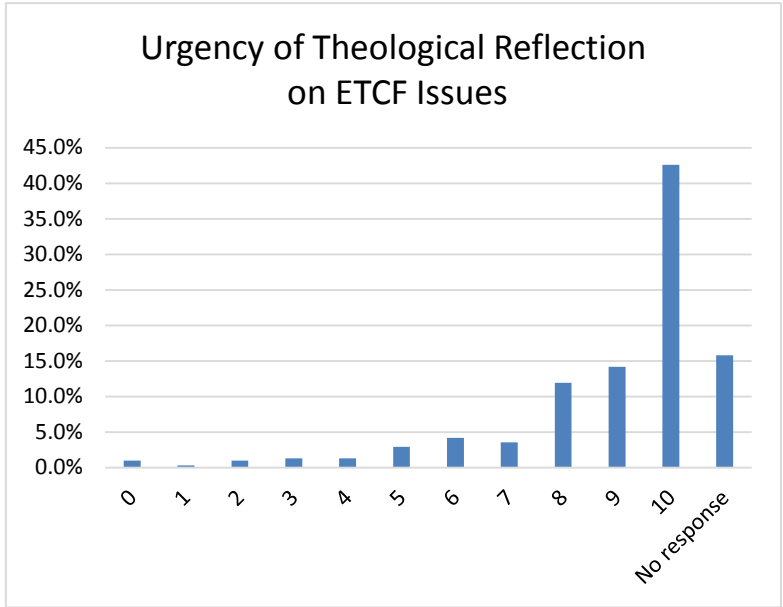


\*For “Other”, please see appendix section II, question 15.

**16. In your opinion, what is the urgency of theological reflection and education on ecology, environment, climate change and food security issues? Please indicate on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is "not urgent at all" and 10 "highly urgent".**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
0	1,0%	3
1	0,3%	1
2	1,0%	3
3	1,3%	4
4	1,3%	4
5	2,9%	9
6	4,2%	13
7	3,5%	11
8	11,9%	37
9	14,2%	44
10	42,6%	132
No response	15,8%	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

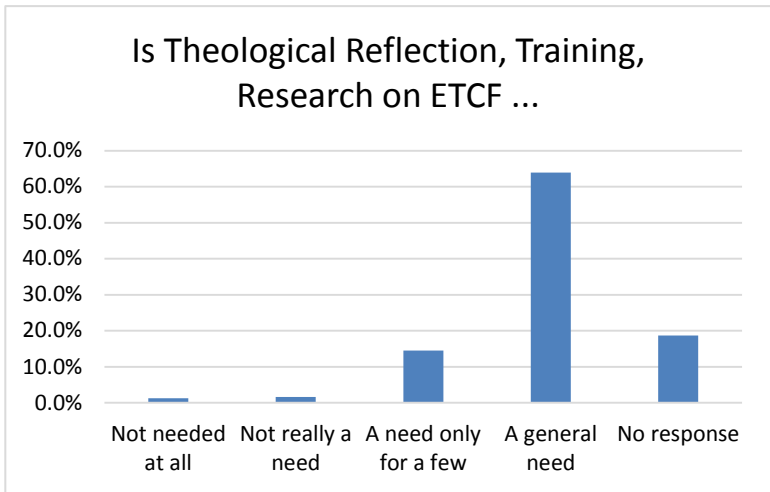
<b>Answered question</b>	84,2%	261
No response	15,8%	49
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>



**17. Is theological education, training and research on ETCF in your context:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not needed at all	1,3%	4
Not really a need	1,6%	5
A need only for a few	14,5%	45
A general need	63,9%	198
No response	18,7%	58
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

<b>Answered question</b>	81,3%	252
No Response	18,7%	58
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310



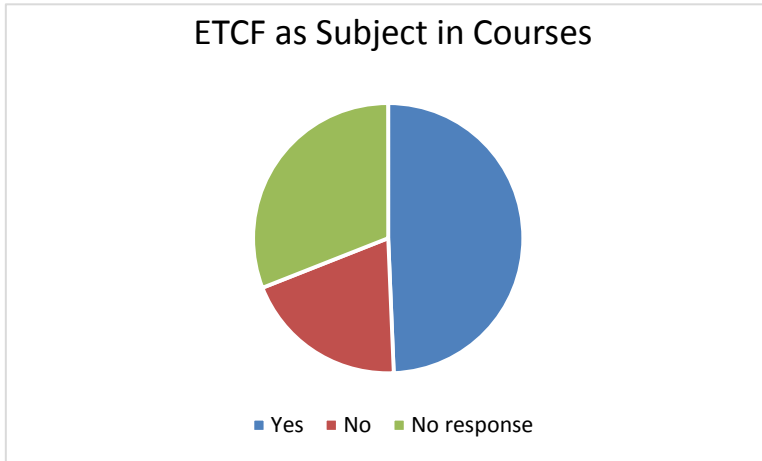
### Section III

#### Questions for Theological Education Institutions

*18. Is ETCF a subject in your theological institution or in theological courses?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	49,4%	153
No	19,7%	61
No response	31,0%	96
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310

<b>Answered question</b>	69,0%	214
No response	31,0%	96
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310

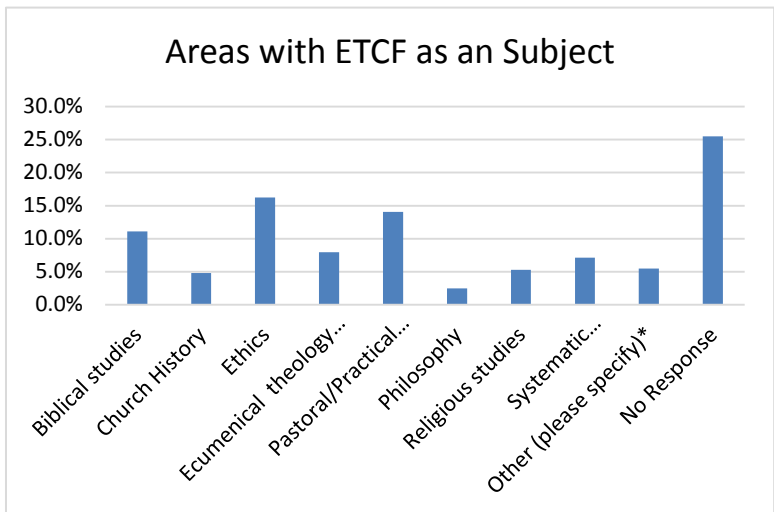


***19. If yes, please indicate in which discipline/s of your institution ETCF issues are dealt with (several answers possible)***

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Biblical studies	11,1%	67
Church History	4,8%	29
Ethics	16,2%	98
Ecumenical theology or studies	7,9%	48
Pastoral/ Practical theology	14,1%	85
Philosophy	2,5%	15

Religious studies	5,3%	32
Systematic Theology/ Dogmatics	7,1%	43
Other (please specify)*	5,5%	33
No Response	25,5%	154
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>604</b>

Answered questions	74,5%	450
No response	25,5%	154
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>604</b>



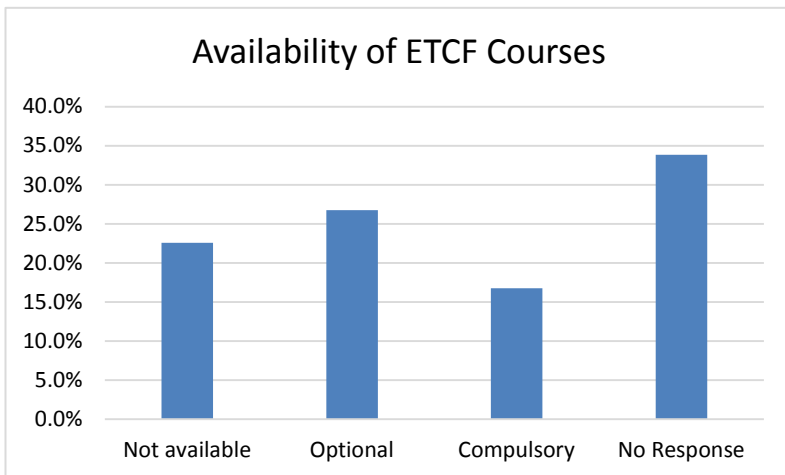
\* For other please appendix section III, question 19.



**20. Are courses related to ETCF compulsory, optional or not available?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Not available	22,6%	70
Optional	26,8%	83
Compulsory	16,8%	52
No Response	33,9%	105
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

Answered question	66,1%	205
No Response	33,9%	105
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>



**21. Please give the names of courses on ETCF in your institution (type or paste all courses in the box below)**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	37,1%	115
No Response	62,9%	195
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

*For the answers provided please see appendix section IV, question 21.*

## **Section IV**

### **Institutional Involvement in Issues Related to ETCF**

**22. Please indicate the areas in which eco-theological perspectives are discussed in your institution, organisation or agency (multiple responses possible):**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Eco-feminism	7,9%	69
Eco-mission	6,6%	58
Eco-spirituality	10,8%	95
Indigenous/ Aboriginal theologies	5,4%	47
Integrity of creation	13,6%	119
Public theology	6,4%	56
Sustainable development	12,0%	105

Theology of Creation	14,7%	129
Theology of life	7,6%	67
Other (please specify)	3,1%	27
No Response	12,1%	106
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	878

Answered questions	87,9%	772
No Response	12,1%	106
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	878

**23. Is there interdisciplinary dialogue concerning ETCF in your institution, organisation or agency?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	28,7%	89
No	44,5%	138
No response	26,8%	83
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310

Answered questions	73,2%	227
No Response	26,8%	83
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310

**24. If yes, please give example(s):**

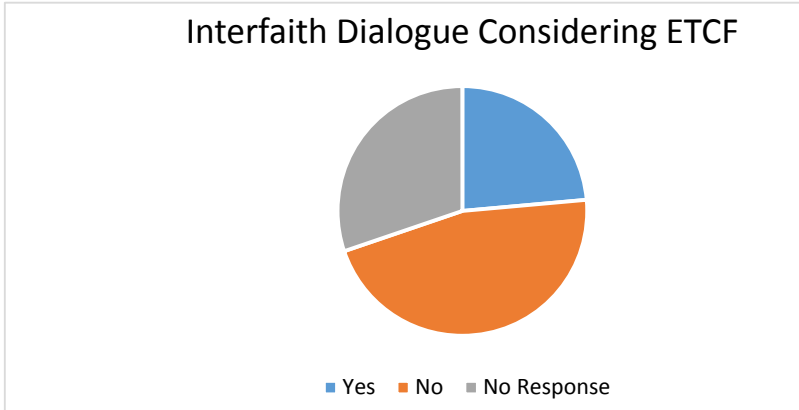
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	24%	74
No response	76%	236
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>310</b>

For answers provided, please see appendix section IV, question 24.

**25. Is there interfaith or interreligious dialogue concerning ETCF in your institution, organisation or agency?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	23,9%	74
No	46,5%	144
No Response	29,7%	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

Answered question	70,3%	218
No response	29,7%	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>



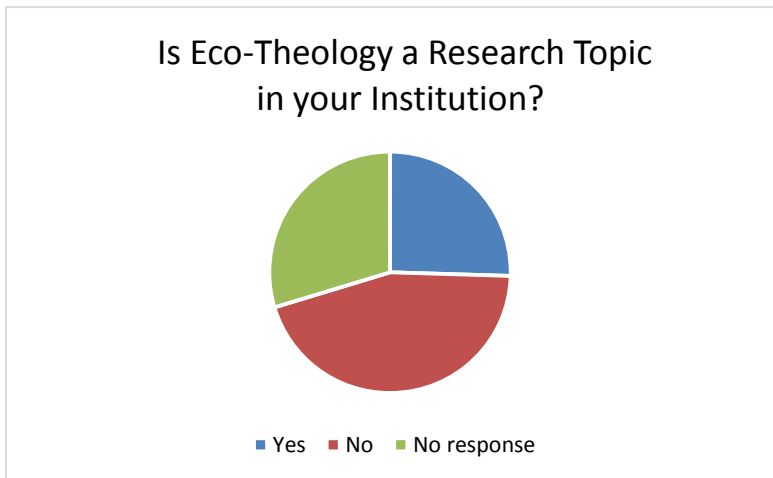
**26. If yes, please give example(s):**

Answer Option	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	22,6%	70
No response	77,4%	240
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly collaboration rather than dialogue.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, both interreligious courses and participation in interfaith dialogues in region</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are an ecumenical institution, so we promote interreligious dialogue in every single activity we have. For instance, liturgy is our ground basis for dialogue, but we also organize periodic workshops, conferences or short term courses on interfaith and interreligious dialogue.</li> </ul>		

**27. Is Eco-theology or related issues a special research topic in your institution?**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	25,5%	79
No	44,8%	139
No response	29,7%	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

<b>Answered questions</b>	70,3%	218
No response	29,7%	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>



**28. If yes, please give the focus of the research of your institution:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	20,0%	62
No response	80,0%	248
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special seminars</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The urgent current research is focused on the Ebola virus and the social and religious responses to it.</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local food sources, ethics and the environment, preaching social change</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Impact of Religious Education on the Environment: Case study of Nairobi Catholic Archdiocese</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please, see our book: Contribuições Ecumênicas para o Desenvolvimento Transformador (<a href="http://www.koinonia.org.br/uploads/publicacoes/contrib_ecum_des_transf_livro.pdf">http://www.koinonia.org.br/uploads/publicacoes/contrib_ecum_des_transf_livro.pdf</a>), see, also, the website of the IV Ecumenical Journey (<a href="http://www.projornada.org.br/">http://www.projornada.org.br/</a>)</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am personally research active in eco-theology and regularly publish articles and papers. Last year I was guest editor of an on-line international journal on Environment and Hope see: <a href="http://www.anviljournal.org/29-1">www.anviljournal.org/29-1</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tribal Concerns, Dalit Programme</li> <li>• For detailed answers, please see appendix section IV, Q. 28.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

## Section V

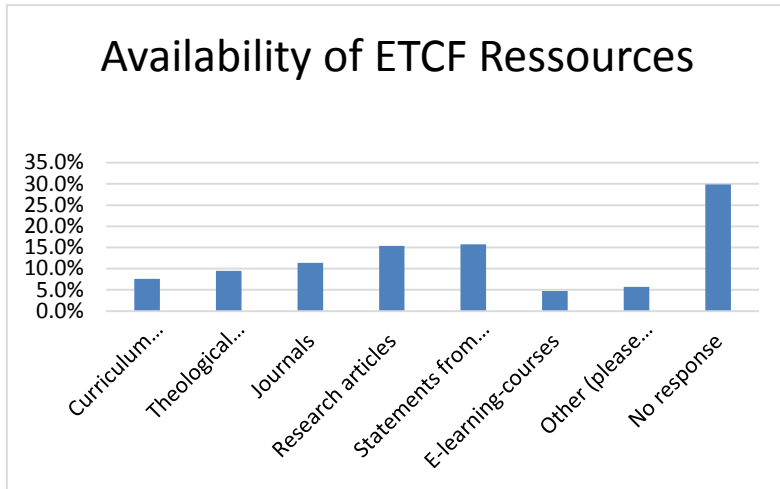
### Resources and Projects

*29. Please indicate if your institution has resources available on ETCF (multiple answers possible)*

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Curriculum models	7,6%	40
Theological monographs	9,5%	50
Journals	11,4%	60
Research articles	15,4%	81
Statements from churches and church organizations	15,8%	83
E-learning-courses	4,8%	25
Other (please specify)*	5,7%	30
No response	29,8%	157

<b>Answered questions</b>	70,2%	369
No response	29,8%	157
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	526



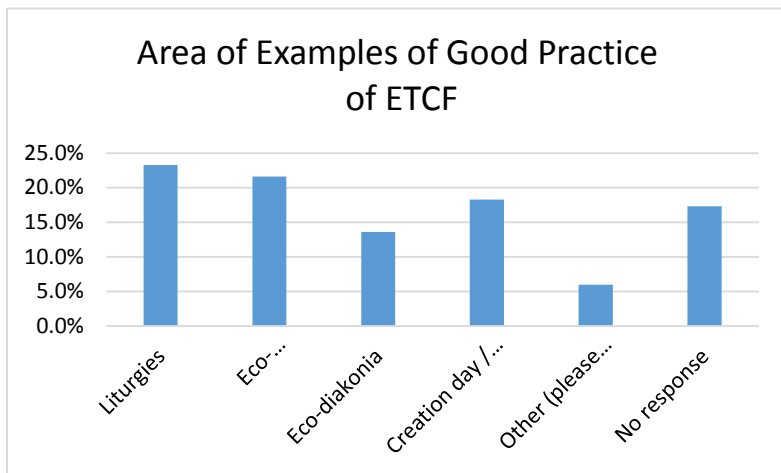


*\*To learn about other, please see appendix section V, question 29.*

**30. Please indicate areas where you know of examples of good practice in relation to ETCF:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Liturgies	24,2%	75
Eco-Congregations / Green churches	21,9%	68
Eco-diakonia	13,5%	42
Creation day / Time for Creation	19,0%	59
Other (please specify)*	5,8%	18
No response	15,5%	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

<b>Answered Questions</b>	84,5%	262
Skipped Questions	15,5%	48
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310



*\*To learn about other, please see appendix section V, question 31.*

### **31. Please give examples:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	22,6%	70
No response	77,4%	240
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310

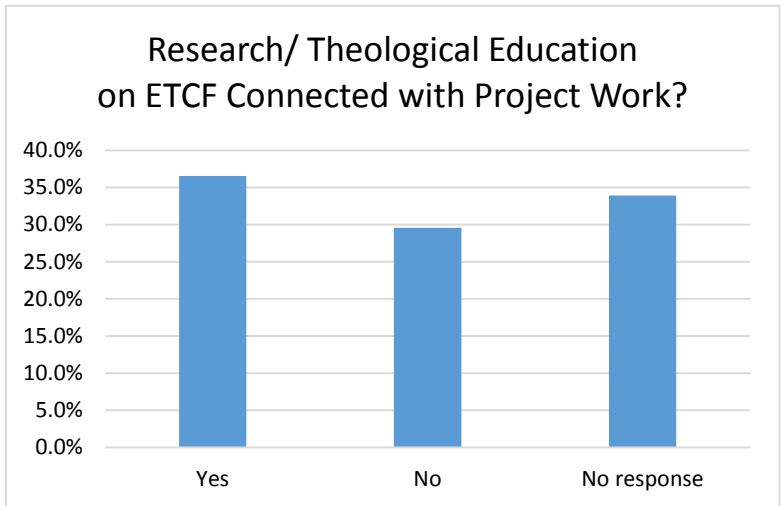
- The Green Church program offers loads of resources and examples for the three pillars: SPIRITUALITY, AWARESS and ACTION. It organizes an annual Green Church Conference. The network reaches almost 50 churches from many denominations.
- Lutherans Restoring Creation; Web of Creation; Season of Creation (Lutheran Church of Australia)
- Liturgies: many are available, both in print and on-line, and we have created others here. Eco-congregations: we belong to both Interfaith Power and Light and to Green Faith, both of which include networks of congregations and many resources on "greening" one's congregation/seminary/school. Eco-Diakonia: we lead, participate in, visit, and hold up models of ecological service, from individual local projects to farm/monastery communities, to urban-garden projects, to wilderness spirituality programs, to eco-apprenticeship or -internship programs.

To read all examples, please refer to appendix section V, question 31.

***32. Is your research work or theological education/formation connected with project work?***

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	37,1%	115
No	29,4%	91
No response	33,5%	104
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

<b>Answered question</b>	66,5%	206
No response	33,5%	104
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310



To see “other”, please refer to appendix section V, question 31.

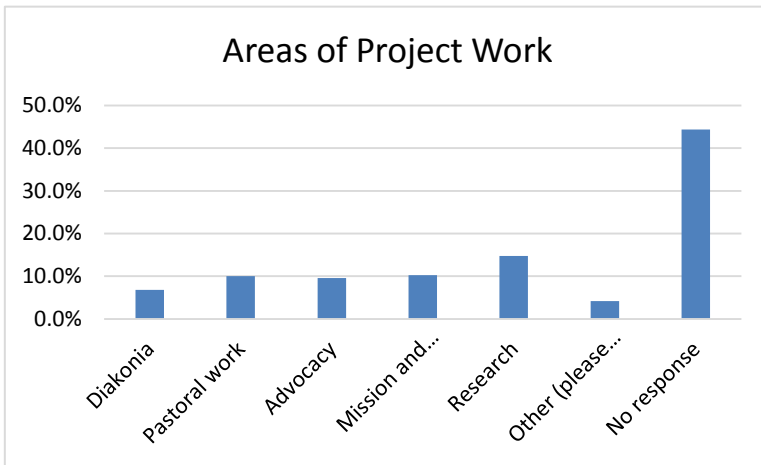
**33. If yes, please indicate the areas of project work (multiple answers possible):**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Diakonia	6,8%	29
Pastoral work	10,0%	43
Advocacy	9,6%	41
Mission and Evangelism	10,3%	44

60 *Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security*

Research	14,7%	63
Other (please specify)*	4,2%	18
No response	44,4%	190
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>428</b>

Answered question	55,6%	238
No response	44,4%	190
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>428</b>



*To read all examples, please refer to appendix section V, question 33.*

**34. Please give examples of such project work, if applicable:**

- A green team in a church usually has a pastoral associate (lay minister), so it is recognized as a Creation Care Ministry.
- My book on climate change as primary hermeneutic for youth ministry.
- All staff members are involved in research projects, some more directly related to the environment than others. For example, currently with the Ebola virus outbreak, we are carrying out educational seminars both at ACI and in churches not just on the prevention, treatment aspects, but on background issues related to the destruction of eco-systems and the Church's responsibilities.
- We make government submissions and produce a peer-reviewed journal, we run environmental retreats and have annual tree planting days etc.
- Biogas Renewable Energy and Organic Farming, Go Green area.

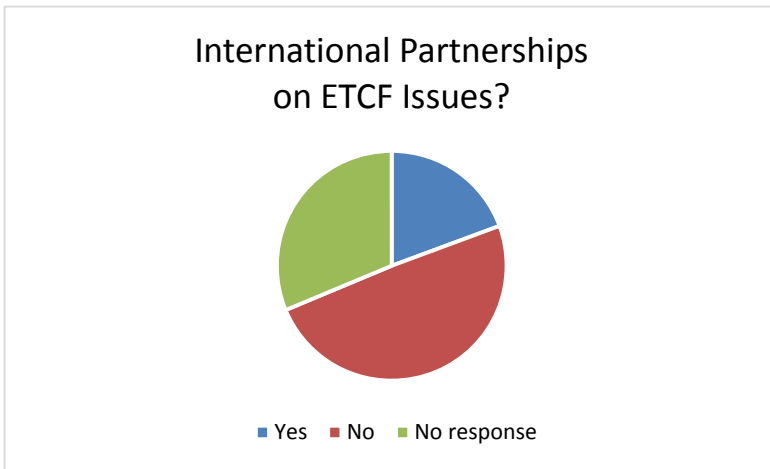
**Section VI****International Partnerships****35. Do you have international partnerships on ETCF issues with churches, agencies or programmes in other countries?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Yes	19,4%	60
No	49,4%	153

62 *Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security*

No response	31,3%	97
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310

<b>Answered question</b>	68,7%	213
No response	31,3%	97
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310



**36. If yes, please give examples:**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Answered question	18,1%	56
No response	81,9%	254
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310

- Not certain but I believe so.

- Greening Sacred Spaces in Canada.
- Earth Ministries in the USA.
- oeku environnement in Switzerland.
- Pastorale del Creato, Diocesi di Brescia, Italy.
- Capacity building worldwide.

*To see the full set of examples provided, please see appendix section VI, question 36.*

## **Section VII**

### **Visions for the Future**

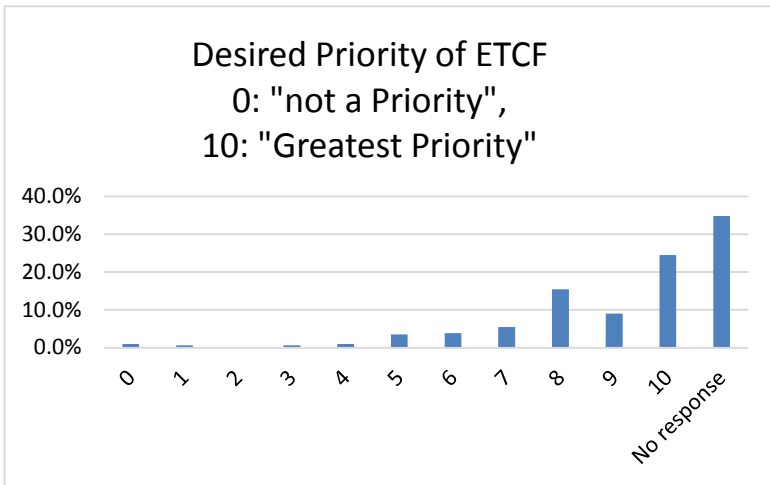
***37. Should ETCF have greater/less/equal priority in theological teaching, ecumenical formation and Christian leadership development?***

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
0	1,0%	3
1	0,6%	2
2	0,0%	0
3	0,6%	2
4	1,0%	3
5	3,5%	11
6	3,9%	12
7	5,5%	17
8	15,5%	48
9	9,0%	28
10	24,5%	76



<b>No response</b>	34,8%	108
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310

<b>Answered question</b>	65,2%	202
No response	34,8%	108
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310



**38. What are your key visions, hopes or suggestions concerning collaboration, sharing of resources and other key topics to be deepened in the area of ETCF training?**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	45,8%	142
No response	54,2%	168
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310

- Prevention of distressing others and the environment through ignorance.

- The cry for eco-justice and the disastrous consequences of ecological ruin already being borne by the most vulnerable people, creatures and ecosystems of the planet demand redress. We are called to Christ's mission of reconciling all things to God; for the sake of the world, every ministry (personal, congregational, denominational, ecumenical) needs to expand its notion of "loving the neighbour" to "loving the neighbourhood."

- To build a Forum of Christian NGOs, Church organisations, action groups and individuals with a focus on ETCF issues.

- \* To join with non-Christian groups on ETCF issues.

- \* To strengthen information dissemination on ETCF issues.

- No Need to avoid "reinventing the wheel". There is a lot of material already available, but people often think there is not! This is now a bit dated, but is a good start:

<http://www.cebts.eu/programme/doc/environmental-theology-course-2007.pdf>

*To see all answers provided, please refer to appendix section VII, question 38.*

## **Section VIII**

### **Available Resources:**

If you have time and availability, please list resources for training and research on ETCF issues (include weblinks) available through your institution in the following areas:

**39. Curriculum models:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	5,8%	18
No response	94,2%	292
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

- Green Theology (4Credits) being offered to the final year BD students
- I don't have
- We do not have our own resources which can be considered as exceptionally good for others.
- Christian Ethics and the Environment TE 48: a 14-hour elective course
- Bible
- Church Fathers

**40. Theological monographs:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Percent Count</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	8,4%	26
No response	91,6%	284
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

- Baastian Wielegna, *Towards an Eco-Just Society* (Bangalore: CSA, 1999).
- George Zachariah, *Alternative Unincorporated: Earth Ethics from the Grassroot* (London: Equinox, 2010).
- Jangkhulam Haokip, *Can God Save My Village* (Carlies:

Langham, 2014).

- Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India* (New Delhi: Kali For Women, 1988).
- I don't have

#### 41. Journals:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Answered question	6,5%	20
No response	93,5%	290
<b>Total</b>	100,0%	310

- <http://www.revistas.una.ac.cr/siwo>
- VOICES, EATWOT's theological journal, as already mentioned, has two very good issues, of permanent value.
- None
- MOUNTLY JOURNAL
- Torch Trinity Journal, Vol. 14, Number 1, May 30, 2011
- New Blackfriars
- The Voice (St Paul's University Magazine)
- There are by now several topical issues of journals which provide more specific resources. I cannot list all of the relevant ones here.
- We produce the "Journal of African Christian Thought" which is an ATLA recognised Journal. This is available for sale. It covers a wide range of themes.
- <https://koinoniainstitute.org/>

To see to all answers provided, please refer to appendix section VII, question 41.

**42. Research essays:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	8,1%	25
No response	91,9%	285
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

- NA
- see <http://users.drew.edu/lkearns/> for a list of articles based on research on religious environmental activism
- The Worldwide Environmental Crisis/ Global Research ([www.globalresearch.ca/...environmental-...](http://www.globalresearch.ca/...environmental-...))
- “Toward the Sustainable Management of Ecosystems for the Filipino Church”, in Torch Trinity Journal, Vol. 14, Number 1, May 30, 2011.
- “A Beloved Earth Community: Christian Mission in an Ecological Age” by David Rhoads and Barbara Rossing
- Presentation of Laudato Si'

*To see to all answers provided, please refer to appendix section VII, question 42.*

**43. Statements from churches and church organizations:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	8,4%	26
Skipped question	91,6%	284
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

- [http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=147](http://egliseverte-greenchurch.ca/green/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=147)
- <http://www.imdosoc.org/web/?p=3540>
- Anglican church statement and Arocha Kenya
- Declaración Pública sobre Pascua Lama OCTUBRE 4, 2013  
<http://ctedechile.cl/home/?p=1111> Comunicado a la opinión pública  
Movimiento
- Carta Pastoral de la Iglesia Evangélica Presbiteriana en Chile  
Taltal, 22 de enero de 2014.

*To see all answers provided, please refer to appendix section VII, question 43.*

**44. Online collections and web resources:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	9,4%	29
No responses	90,6%	281
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

- The World Latin American Agenda dedicated the issue of 2010 to ecological issue (is available on line at [latinoamericana.org/digital](http://latinoamericana.org/digital))  
The next issue of the Agenda, the one of 2017, is now being prepared, monographic on Integral Ecology.
- [greenseminaries.org](http://greenseminaries.org) has syllabi and teaching resources

70 *Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security*

- The EEC’s website has links to many resources, including articles written by members of the organization. In addition, there is information about the work we do at the EEC, such as our bird ringing research. Links can be found at [www.eecp.org](http://www.eecp.org)

- [www.GreenChurch.ca](http://www.GreenChurch.ca)
- <https://koinoniainstitute.org/>
- The CSU library gives access to electronic databases of journals etc.

*To see all answers provided, please refer to appendix section VII, question 44*

**45. E-learning-courses:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Answered question	3,5%	11
No response	96,5%	299
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

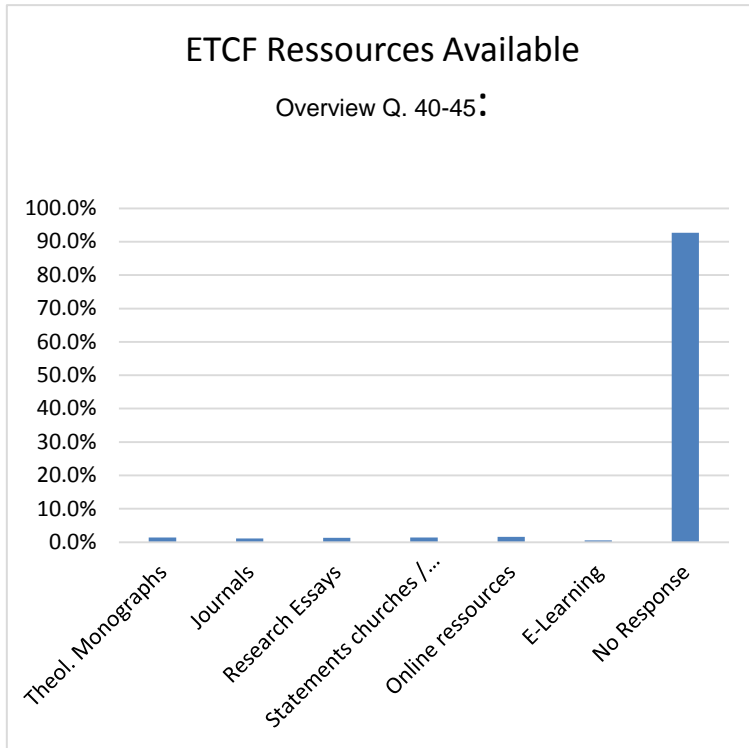
- Business ethics by Instituto Business Ethics in London
- Theology course is available by distance education over the Internet.
- Accessible
- [www.cres.org.uk](http://www.cres.org.uk)

*To see all answers provided, please refer to appendix section VII, question 45.*

Synopsis: Among those who answered positively, the following resources on ETCF are available:

<b>Answer Option</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Theol. Monographs	1,4%	26
Journals	1,1%	20
Research Essays	1,3%	25
Statements churches / organizations	1,4%	26
Online resources	1,6%	29
E-Learning	0,6%	11
No Response	92,6%	1723
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1860</b>





**46. Please indicate if you wish to be kept informed by email about the Global Digital Library on Theology and Ecumenism (GlobeTheoLib) and Globethics.net, which is hosting this survey.**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Answered question	45,2%	140
No response	54,8%	170
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>310</b>

**47. We may wish to make available publicly the information you have submitted about resources available, project work and international cooperation. If you do NOT wish any of these categories to be made public please indicate below as appropriate (multiple answers possible).**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Available resources	10,2%	36
Project work	8,2%	29
Int. cooperation	8,0%	28
No response	73,6%	259
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>352</b>

<b>Answered questions</b>	26,4%	93
No response	73,6%	259
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>352</b>



## ETCF – FINAL NARRATIVE (QUALITATIVE) SUMMARY REPORT

Interim Executive Report on Results (2014-2016)  
10 March 2016

*Raphael Sartorius*<sup>5</sup>



*Global Survey on Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security  
(ETCF) in Theological Education and Christian Leadership  
Development in Cooperation with the Orthodox Academy of Crete and  
Volos Academy for Theological Studies.*

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<sup>5</sup> Raphael Sartorius is a PhD student in theology at the Augustana Theological Seminary. His research focuses on religion and development. He analysed, prepared and partly conducted the “Global Survey on Eco-theology, Climate Justice and Food Security”. He works together with different organizations, i.e. the World Council of Churches, Bread for the World, Globethics.net and the United Evangelical Mission.

**Summary: Global Survey on Eco-Theology,  
Climate Justice and Food Security**

The overall ETCF report consists of three parts: an executive summary of the results in qualitative fashion (15 pages), the full report of all results of the questionnaire (quantitative report, 35 pages) and a bibliography with 50 selected ETCF resources. The quantitative part is of empirical nature, displaying the data provided through the respondents' answers. The third part of the report consists of a bibliography with selected educational resources on ETCF from the online collection of the Global Digital Library on Theology and Ecumenism

(GlobeTheoLib).

The qualitative part of the report (the executive summary report) is arranged around four key thematic areas, which seem to be most important according to the respondents' answers:

- Sharing and networking on priority issues related to ETCF (chapter 2)
- Awareness raising on ETCF within institutions of theological education (chapter 3)
- Emphasis on ETCF issues in liturgy and spirituality (chapter 4)
- A holistic vision for theology (chapter 5)
- Concluding recommendations (chapter 6) will be listed at the end

According to the project proposal considering the outcome of the survey, selected resources are mentioned as well as strategic recommendations for the improvement of the goals for the incorporation of ETCF.

## **4.1 Introduction: Basics about the Global Survey on Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security (ETCF)**

The Global Survey on Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security (ETCF) is the only study and research project of this kind and has thus been a unique enterprise. This joint project has been undertaken by Globethics.net, the World Council of Churches, Bread for the World, and the United Evangelical Mission in cooperation with the Orthodox Academy of Crete and the Volos Academy for Theological

Studies, to examine the role of issues such as eco-theology, climate justice and food security in theological education and Christian leadership development, as perceived by theological faculties, Christian theological colleges and seminaries, bible schools, faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, churches, individuals and all people related to activities based on such issues. The general goals of the project were:

- to highlight and to make visible the contributions, resources and perspectives of eco-theology, climate justice and food security particularly (ETCF) from the churches of the South as often resources and contributions are only known and shared in the North.
- to contribute to mainstreaming eco-theology, climate justice and food security issues (ETCF) as integral components in Christian leadership formation both in formal theological education as well as in non-formal programmes of Christian and development training in the global South.
- to support and foster the relevance of ETCF in the awareness of churches in the global North and the global South during a period

of global political negotiations on binding restrictions on CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions.

- to contribute to international networking, exchange and South-South, North- South, and West-East networking between regional hubs of research and education in issues of ETCF issues.

Within these general goals, an online survey was opened and promoted for just over twelve months. 310 respondents, from all continents and all world regions, have taken part in the survey and shared their perspectives on ETCF (257 respondents answered the English-language survey and 53 the Spanish-language survey). The respondents offered insights on their daily work with issues in their particular context, on the resources they know and use, on their best practice models as well as on their visions and ideas for the future. Methodologically the survey is not fully representative, but represents the responses of those who decided to take part.

Respondents came from Afghanistan and Argentina, to France and Lebanon via India, Japan and Kenya to South Africa and to Zimbabwe. The highest number of respondents came from Africa (16,5%) and the Caribbean (16,1%), followed by North America (15,5%), then Asia (14,5%) and Europe (13,9%). Other responses came from Latin America (8,4%), Oceania (2,3%) and the Middle East (1,6%).

Regarding the respondents' occupation: 39,7% of answers came from "committed individuals" while 20,6% are involved in theological institutions as representatives.

13,7% are students at such educational theological facilities, another 9,4% are members of FBOs.

The highest number of respondents belong to the Roman-Catholic (13,5%), Presbyterian or Reformed (12,2%) or Lutheran (11,2%) church traditions. Anglicans (9,7%), Evangelicals (8,1%) and Methodists (6,4%) are also well represented. Moreover, there are many people from

other denominations who also answered the survey, such as Orthodox Christians, representatives from the “Forum for Child Rights” or the YMCA.

#### ***4.1.1 Sharing and Networking on Priority Issues Related to ETCF***

Respondents appear to agree on the seriousness of challenges linked with ETCF: More than two-thirds of the answers indicate that their context is already affected by environmental, ecological, climate and food security issues in a major or a “heavily affected” way (Q 14). General effects of climate change, loss of biodiversity, floods, deforestation, droughts, lack of drinking water and food scarcity are the issues indicated most often (Q 15). Also other phenomena such as extreme weather events, high winds and flash floods are mentioned as occurring more often several times. Participants also share a conviction that these events affect the environmental condition they live in, which therefore affects the level of their sources of food and water as well.

Those institutions, organizations or agencies in which ETCF issues are discussed, are mostly connected to the field of “Theology of Creation”, “Integrity of Creation”, “Sustainable Development” and “Eco-Spirituality”. “Public Theology”, “Eco-Feminism”, “Eco-Mission” and “Indigenous/Aboriginal Theologies” also received many responses (Q 23). However, only around one third of the interviewees state that their institution conducts interdisciplinary dialogue concerning issues related to ETCF (Q 23). In terms of sharing knowledge, experiences and best practice models, this seems to be an essential point which needs to be improved.

Those who conduct interdisciplinary dialogue report great benefit from it for their work and on many different levels. Several examples were reported from people of different academic and/or professional background (Q 24). Theologians of various disciplines and interests (biblical, feminist, ecological, pastoral, historical as well as theology and



urban and international development) have connected with veterinarians, agrarian and civic engineers, meteorologists, development and policy divisions departments of universities, farmers, state actors as well as church action groups and different theological universities.

An example in point is the “John Ray Initiative” ([www.jri.org.uk](http://www.jri.org.uk)), which is based in the United Kingdom, working together with different, mainly Christian organizations and academic institutes concerned with ETCF. The outcomes of the interdisciplinary meetings within this initiative are described as “a holistic understanding of the issue” as one respondent points out. Generally, the outcomes mentioned are projects such as school farms, university courses, urban and rural action groups in which the topics of ETCF are discussed, practiced and developed. The groups range from practical grassroots-levels to academic theory. In these gatherings people seem to develop solutions and good practice models to face challenges of ETCF in their particular context. It seems to be well understood, as indicated by the composition of people of such different areas, that issues affecting the environment have impacts on a lot of different levels, such as affecting social composition and the distribution of wealth to mention only these examples. In its basic understanding, the JRI sees the world as God’s creation. Stewardship towards nature is therefore seen as a responsibility of Christians.

Those platforms seem to provide an extraordinary possibility for sharing and exchanging ideas and (tailor-made) strategies to relate to ETCF. They also serve the same purpose as networks between different communities, therefore serving as an important contribution to civil society.

Strongly linked to this topic is also the question whether the interviewee’s institution undertakes interreligious dialogue concerning ETCF (Q 25). 23,9% of all respondents give a positive response. while 46,5% stated they do not. The remaining interviewees, roughly one

third, did not respond to this question. Those who maintain interreligious relations refer to dialogue settings with Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and adherents of indigenous faiths in the African and Pacific context for example. Adherents of different Christian denominations are also mentioned as well in this area. Interfaith gatherings to discuss special topics related to ETCF are mentioned as examples of common actions. These exist in the form of dialogue or university courses for those of different faiths or where speakers of different religions are invited. Interfaith activities are practiced in organic farming or in practical workshops. Answers here indicate gatherings on different levels of organizational hierarchy, for example organization leaders or staff professionally related to organizations, as well as people with different educational backgrounds such as rural workers or students or professors. Common actions in areas of ETCF are both initiated by private persons, by churches, universities, FBOs and NGOs, as well as by state actors.

It is not possible to discern from the responses why the level of participation in interreligious dialogue is low. Although the figures are low, those taking part in such undertakings seem to benefit from many positive experiences, similarly to the previous question on the exchange of knowledge and reflection from different perspectives on particular context-related ETCF issues. These can spread to a much broader group of percipients when carried out and adapted through different religious groups.

Other side effects to interreligious dialogue are engagement and the empowerment of civil society, along with peace building and the prevention of fundamentalism and conflict or peace building, which benefits all members of society. In this spirit, we can draw attention to a research project mentioned by a representative of Chang Jung Christian University, Taiwan, named “Promoting Religious Dialogue to Overcome

Fundamentalism and to Construct Communities of Peace and Justice” in an Asian context, or workshops and conferences of interfaith and peace building character. A project between the three monotheistic religions, “La casa de Abraham” (The House of Abraham) which is hosted by the Jewish Museum in Buenos Aires, is another example. The positive side effects of interdenominational and interreligious gatherings on ETCF issues, such as gaining experience and proficiency on ECTE, as shown by the responses, are numerous and extremely fruitful, and thus deserve more attention.

In terms of international collaboration, 19,4% of the respondents state they have international partnerships with agencies or programmes in other countries (Q 35). Partnerships seem to exist on different levels. Firstly, they exist as cooperation between partnering churches in different countries and continents, often of the same tradition, denomination or confession. Secondly, partnership relations exist with professionalized faith-based organizations, such as cooperation with Bread for the Word, the World Council of Churches, Globethics.net, the Lutheran World Foundation, ACT Alliance, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace or Catholic Relief Services. Thirdly, cooperation exists with non-governmental actors as well as with state actors, such as Action Aid UK and the Gulf of Guinea Citizens Network. This complicated structure of relations exists asymmetrically and on different faith levels. For example, faith-based actors work with state actors, Christians with Muslims, as well as all possible constellations. These relations also seem to provide a platform of great opportunities of sharing knowledge and experiences on many different levels and from a lot of different backgrounds (Q 36).

Regarding the question whether the current institution of the interviewees have sufficient resources on ETCF at hand, around 70% answer positively, while the remaining 30% answer negatively (Q 29).

Resources on ETCF are statements from churches and church organizations (15,8% of all answers), followed by research articles (15,4%), journals (11,4%) while theological monographs, curriculum models, and e-learning courses all remain much lower in ranking (< 10%). It is important to note that interviewees were able to answer this question multiply.

Considering this, the non-availability of ETCF resources for 30% of the participants of the survey seems to need to be improved. Within those 10% responding affirmatively, the majority of resources available are online and web resources (9,4%) and statements from churches and church related organizations (8,4%).

Still, a considerable percentage – 30% – state that they have no access to ETCF resources. One lesson from this the urgent need for more and intentional sharing of concrete resources on training and education for issues on ETCF, particularly in terms of an online collection like intended as one outcome of the ETCF project.

This should include research articles, journals and church statements in the form of online collection resource, (see also Q 29 & 39).

In comparison with the rather disappointing figures in terms of concrete listing of available teaching resources the sharing of knowledge concerning good practice models in the area of ETCF provided more encouraging results. Only 15,5% of the respondents were not able to answer this question at all (Q 30), while the other

85% responded positively to know innovative models related to ETCF in the field of liturgies, eco-congregations, diakonia and creation day activities. Examples of alternative farming and tree-planting were also mentioned.

## **4.2 Awareness Raising on ETCF within Institutions of Theological Education**

Another key ETCF issue to be advocated is doubtlessly the awareness-raising among younger theologians and people trained at any type of theological institution or working with them. These institutions can serve as an interactive hub to maintain and develop focus on ETCF.

As mentioned above, most respondents attach highest importance to the theological reflection and education on ETCF-related issues (Q 16) and therefore to theological training (Q 17). The reality check, concerning the answers provided, unveils that only half of the respondents declared that their own theological institution contains ETCF as a subject in theological or ethical courses. Around 20% answered negatively, while roughly 30% did not answer at all (Q 18).

Among the disciplines in which ETCF is a subject, ethics comes first, followed by the disciplines of pastoral/practical theology and biblical studies, then also by systematic theology/dogmatics, as well as religious studies, church history, and philosophy. ETCF sometimes also occurred as subject in liturgical studies and contextual studies of history, missiology and spiritual formation. A multi- perspective is given as an example from a module called “The Kingdom of God” by the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, Lebanon, where ETCF is a subject of teaching and discussion through the multiple lenses of biblical-theological, historical-theological, social-contextual and ministerial studies. Several courses on ETCF issues are mentioned by other respondents, which seem not to be directly linked to major theological disciplines but are rather to development work, sociology of religion and religious education (Q 19). Interestingly enough, 27% of the courses provided are optional, whereas only 17% of ETCF courses are compulsory and 23% do not provide courses at all (Q 20). That one out

of five institutions does not provide any courses on ETCF is a fact that needs to be improved.

In terms of awareness-raising, the broad canon of disciplines in which ETCF is discussed seems to be very positive, since it includes many different views on the issue. The same positive effects can be assumed for the different theological perspectives in which ETCF is discussed, such as theology of creation, eco- spirituality, eco-feminism or indigenous theologies, to mention just few (Q 22). These add layers of perspective to the issue.

A difficulty for awareness raising on ETCF within institutions of theological education certainly consists in the previously mentioned lack of resources related to ETCF in probably 30% of the inquired institutions (Q 29). The status of ETCF and its importance within theological institutions also is affected by the issues, previously discussed, of interdisciplinary, interreligious and international dialogue. The question of whether eco-theology or related issues are a special research issue in the respondents' institution provided an additional significant indicator for the inner preferences of an institution as well as its image related to eco-theology towards the outside: 25,5% positively confirm that eco-theology is a special research field, but also 44,8%, almost twice as many, answer this question with a straight "no".

The mutual interrelation between the awareness on ETCF issues and its actual presence in terms of courses or explicit research at theological education institutions is probably best described in terms of an interrelated circle. The more ETCF has become part of courses taught and projects undertaken, the more ETCF- issues become part of teaching resources and the more they appear on the agenda of the discussions between interfaith and international groups or focus of research and vice versa.

The under-estimation of ETCF-related issues can be excluded as a reason for most. A majority see their contextual environment affected and agrees on the necessity to conduct theological reflection and training. A significant majority considers the ETCF as a most necessary topic of reflection in theological education, out of which

43% of the respondents categorize ETCF as a “highly urgent” (Q 16). Accordingly, 63,9% conclude theological training on ETCF in their context as a “general need” (Q 17).

The total number of those who consider theological training on ETCF in their context “not needed at all”, “not really a need” or “a need only for a few” (Q 17) accounts for only 17,4% of the responses provided. This comes close to the 19,7% who report that ETCF is not a subject in their institution (Q 18) - this seems to be an interesting link. Of course it cannot be taken as fact, but it still needs to be considered, that these voices - who count little less than 20% - still might not be concerned about ETCF for several reasons. They need to be reached. It should also be considered that those who took the survey are those who are already engaged and motivated on ETCF, while others might care less.

Clearly, the reflection of the urgency of issues related to ETCF is determined by the given context and also caused by preferences given to other issues. This is pointed out by a Lebanese respondent: “For the region and context I am studying in, ETCF does not play a role. Lebanon is very much busy with inter-denominational problems and discussions in the broad field of ecumenism, in addition to the political regional problems that are requiring to be dealt with. Therefore, ETCF is, despite the ecological problems the region definitely has, not an issue that is discussed in our context. Neither do I expect a change in the near future, as other issues appear to be more urgent to be dealt with in the region.”

In cases like these, advocates of ETCF need to ask if they are able to deliver solutions or assistance that are valuable for a particular's context's problems. This could make eco-theology attractive for voices as the mentioned example. Could ETCF, in an interreligious/interfaith-shaken context as the Lebanese example, serve as a platform and bridge-builder to bring different parties together? The extent to which possibilities of ETCF-related experiences can contribute needs to be examined. Examples, where these strategies work for conflict prevention and peace building, are provided, all under the label of "inter-religious and interdenominational dialogue".

At times opinions from the Global South claim that ecological awareness is the new dress of colonialism coming from the Global North. Such critical comments are to be heard with particular attention.

- Summary of recommendations:
- Basic access to resources and sharing of appropriate learning tools in an interdenominational, interfaith, and interdisciplinary setting is essential and most necessary and most effective. This is valid for any kind of positive activity which includes spreading of curricular models.
- More sharing should be encouraged on exchange related to good curriculum models and good practice examples related to ETCF as many of these positive examples are still not known to a number of respondents. Also, many more people remember well good practice examples and remember them better than resources (Q 30 & Q 39 ff).
- The introduction of compulsory courses on ETCF at institutions of education should be seen as one part of a possible solution. This will affect students and future generation of teachers and pastors, who can pass on their knowledge in their daily work environment and therefore serve as multipliers.



- The training and motivation of theological teachers on ETCF is another complementary component as it does not make sense to introduce compulsory courses as long as those responsible for the courses don't see the necessity for these. They need to be convinced first

### **4.3 A Greater Emphasis on ETCF Issues in Liturgy and Spirituality**

The ETCF survey has also referred to eco-theological dimensions in liturgy and spirituality (part of the categories used in Q 22 and Q 30). While the survey as such has not given any neat definition on the terms and their understandings in different constituencies, the evaluation of answers need to be aware of the fact that the terminological understanding can be different, might be even more with the term "spirituality" than with the term liturgy which most often refers to worship and ordered liturgical life. The academic discussion is beyond the scope of this evaluation but publications on the subject are available.<sup>61</sup>

It is striking however that respondents, when asked to indicate the areas in which eco-theological perspectives are mainly discussed in their institution, indicated "Eco-spirituality" as the third most mentioned category. For one out of ten respondents eco-theology here was viewed as being essential (Q 22).

"Liturgy" on the other hand also received high ranking among the answers related to the most important examples of good practices on ETCF (Q 30), i.e. the first place among all other answers (24,2%). From

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<sup>6</sup> 1 For further explanation in a development context, please refer to „Spiritualität bei Charles Taylor – Konzepte, Dimensionen, Anwendung“, Sartorius 2014, <http://www.globethics.net/gel/6101331>.

the answers provided it seems clear that liturgical life and content are able to raise awareness on ETCF and knowledge about its challenges. Examples provided included both general and particular environmental issues relating to the context, such as ecumenical and ecofeminist aspects. Other examples refer to issues of rural churches, where people live from the soil they cultivate, examples of green pilgrimages and biological and cultural diversity are provided. Liturgies can link to drought, food, climate change, salinity and so on. Issues on ETCF like this can be integrated in all kind of different services and prayers, including Sunday schools. Materials and examples of liturgies are provided in the given answers abundantly. As elaborate example among many others resources provided by the website “greenanglicans.org”, the environmental network of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, can serve as an example. An interesting approach is also given by the “Green Church Program”, which offers examples based on the three pillars of “Spirituality, Awareness and Action” ([www.eglisevertegreenchurch.ca](http://www.eglisevertegreenchurch.ca)). This Canadian programme is conducted by members of different churches such as the United Church of Canada, the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Orthodox Church.

It is noteworthy that knowledge of examples and of good practice seems to be far more widespread among respondents than resources that are available. Models of good practice include Liturgies, Eco-Congregations/Green Churches, Eco-diakonia and Creation day activities.

The main lesson learned from this is that liturgy is the type of good practice model which is, for reasons which are not verifiable, the most cited. Hence it seems to be the most effective agent of ETCF as a good practice model. Liturgy, seen in the perspective of a good practice model, can serve in a first place for the congregation to raise especially spiritual awareness of God’s creation and the human-made problems

linked to creation. We therefore should not underestimate the dimension of liturgy as a good practice model which in a first place can serve educational purposes in local congregation settings to raise spiritual awareness of God's creation and manmade climate related and environmental problems. Therefore the area of liturgy and spirituality are presented here as dimensions of paramount importance like the area of sharing knowledge and networking and awareness-raising in ETCF.

The link between spirituality and ETCF may also have relevance for interfaith relations: Religions, particularly non-monotheistic ones, often have a different connection to planet earth and its creatures than Christianity. Religious traditions like Buddhism, Hinduism or indigenous traditions practiced by native people, know about earth and the creatures seen as deities and possessing their own spiritual values and are therefore treated with much more respect. Appreciation of better understanding of indigenous and other religious values can therefore enrich interfaith learning and cooperation in environmental issues. Indigenous communities have preserved ways of life which are often in accordance with nature's integrity and have developed methods of resilience in their particular context, as several respondents point out.

Eco-spirituality may be able to have a significant function as a bridge-builder between religious traditions, in the perspective of what has been called "interspirituality", or any form of spiritual commonality of different religious groups through common spiritual values. This could contribute to the inclusion of indigenous values which have in the past been treated as inferior, especially in regions that have been colonized.

#### **4.4 A Holistic Vision for Theology**

The ETCF survey concludes with a section related to the participants' ideas and visions for the future. Question 37 is related to whether ETCF should receive greater, lesser or equal priority in theological teaching, ecumenical formation and Christian leadership development in the future. On a scale ranging from 0 (“not a priority”) to 10 (greatest priority) the option “10”, demanding highest priority to ETCF, was chosen by 25% of respondents. Most other respondents mark at least “5” or beyond. Only fewer than 5% of all answers remain beneath the 5-mark, expressing a low priority on ETCF. The vast majority of participants who answered the question consider a greater priority of ETCF in theological teaching is necessary (although almost 35% of the respondents skipped the question (Q 37).

In question 38, the participants were asked to articulate their key visions, hopes or suggestions concerning collaboration, sharing of resources and other key topics to be deepened in the area of ETCF training. Answers given here provided a huge resource of comments, ideas, examples, experiences and thoughts, although slightly fewer than half of the respondents (45%) skipped this question (which required significant time input as it needed text input and not simply responding to a multiple choice question).

While we cannot list all of the comments give here, we have summarized some of the most important suggestions:

- a) Many respondents emphasize the importance of learning from knowledge of indigenous people and native practices as valuable contributions, both for practical solutions as well as for conceptual work in the academic world.
- b) Several respondents emphasize the need for more “inter-collaborations”, i.e. collaboration and cooperation on

international, interfaith, interorganizational, intercommunity, inter-university as well as interdisciplinary fields.

- c) There was a request for more cooperation on a theological level, including reading the Torah, Bible and Quran through an environmentalist lens.
- d) Several respondents emphasized the need for more holistic pastoral training and improved education of ministers. This is linked to a desire for more holistic approaches, which were often mentioned: “The students would be competent in the area of geo-theology and rural life ministry, community development and environmental justice advocacy. Prepared enough to accompany the people in their hope for unity, social justice, prosperity and peace. Our collaboration could provide short term technical-vocational trainings, seminars and forums related to the agricultural crop production, organic and sustainable agriculture.”
- e) Others go on to demand a paradigm shift within theology itself: “The paradigm of Christian Theology needs to be shifted from anthropocentric orientation to that of the whole house of God (oikos), which inclusively means to deal with ecological justice, economic justice and ecumenical solidarity. This requires a cross disciplinarian cooperation and mutual contributions. “Also, the destruction of nature is deeply rooted in the anti-materialism and anti-nature thinking, which is deeply inherent to western Christian theology,” as one answer tells. Another interviewee demands “understanding the ecological significance of God’s transcendence, doing justice to both creation and salvation, a non-reductionist and nondualist anthropology, a non-escapist eschatology”.

- f) Further voices point to the need to develop the broadest possible dialogue platform between churches, FBOs and scientists on these issues: “We need all hands on deck with these questions: partnerships with scientists, naturalists, activists, poets, and people of many faiths or no explicit faith.” Responding to the interests of natural scientists who are involved in environmental-justice-related issues and would like to know more about the theological reasons and arguments behind care for creation would call for an improvement of the public relation strategy of churches and FBOs involved with ETCF.
- g) Additional voices emphasize the need for ETCF at earlier education levels, particularly for children. Basic knowledge and awareness of ETCF is proposed to be available for children from an early age on. Another person demands the compulsory existence of education on ETCF in all curriculums for theologians.
- h) Respondents also emphasize not to forget the solidarity with the most vulnerable populations which suffer from the aftermath of climate/change and deteriorating weather conditions already now.

Only a selection of responses could be included in this overview due to space limitation. One response seems quite noteworthy because it appears to summarize what many respondents seem to think, understanding the complexity of the challenge on ETCF: “The cry for eco-justice and the disastrous consequences of ecological ruin already being borne by the most vulnerable people, creatures and ecosystems of the planet demand redress. We are called to Christ’s mission of reconciling all things to God; for the sake of the world, every ministry (personal, congregational, denominational, ecumenical) needs to expand its notion of “loving the neighbour” to “loving the neighbourhood.”

## **4.5 Concluding Recommendations**

This very final chapter contains a list of suggestions, recommendations and experiences which were gathered by the answers taken from the survey.

### ***4.5.1 Conclusions: Sharing and Networking***

- Basic access to resources and sharing of appropriate learning tools is essential and necessary. This is valid for any kind of positive activity which includes spreading of curriculum models.
- Strengthen online availability and easy accessibility of such resources, as one strategy to overcome the lack of resources on ETCF issues. This could include developing straightforward ways for those who have developed such resources to upload and share them with others.
- Ensure that resources are presented in the most accessible form, such as church statements, research articles, journals and liturgies, which were identified by respondents as a primary source of information and good practice models.
- Strengthen interdisciplinary, interdenominational and interfaith approaches to and resources for ETCF issues in theological settings; these came through in the survey as among the most fruitful approaches to raising awareness and promoting action (with other potential beneficial results in terms of cooperation in civil society, increasing understanding and reduction in conflict potential).
- Ensure that resources are developed that reflect the global perspectives, ensuring that perspectives from the global South are properly represented to avoid that they are not dominated by perspectives only from one part of the world.

#### ***4.5.2 Conclusions: Awareness Raising***

- Work with theological education institutions to increase awareness of ETCF education and to include this as a key component in curriculums and courses, especially for future pastors, leaders and church workers.
- There is a need to identify key multipliers for ETCF issues in theological education and Christian leadership development.
- The introduction of compulsory courses on ETCF at institutions of education should be seen as one part of a possible solution. This will affect students and future generation of teachers and pastors, who can pass on their knowledge in their daily work environment and therefore serve as multipliers.
- The most effective agent of ETCF seems to be good practice models; for example, Eco-Congregations/Green Churches, Eco-diakonia and Creation day activities – are much better known than resources.
- The training and motivation of theological teachers on ETCF is another complementary component as it does not make sense to introduce compulsory courses as long as those responsible for the courses don't see the necessity for these. They need to be convinced first.

#### ***4.5.3 Conclusions: Emphasis on Liturgy and Spirituality***

- More sharing should be encouraged on exchange related to good curriculum models and good practice examples related to ETCF - such as Liturgies, Eco- Congregations/Green Churches, Eco-diakonia and Creation day activities - as many of these positive examples are still not known to a number of respondents.



- Liturgies and worship material, and spirituality more generally can be effective ways of manifesting commitment to and raising awareness of ETCF issues; promoting awareness of various spiritual approaches to ETCF including indigenous perspectives.
- Liturgy, seen in the perspective of a good practice model, can serve in a first place for congregations to raise especially spiritual awareness of God's creation and the human-made problems that exist.

#### ***4.5.4 Conclusions: A Holistic Vision for Theology***

- Strengthen work and cooperation with younger theologians and the new generation of theological scholars and teachers, not only to build awareness on ETCF issues but also to gather and make use of their perspectives and input on ETCF
- Keep in mind the need to reach the general public on ETCF issues; the purpose of increasing awareness of ETCF issues is not as an end in itself but as a contribution to more just, peaceful and sustainable societies.

The following recommendations, briefly listed, are the same conclusions as seen beyond, but in a more condensed list.

1. Extension of resources and simplified access to resources. The time is right: most respondents see the high urgency of ETCF-related issues. But in still too many cases people seem not to have access to resources or to those resources they need. Online availability deserves first priority as form of distribution.
2. Provision of resources in catchy ways. Most respondents use and known as primary resources firstly liturgies, then ETCF related church statements, research articles, journals as good practice models. Therefore these types of resources should be prioritized as the junctions to connect, focusing on liturgies.

3. Improvement of inter-connected collaboration. The “inters” seem to be beneficial for many participants and were often emphasised from survey respondents: interdisciplinary, interdenominational, interreligious, international, inter-institutional, interspiritual... Many forms of collaboration have delivered great benefits. Consideration of indigenous’ people knowledge needs to be pointed out particularly. Also, the helpful side effects of cooperation was highlighted as a bridge builder supporting conflict prevention, peace building, the empowerment of civil society and the empowerment of resilience.
4. Increase of ETCF education. Only every second theological educational institution provides lessons or courses with ETCF as a subject. To raise the number of institutions who do provide ETCF-related lessons, it is a key connector to raise awareness and knowledge, mainly for future ministers and church affiliated persons.
5. Awareness-raising. FBOs and churches should not be the odd person out when it comes to environmental and climate issues. Public relations for the non- affiliated public is not of utmost priority, but should not be neglected.



## **MANIFESTO ON ECOLOGICAL REFORMATION OF CHRISTIANITY - THE VOLOS CALL**

*Ernst Conradi, Ekaterini Tsalampouni, Dietrich Werner*

*Veni, Creator Spiritus!* Come, Holy Spirit, renew your whole creation!

There have been numerous reform movements throughout the history of Christianity. Such reform movements are best understood as responses to a discernment of the movement of the Holy Spirit. This is expressed in the ancient prayer for the transformative work of God's Spirit: *Veni, Creator Spiritus!*

In different periods in history and in particular places such reform movements have been prompted by distinct challenges, concerns and needs. This is illustrated by the various 16<sup>th</sup> century reformations but also by the Benedictine and Franciscan reformations, alongside many others. The 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation which is expected to be celebrated with thousands of international guests as a world ecumenical event in 2017 is an occasion to think about what is demanded from *an "ecclesia semper reformanda"* in giving witness to what the triune God is doing in the world today.

To address this question requires ecumenical fellowship and dialogue as there are diverging views on the hand of God in human and evolutionary history. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is nevertheless clear that many Christian communities all over the world have discerned the need for an ecological reformation of each Christian tradition in every geographical context. This is expressed in the ecumenical prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, renew your whole creation!

The need for an ecological reformation of all Christian traditions is of course manifested in different ways in various parts of the world. The pain impulses associated with ecological destruction have been registered especially in those areas that lie on the periphery of current constellations of economic power. The call for an ecological reformation of Christianity has come with particular urgency from Christians in such areas (the Pacific, Africa, Asia, Latin-America) as they are more exposed and vulnerable. This call is echoed by churches which belong to (mainly protestant) countries in the global North which have contributed heavily to the exploitation of natural resources, industrial production and a style of consumption that causes environmental degradation.

It is vital that these calls be heard when churches meet for the Reformation Jubilee in 2017. An ecological reformation of Christianity is a matter of repentance, conversion and renewal for all Christian traditions. It necessarily has to be ecumenical in scope and has to extend throughout the whole inhabited world. The call for ecological reformation, therefore, comes as a gift to those countries in which the 16<sup>th</sup> century reformations have started and from where it has spread elsewhere. The call for an ecological reformation of Christianity has been expressed in statements by church leaders such as Patriarch

Bartholomew<sup>7</sup> and Pope Francis<sup>8</sup> and by ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches and by regional fellowships of churches alike. It is indeed encouraging and illuminating to observe that processes pointing and contributing to an ecological reformation are already underway in each of the main branches of Christianity and in all corners of the globe 500 years after the Reformation.

What does such an ecological reformation of Christianity entail? It implies a twofold critique, namely both a deeper Christian critique of the root causes of ecological destruction and an ecological critique of forms of Christianity which have not recognised the ecological dimensions of the gospel. The latter critique comes from outside and inside Christian churches and is expressed by secular critics, representatives of other living faiths, church leaders, theologians and lay leaders alike.

Such an ecological reformation can only be authentic if it is based on an emerging vision of God's identity and character and a deeper discernment of God's work. This may be explained with different symbols in particular Christian traditions. At the core of this vision is the widely recognised insight that God's love extends to all God's creatures, that the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ and through the Spirit is a message for the whole earth and that the life of the church is situated in God's encompassing mission. This vision allows for an integrated understanding of God's work of creation, salvation and the consummation of all things. Ancient liturgies, and especially the Eucharistic praxis of Eastern Orthodox tradition, demonstrate that nature elements are involved in the sanctifying acts of the Church not as

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<sup>7</sup> Bartholomew I. Ecumenical Patriarch, *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I*, John Chryssavgis (ed.), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Laudato Si*, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_encilica-laudato-si\\_en.pdf](http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encilica-laudato-si_en.pdf).

instruments for the achievement of human success and progress but also as co-participants in the foretaste of this vision.

A reform movement often commences with highly particular actions, as is illustrated by the 95 statements that Martin Luther knocked to the door of the church in Wittenberg in which he addressed malpractices around indulgences. From the energies unleashed by such an event a reform movement typically spreads to address a wide range of related issues and soon becomes comprehensive in scope. This applies to many other contemporary reform movements addressing issues of gendered relationships, health, economic justice, peace and the integrity of creation. It therefore applies to an ecological reformation of Christianity as well.

Such an ecological reformation cannot be restricted to a recovery of a theology of creation or a call for responsible stewardship. It calls for reflection, discernment, prayer and a transformation of Christian practices that may be harmful to others, to all God's creatures. It also calls for a rereading of the canonical biblical texts, a critique of the environmental impact of specific Christian traditions and practices, a retrieval of historical insights, figures and practices, a reinvestigation of the content and significance of the Christian faith, a reconsideration of influential symbols, a renewal of Christian communities and a transformation of the ministries and missions of the church. The ecological reformation of Christianity therefore is comprehensive in its scope and needs to extend to Bible study, catechism, teaching, liturgies, hymns, Christian art, pastoral care, ministry and mission alike. Examples of "eco-congregations" or "green churches" have become widespread; numerous earthkeeping projects have originated from within a Christian context, while several institutions, para-church organisations and multi-faith organisations have been established to address a wide range of environmental concerns. These are best

understood as examples of a wider ecological reformation of Christianity. They function as dynamos for transformation by eliciting and channelling available energies to test and develop best practice.

Any reformation is situated in a polemical context. It seeks to transform the status quo and is therefore contested by those that wish to maintain current practices. At the same time a reform movement has to articulate its emerging vision and offer constructive proposals for transformation. Such proposals will have to be best tested by others to see whether these are indeed fruitful ways to extend what is valuable and therefore treasured in particular traditions. It is therefore not surprising that an ecological reformation of Christianity has invited ongoing theological reflection. This is expressed in an expanding corpus of popular and scholarly literature that is found in many particular Christian traditions, written in various languages and published in various contexts. Such literature naturally mirrors the ongoing ecological reformation, but also offers some internal critique and seeks to sustain and deepen particular reform movements.

A reformation cannot be organised or managed by any individual, institution or lobbying group alone, it is the result of networking, mutual inspiration and learning. Any authentic reformation is best understood as a response to the discernment of the movement of God's Spirit. Such a response brings challenges that are often hard to bear for its witnesses, perhaps because it involves speaking truth to power. Such a reformation is therefore not always welcome, not even by its own proponents. This clearly applies to an ecological transformation of Christian traditions as well. Such powers may include various constellations of political and economic power and does not exclude ecclesial authorities. It is remarkable that prophetic concerns about environmental issues are often expressed by scientists, novelists and artists. Apocalyptic images about impending doom have become popular in the media. Yet such voices do



not yet discern the movement of the Holy Spirit. That requires analysis and mediation but also discipline and sacrifice. These are best sustained by receiving the gifts of the Spirit that comes along with that.

Such spiritual discernment will be meaningless if this does not lead to renewal and transformation. This requires collaboration with government and civil society since ecological concerns about the common good are by definition shared with others.

The UN conference on climate change in Paris in December 2015 (COP21) has provided an unprecedented point of rallying and networking between a growing number of institutions in civil society, including faith-based organizations (FBOs). These organisations provide a moral and spiritual grounding for the ecological transformation of society that is required.

The Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 which was agreed by the UN in New York 2015 provides a binding commitment for a substantial transformation of the current development paradigm and refers to key issues that are widely discussed in Christian churches (SDG 7: affordable and clean energy; SDG 15: live on land; SDG 14: Life below water etc.). As almost never before churches from all denominational traditions worldwide are called to spell out their contributions towards the big five P's (people, planet, peace, prosperity, participation, partnership), as well as an ecological ethics of life which can provide moral and spiritual grounding and critical values for reaching the targets of the SDG Agenda - which are compulsory for each national government to address and essential for the survival of this planet.

We therefore call on all participants in the Reformation Jubilee 2017 and their representing churches

- To be open to listen to the cries of suffering creation at the peripheries as well as in the centres of our planet (Rom 8.20);

- To recommit to mutual learning and ecumenical partnerships for empowering a younger generation of leaders in the area of eco-theology, climate justice and food security and for promoting ecologically aware education for all in order to learn what it means “not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”(Rom 12,2);
- To encourage an international network of green churches to serve as learning hubs for new live-styles which follow principles of fair trade, an economy of enough and reconciliation in the human family, so that “we offer every part of yourself to him (God) as an instrument of righteousness”(Rom 6,13)
- To spread and promote the celebration of a week for creation after 1<sup>st</sup> of September as a period of fasting, meditation and spiritual renewal concerning our human responsibility to care for God’s creation (often expressed in terms of theology of stewardship, priesthood or earth-keeping based on Gen 2,15) according to the proposals made by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew;
- To allow for new and courageous forms of unity of all church traditions in joint service to all humankind and all of creation as the ecological dimension of the gospel is being recognised in each Christian tradition. As the letter to the Ephesians states:

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.<sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;<sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism;<sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4,2-6)*

Gathering at the Academy of Volos, Demetriades Diocese of Church of Greece, as church representatives from different traditions and all continents during the international conference on Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security (10-13 March 2016)<sup>9</sup>, we are convinced that an ecological reformation of Christianity (in all its traditions) is possible, but can remain authentic only if it stays in the spirit and is expressed in the form of a humble prayer: *Veni, Creator Spiritus!* Come, Holy Spirit, renew your whole creation!

Participants of Volos Academy Consultation on Eco-Theology, Climate Justice  
and Food Security, March 2016

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.globethics.net/web/gtl/ecotheology>

**PART II**  
**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**



# CLIMATE JUSTICE, FOOD SECURITY... AND GOD

## Some Reflections from the Perspective of Eco-Theology

*Ernst M. Conradie*<sup>10</sup>

### 6.1 The Current Climate in the South African Context

Allow me to begin my contribution with a few observations on the current interplay between climate change and food security in the South African context.<sup>11</sup> This interplay is appropriately termed the Food-Energy-Water nexus.<sup>12</sup> I offer these not as an expert in the field but as a concerned citizen. I will use this sketch of a constantly changing

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<sup>11</sup> In this contribution I will include academic-style references and some discussion in the footnotes rather than in the main text. I will deliberately draw mainly on (South) African literature and use some of my own work as short-cuts for a further survey of relevant literature.

<sup>12</sup> See the comment by Laura Pereira: “While the food-energy link is important, in terms of climate change impacts in South Africa the emphasis is on the linkages between the food and water systems.” See Pereira, Laura M., *The Future of South Africa’s Food System: What is research telling us?*, South African Food Lab, 2014. See [http://awsassets.wwf.org.za/downloads/safl\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_south\\_africas\\_food\\_system.pdf](http://awsassets.wwf.org.za/downloads/safl_the_future_of_south_africas_food_system.pdf) (accessed 29 January 2016).

situation as the backdrop for some wider theological reflections on the underlying issues. It may perhaps serve as a parable that invites further reflection.

In the South African spring of 2015 climate scientists warned South African citizens that clear evidence from sea temperatures in the Pacific was available that a strongly developed El Niño system will have an impact on weather patterns in the summer rain fall areas in southern African countries in 2015/2016. This warning proved to be timeous, if perhaps not truly “prophetic”. In five of the nine South African provinces rain was virtually absent in spring (September to November) and early summer. Although some rainfalls were recorded by mid-January such rain came too late to plant maize. Much the same applies within other southern African countries.<sup>13</sup> Maize is the staple diet for most South Africans and is also used as fodder for farm animals. The drought was associated with several heat waves, soaring temperatures and unprecedented dust storms. Especially the province of Free State was turned into a virtual sand desert. Pictures published in the media captured the imagination of many.

The implications of this drought are many and far-reaching, some with a long-term impact. In short, there is water scarcity in many towns – with dam and underground water levels dropping and the quality of water deteriorating, actual food shortages are likely (especially in Zimbabwe), food security for subsistence farmers will become an issue due to the now inevitable crop failures, maize will need to be imported at high costs, prices of some food products are expected to rise drama-

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<sup>13</sup> Obi Anyadike reports that “Southern Africa is facing the threat of extensive crop failures this year as a result of record low rainfall in a region in which 29 million people already don’t have reliable access to enough affordable and nutritious food.” See <http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2016/01/28/southern-africa%E2%80%99s-food-crisis-numbers> (accessed 28 February 2016).

tically, while inflation is around 6%.<sup>14</sup> Some have called this South Africa's food price a time bomb. Moreover, herds of farm animals and wildlife on commercial farms will have to be culled, leading to a short term over-supply of meat with longer term cost implications. Of course, there is the possibility that this weather pattern will recur more frequently due to climate change, if perhaps not annually.

Farmer unions have called for the drought to be declared a national emergency and for support from government. However, such calls come within a volatile political climate. There are long-standing debates on the conquest of land and the widely acknowledged need for land redistribution. Controversies continue over the administrative lack of progress, the mechanisms used for land redistribution and the recognition of private property and market-related forces in this regard. In addition there are unresolved problems around support for emerging farmers in terms of infrastructure, skills development and financing. In this context government is understandably reluctant to provide financial support for farmers that would not also benefit farm workers.<sup>15</sup> The dominant concerns remain over land redistribution, land rights, the rights of farm workers and minimum wages. However, there is also the recognition that South Africa relies on around 38 000 large commercial farms (3% of farm owners) for something like 95% of its formal sector food supplies.<sup>16</sup> At the same time there are widespread concerns over

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<sup>14</sup> Recent media reports indicate that food inflation has increased due to the drought from 4.3% in June 2015 to 7% in January 2016. From January 2015 to January 2016 the market value of white maize increased with 150%, for yellow maize with 90%, while wheat and soya increased with 25%.

<sup>15</sup> An amount of R1 billion was eventually made available for drought relief in the budget speech delivered by Min. Pravin Gordhan on 24 February 2016. The amount is aimed at sinking boreholes and the distribution of water (R502 million), support for small-scale farmers (318 million) and distribution of fodder (187 million).

<sup>16</sup> This is according to a report for the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) entitled *Agriculture: Facts & Trends South Africa*. See <http://awsassets>.



safety for farmer owners and farm workers alike due to numerous incidents of what is called “farm attacks” and “farm murders”, while allegations of racism and ill-treatment of workers are also rife and highly publicized.

In one incident (6 January 2016) near the town of Parys in the Free State province an elderly farmer, Loedie van der Westhuizen (72) was attacked, called for help, was assisted by a self-organised neighbourhood watch of around 40 men who pursued the two alleged culprits, Samuel Tjexa (35) and Seun Tangasha (28 or 29), apprehended them and beat them to death. Some reports suggested that this was not yet another farm attack but a wage dispute. Four farmers were then arrested but were released on bail due to insufficient police evidence – which is the pattern in all too many criminal investigations. Tensions are understandably high in the town.

All of this is situated in a highly volatile political climate. This is not easily captured with any degree of objectivity. Suffice it to say that there will be municipal elections in 2016. The ruling African National Congress (ANC) acknowledged during a mid-term review that its membership has dwindled while opposition parties hope to gain substantial support in order to challenge the ANC dominance in several metropolitan areas and with a view to the 2019 national elections.

In addition, there are ongoing service delivery protests, regular allegations of corruption and self-enrichment in many sectors of society, including government, concerns over the legacy of the Marikana massacre in 2012 (in which 41 mine workers were killed by the police), several legal battles which President Jacob Zuma has to confront (e.g. over “security upgrades” to his Nkandla homestead) and (occasionally

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[Wwf.org.za/downloads/facts\\_brochure\\_mockup\\_04\\_b.pdf](http://Wwf.org.za/downloads/facts_brochure_mockup_04_b.pdf) (accessed 29 January 2016). On food security in South Africa, see also the report by Laura M. Pereira, *The Future of South Africa's Food System*.

violent) student protests over the cost of tertiary education. In such a volatile climate fascist groups on opposite sides of the political spectrum have emerged that deliberately seek to polarise race relations. Universities have become the battle ground for simmering conflicts. This political climate needs to be understood in the context of extremely high levels of (youth) unemployment, the obvious need for poverty alleviation despite huge government spending on various social grants, the migration of millions of people to South Africa from other (southern) African countries, the highest levels of economic inequality in the world, declining currency values, financial security grading indicating a low trust from investors and implying that higher interest rates would need to be paid on loans, a deeply polarised education system (with some good schools relying on private funding and a significant proportion of dysfunctional schools), the prevailing impact of HIV and AIDS amidst an equally polarised public health system, soaring energy prices amidst what is called “load shedding”, controversies over unaffordable contracts for nuclear power, the building of coal-fired power plants and so forth.<sup>17</sup>

In all of this the South African context is far from unique but it remains a kind of parable indicating simmering global tensions.

## **6.2 Theological Resources and Approaches**

It should be clear to all concerned that climate change has been directly affecting the livelihoods of marginalized communities, farmers and fishing communities, who are crucial to the world’s food security.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> There are ample sources be consulted on each of these concerns. A good overview may be found in the *Diagnostic Report* and the *Diagnostic Overview* produced by the South African National Planning Commission in 2011.

<sup>18</sup> This formulation is derived from a WCC press release on 9 December 2015, with COP 21 still in session. See <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press->

The interplay between climate change, fresh water scarcity and food security requires political responses and a transformation of the global economy, including global food systems. Ecumenical networks, religious groups, Christianity in particular and Christian theology can only play a minor role in this regard and only in conversation and collaboration with other role players. Faith-based organisations would also be right to stress that food security cannot be reduced to ensuring production and distribution: “Rather than being driven by markets, our decisions and interventions need to be guided by communities’ priorities, knowledge and capabilities to plan for and overcome climate change.”<sup>19</sup>

Yet, given the immense complexity and scale of the problems there is a vital need to address the moral and indeed the spiritual roots of the underlying problem. Many have recognized that climate change and food insecurity are deeply moral issues and have rightly called for justice, equity, sustainability, resolving climate debt, frugality, wisdom,<sup>20</sup> charity where need be, and so forth. There is an obvious need to align oneself with such calls but perhaps no need to merely reiterate such demands if all are more or less agreed on the underlying principles, if not their implications. Ecclesial resolutions aimed at those in positions of power can easily degenerate to talking to the already converted insiders only, perhaps even with a sense of self-righteousness.<sup>21</sup> A

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centre/news/cop21-how-climate-change-affects-access-to-our-daily-bread (accessed 30 January 2016).

<sup>19</sup> See again <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/cop21-how-climate-change-affects-access-to-our-daily-bread> (accessed 30 January 2016).

<sup>20</sup> In its Food for Life Campaign, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) reported that “one-third and one-half of all food produced for human consumption is wasted, due to lack of storage and distribution infrastructure as well as through wasteful retail and consumer practices”. This clearly requires the virtues of frugality and wisdom. See <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/eaaf/food-for-life-campaign> (accessed 30 January 2016).

<sup>21</sup> See the argument of my article “Climate Change and the Common Good:

welcome recent exception is the set of “Ten Commandments” on food through the lens of justice, presented by Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, the WCC general secretary, at a World Economic Forum session. He spelled out how food choices can become a catalyst for positive change.<sup>22</sup>

The spiritual roots of climate change are less obvious but still widely recognized, for example in statements by Patriarch Bartholomew<sup>23</sup> and Pope Francis.<sup>24</sup> In short, if we know that there is a problem, realize the extent of the problem, know what is to be done, have the technology to address that, can calculate that the related economic costs are still bearable, have some political will to find solutions (e.g. at COP 21), but have collectively still been unable to turn the tide of carbon emissions, this suggests a spiritual problem. It points to a lack of moral energy, moral imagination (imaging what kind of different world is possible) and moral leadership.<sup>25</sup>

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Some Reflections from the South African Context”, in: *International Journal of Public Theology* 4, 2010, 271-293.

<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/tveit-on-the-2011-ten-commandments-2011-of-food> (accessed 30 January 2016).

<sup>23</sup> See Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, “Statement for the WCC Working Group on Climate Change”, in: *Climate change*, Geneva: WCC, 2005, 67.

<sup>24</sup> The spiritual roots of ecological destruction is a recurring theme in Pope Francis’ encyclical letter “On Care for Our Common Home” entitled *Laudato Si*, Vatican Press, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> In their foreword to a series on world religions and ecology, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim comment: “It is becoming increasingly evident that abundant scientific knowledge of the crisis is available and numerous political and economic statements have been formulated. Yet we seem to lack the political, economic, and scientific leadership to make necessary changes. Moreover, what is still lacking is the religious commitment, moral imagination, and ethical engagement to transform the environmental crisis from an issue on paper to one of effective policy, from rhetoric in print to realism in action.” See Tucker, Mary E./ Grim, John: “Series foreword”, in: T. Hessel, Dieter/ Radford Ruether, Rosemary (eds.), *Christianity and ecology: Seeking the well-being of earth and humans*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, xv-xxxii (xix).

Given the moral and spiritual roots of the underlying problem one can easily identify distinct yet related avenues to approach the problem from within an ecumenical context. Let me merely list them:

Some recognise the need for a pastoral response, i.e. helping the victims of climate injustice and food insecurity to come to terms with their loss and to find a way forward – and to pastorally confront perpetrators with what they are doing.

Some approach the problem at a practical level, e.g. through ecclesial praxis, the work of faith-based organisations with diverse interests, launching sustainable development projects, organizing charity and relief projects to address immediate needs and so forth.

Some consider a ritualized response, e.g. through the cultivation of spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, manual labour) and the cultivation of the virtues of frugality, restraint, generosity, hospitality, justice and wisdom.

Yet others insist that a political or prophetic response is required in order to stand in solidarity with the victims, to speak truth to power, to call for policy changes and so forth.<sup>26</sup>

Some may think that offering ethical pronouncements may suffice. They adopt resolutions at various levels seeking to clarify appropriate principles, perhaps justifying such moral demands from biblical texts, social analysis, contextual needs or through rational argumentation.

Yet others focus on more strictly theological reflection. They ask what God is saying and doing in such a world, seeking to discern God's will, drawing on resources from their particular traditions to facilitate this task. I will return to this below.

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<sup>26</sup> See the booklet produced for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 2002: *Solidarity with Victims of Climate Change: Reflections on the World Council of Churches' Response to Climate Change*, Geneva: WCC, 2002.

These avenues are not mutually exclusive, of course, but I suggest that the one may at times be emphasized at the cost of the other. In short, it should be clear that a multi-dimensional response is required, one that requires from all of us to use our hearts, our heads, our hands, our feet, ears, voices and indeed our guts.

There are rich resources available within the various confessional traditions to assist one with this task and to understand its complexity. Consider for example the typically reformed notion that a Christian vocation has prophetic, royal and priestly dimensions. Or consider the multiple dimensions of mission that may help us to see that witness through word cannot be separated from deed, that witness (*marturia*) cannot be separated from service (*diakonia*) and that the integrity of both proclamation (*kerygma*) and service (*diakonia*) will be judged by the quality of fellowship (*koinonia*) and more specifically by the orientation of worship (*latreia*) and liturgy (*leitourgia*).<sup>27</sup> Others have used the distinction between the liturgy and the liturgy of life to aid understanding.<sup>28</sup> In my view all these categories are helpful but do not yet address the core theological challenge that climate change and food insecurity confronts us with. I will now turn to that core theological challenge.

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<sup>27</sup> This structure is employed in a forthcoming volume entitled “The Church in God’s Household: Protestant Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ecology” edited by Clive W. Ayre and Ernst M. Conradie, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> I have explored the transformative impetus of a liturgical vision (a way of seeing the world) at some length in *The Earth in God’s Economy: Creation, Salvation and Consummation in Ecological Perspective*, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2015.

### 6.3 The Theological Challenge: What is God up to?

For Christians there is only one thing which is more dangerous than trying to identify the finger of God in human history amidst the wider evolutionary history – and that is not to even raise the question. Amidst many false prophets and ongoing attempts to seek theological justification for particular social causes there is a clear need for an encompassing vision of God’s work and for more detailed discernment in particular circumstances,<sup>29</sup> to read the signs of the time through social analysis (seeing), to discern where God is within all of this (judging) and to seek God’s will (acting). How, then, does one proceed with this daunting task? Where does one find an appropriate key? Let us consider some possibilities, noting that the plausibility of every proposal is undermined by the next one.

Traditionally, especially in the reformed tradition, themes such as the weather, rains, fertility and harvests were discussed under the rubric of divine *providence*.<sup>30</sup> Since God cares for us as creatures (all God’s creatures), God continues to provide in our needs, despite the impact of human sin. Providence should not be taken for granted though: after the fall it required an actual decision from God not to relinquish the works of his hands (or the fruit of her womb), to maintain and govern the world in order to introduce a plan of salvation that would allow creation to flourish again. According to this logic, we should not be too surprised if

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<sup>29</sup> For this distinction between vision and discernment, see Wood, Charles M., *Vision and Discernment: An Orientation in Theological Study*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985.

<sup>30</sup> There is ample literature here, but the discerning reader will pick up an implicit reference to Abraham Kuyper’s (in)famous notion of God’s “common grace” – to restrain the impact of evil in the world. For a discussion from the perspective of eco-theology, see Conradie, Ernst M. (ed.), *Creation and Salvation: Dialogue on Abraham Kuyper’s Legacy for Contemporary Eco-theology*, Leiden: Brill, 2011.

weather patterns change, if rains do not come on time and if there is crop failure. This is what one should expect given the self-destructive impact of sin. It reminds us not to take God's providence for granted. This may be a form of punishment from God but it is better understood as a parental reminder that we remain dependent upon forces beyond our locus of control. If we heed that reminder and express our dependence upon God and our gratitude for God's sustained blessings (the very gift of life), God will continue to care for us, even if we act like rebellious children.<sup>31</sup> Either way, such caring is not sufficient for our well-being. Beyond God's conservation of a fallen world (not allowing it to self-destruct), we also need God's governance in history and some form of mutuality between Creator and creature. Beyond providence in the form of *conservatio*, *gubernatio* and *concursus*, we also need God's salvation and the final completion or fulfilment of God's work.

Does such a theological interpretation of God's care help us to come to terms with climate change and food insecurity? Some would suggest that, given the gravity and scale of the nexus of problems, it would be better to discuss this in a *soteriological* key. What is required is nothing less than salvation.<sup>32</sup> If salvation is understood as wholeness (*heil*) or

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<sup>31</sup> The specific theological content of the notion of sustainability is seldom recognized even though the apparently originated in an ecumenical context (at a WCC consultation in Bucharest, 1974). The emphasis on sustainability may indeed be regarded as a secularized expression of the doctrine of providence. It expresses faith in the God whose creative, nurturing, redemptive and innovative love sustains the whole earth, moment by moment. This is also the tenure of numerous Psalms: the steadfast love and mercy of God upholds, feeds and sustains us in time of need: "I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the Lord sustains me" (Psalm 3:6, NRSV). We do not need to be afraid for the Lord our God is with us. God strengthens us, helps us and sustains us (Isaiah 41:10). This sustenance that God provides is also enduring; it is based on the everlasting faithfulness of God to the work of God's hands. Accordingly, sustainability is best understood within the context of the doctrine of providence.

<sup>32</sup> The relationship between God's work of creation and salvation has been explored in a series of publications. See Conradie, Ernst M. (ed.), *Creation and*



comprehensive well-being, then God's acts of salvation would target any deficiency in such well-being.<sup>33</sup> This accounts for the wide variety of biblical metaphors for salvation (used here as a generic term), including the liberation of slaves, liberation from oppression, healing from life-threatening diseases, feeding the hungry amidst famine, deliverance from evil through exorcism from evil forces, rescuing amidst military and security threats, redemption of those held hostage, reconciliation amidst various forms of violent conflict, the reintroduction of law amidst chaos and anarchy, pedagogy for the ignorant, the reconstruction of society through new visions and so forth.<sup>34</sup> It is obvious that some of these images are favoured in particular confessional traditions and theological schools more than others. Each of these has contemporary relevance amidst climate change, food security and environmental refugees. In the context of climate change we do not merely need a continuation of existing weather patterns but a transformation of the energy basis of the entire global economy from fossil fuels to sustainable alternatives. This would require something of a miracle within the next few decades and, should this happen, even secularized Christians may well attribute this to God's doing.

Others may pray for another, more overt form of *miracle*. This begs many further questions though: What can God really be expected to do

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*Salvation, Volume 1: A Mosaic of Essays on Selected Classic Christian Theologians*, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2011; also *Creation and Salvation, Volume 2: A Companion on Recent Theological Movements*, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012 as well as my *Saving the Earth? The Legacy of Reformed Views on "Re-creation"*, Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> This position has been adopted by Klaus Nürnberger, an eminent South African Lutheran theologian, in many of his books. See for example his *Regaining Sanity for the Earth*, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion and clustering together of such images, see my article "The Salvation of the Earth from Anthropogenic Destruction: In Search of Appropriate Soteriological Concepts in an Age of Ecological Destruction", in: *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, Ecology 14* (2-3), 2010, 111-140.

about climate change? What miracle would change the concentration of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere? How does God act in the world?<sup>35</sup> How does science inform one's worldview and how do worldviews shape our notions of divine action? Should one place one's hope instead on human ingenuity and technological innovation? Would we have to redeem ourselves from the worst impact of climate change so that God-talk is merely a decorative way of mustering our strength for the task that lies ahead? What about differences of class, race, gender, culture and bioregion with reference to those likely to secure such "redemption" for themselves and their families? Who are then included in the whole household of God? Only the elite? What about all God's other creatures?

Given such unresolved questions, yet others would opt for an *eschatological* or even an *apocalyptic* key to understand what God is doing.<sup>36</sup> Apocalyptic imagery is of course rife in the media, popular culture, novels and films alike. Post-apocalyptic literature typically presumes that the world has to go through some form of punishment for the "sins" of industrialized civilization, often in the aftermath of a nuclear meltdown, infectious diseases or a dramatic change in weather patterns. However, after a period of tribulation a remnant of survivors is always somehow saved and they have to start anew, building human communities. The conditions may vary. Some images assume preliterate societies, others allow for technological innovation or for trans-human forms of life. The popularity of such imagery is perfectly

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<sup>35</sup> There is a huge corpus of literature on this question in the context of science and theology discourse. For a discussion in the context of eco-theology, see Edwards, Denis, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption and Special Divine Action*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010 and my *The Earth in God's Economy*, 175-220.

<sup>36</sup> For a critique, see my essay "Appropriate contemporary forms of apocalyptic", in Haker, Hille/ Torres Queiruga, André/ Wacker, Marie-Theres (eds.): *The Return of Apocalypticism, Concilium*, 2014/3, 96-103.

understandable. The global industrialized economy requires a precarious balancing of market forces but is plagued by serious distortions and internal tensions that seem irresolvable. There are legitimate fears that the whole system may simply collapse due to population growth, rampant consumerism, terrorism, nuclear threats, civil wars, the migration of peoples and so forth.

Given the popularity of such imagery Christians may well be tempted to draw on biblical apocalypse to conclude that climate change is indeed God's final *punishment* for human sin. Some would say that the world as we know it will indeed come to an end and put their trust either in some form of millennial expectations, in heaven as a "home beyond the clouds" where we (humans only!) will be relieved from this "earthly vale of tears", or perhaps in the coming into being of a "new heaven and a new earth". Others would agree that it may be necessary for God to "stir the soup", to allow for the destructive but creative forces of chaos to rule for a while in order to allow something radically new to emerge from such chaos.<sup>37</sup> Maybe some *homo excelsior* may then be born?! Yet others would lament the impact of the Anthropocene and fear that the evolution of intelligent forms of life will come to a premature end if the last of the hominid species comes to extinction due to climate change. If climate change would lead to the skipping of several ice ages, coupled with mass extinctions, it is possible (since the lifespan of the solar system is roughly halfway) that evolutionary processes may never get back on track again.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> I am drawing here on a famous article by Arnold van Ruler entitled "God en de Chaos". See van Keulen, Dirk (ed.), *Verzameld Werk, Deel III: God, Schepping, Mens, Zonde*, Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2009, 159-172.

<sup>38</sup> I have heard such views expressed by the (atheist) Australian philosopher Clive Hamilton. See for example his *Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change*, London & New York: Earthscan, 2010.

Given the popularity of such imagery and the scale and complexity of the problems it may be prudent, some would say, to give up on activist dreams to “save the planet”. It is futile and psychologically debilitating for ordinary folks to be overly concerned about planetary problems since these are in any case far beyond their locus of control. It is better to focus on one’s daily tasks and to cultivate skills and virtues that will enable one to survive in an increasingly hostile climate. Especially for those on the margins of the global economy this can only be done in community. It is therefore crucial to foster communities based on mutual care and resilience. These will have to be sustainable communities,<sup>39</sup> perhaps self-sustaining communities that would be able to attend to food sustenance, food security and sustainable livelihoods. In many (but not all) parts of Africa the church provides a symbol of hope in this regard. Local Christian communities are often amongst the more functional organizations. They attract regular attendance by significant numbers of people, have some credible leaders (despite the prevalence of abusive charismatic leadership), have moral resources to draw on and enjoy more trust from local people than any other political party, trade union, business or school. Such Christians may suggest that God’s plan for the salvation of the world, also amidst climate change, is through the church, through the establishment, formation, ministries and missions of local congregations. The task of formation is then crucial and is epitomized by the worshipping community, where people learn to see the world from God’s perspective despite prevailing power structures, to see the radical distortions of this world, beloved by God, in

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<sup>39</sup> See my article “A Few Notes on the Heuristic Key of ‘Sustainable Community’, in: *Scriptura* 75 (4), 2000, 345-357, drawing especially on Larry Rasmussen’s *Earth Community – Earth Ethics*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996.

the light of the Light of the world. Accordingly, what God is up to amidst climate change can only be answered *ecclesiologically*.<sup>40</sup>

There are, of course, other Christians who would find such a vision far too narrow, too provincial and domesticated. They may point to counter examples of dysfunctional Christian communities, of abusive leadership and of moral decay to suggest that the church is scarcely a symbol of hope. Moral communities are easily destroyed. In a context of rampant consumerism, amongst the affluent and poor alike, moral resources are more easily depleted than replenished.<sup>41</sup> They would comment that church services are all too often demoralising and epitomize the underlying problem, that biblical preaching is replaced by motivational speeches, that the Holy Communion too often degenerates towards an empty ritual. Moreover, Sunday at 10h00 (or 11h00) remains the “most divided hour”<sup>42</sup> of the week in terms of race, language and culture and even gender (noting the numeric weight of women despite predominantly male leadership). Instead of focusing on narrow group identities, there is a need for a more encompassing vision that would energize such local communities. Perhaps that vision is an *ecumenical* one, of the whole household of God standing in solidarity with each other before the Creator. Or perhaps the vision needs to be *missiological*: the church is an instrument in God’s mission to the world

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<sup>40</sup> See again Ayre/ Conradie: “The Church in God’s Household”.

<sup>41</sup> See especially Rasmussen, Larry: *Moral Fragments and Moral Community*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993. This emphasis on moral community is picked up in many WCC publications from the same period, including the study on *Ecclesiology and Ethics: Ecumenical Ethical Engagement, Moral Formation and the Nature of the Church*, Best, Thomas/ Robra, Martin (eds.), Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1997.

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion on Martin Luther King (jr)’s phrase, see Van der Borght, Eddy, “Sunday morning the most segregated hour: On racial reconciliation as unfinished business for theology in South Africa and beyond”, 2009. Inaugural lecture delivered upon accepting the position of VU University Amsterdam Desmond Tutu chair.

that God loves so much. Or perhaps there is still room for the vision of God's *coming reign*, to be established in "every square inch" of society.

The problem is of course that these expressions of an encompassing vision tend to sound rather hollow amidst simmering tensions, current migration patterns and the looming threats associated with climate change. How would such a vision sustain us if things get worse?

#### **6.4 Another Theological Challenge: Which God?**

Given such conflicting attempts to read the signs of the time and to discern the finger of God in human and evolutionary history, there is perhaps a need for clues to look in the right direction. This is why it is theologically unavoidable to reflect on the identity and character of God. This is an equally difficult task. In the context of secularized societies many would be inclined to leave God out of public debates on climate change since these are complex enough (and plagued by climate denialists with religious agendas) so that it may be wise not to confuse public discussions with added controversies. In the context of interreligious dialogue and multi-faith collaboration to address the moral problems associated with climate change to focus on God's identity may prove to be divisive. Nevertheless, there again may be only one thing that is worse than talking about God's identity and character and that would be to eschew such God-talk altogether. This reduction of religion to matters of morality is the danger of self-secularisation<sup>43</sup> – which will in the end leave Christians with not much to contribute to public debates

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<sup>43</sup> For an early discussion of this term, see Huber, Wolfgang, *Kirche in der Zeitenwende: Gesellschaftlicher Wandel und Erneuerung der Kirche*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 1998. The danger here is of reducing God-talk to ethics for the sake of public accessibility.

except in purely functional ways, given the lasting influence of Christianity in many societies.

There is another important reason to address such *theological* concerns and that is the need to respond to the now global culture of consumerism – which plagues industrialized societies, countries that become indebted due to spending habits embedded in the national psyche and the upwardly social mobility in emerging economies alike.<sup>44</sup> It also pervades Christianity itself – as is evident in ongoing debates on the prosperity gospel, the good news of “health and wealth” proclaimed by many. The question here is one of idolatry: as Luther observed better than most others, one’s god is that in which one puts one’s trust to ensure well-being. There are many available surrogates for God and these are widely discussed, if also elusive: nutritious food, the power of positive thinking, sport, hygiene, physical beauty, bodily strength, education, development, money, the Market and so forth. In addition, there are many rival claims for influence (as exercised by movie stars and sports heroes) and power, if not omnipotence – from gods legitimizing the interests of narrow group identities with their claims to control water, oil and territory, to military super-powers, to computing power to an evolutionary battle cry for the survival of the fittest.

In this context Christians may need to revisit the ancient contestation between Israel’s faith in Yahweh, the God of the exodus, and fertility cults such as Baal. In Canaanite religion (where harvests depended on rainfalls rather than irrigation) the dry summers were explained as Baal’s time in the underworld and his return in autumn was said to bring the rains. The cult is therefore aimed at ensuring the timely return of Baal. Anxieties over the availability of water increased the immediate significance of this cult in comparison with the more aloof God “El”.

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<sup>44</sup> For a discussion, see my *Christianity and a Critique of Consumerism: A Survey of Six Points of Entry*, Wellington: Bible Media, 2009.

At the heart of this contest is the altogether human need to come to terms with that which lies beyond one's locus of control. This includes issues related to health, fertility, rains, harvests, surviving military battles, safety on the road, personal happiness and so forth. In each case there are many things that can be done to enhance one's chances, to extend one's power and sphere of influence, but ultimately each of these categories lies beyond one's locus of control. This begs the question: what determines that which cannot be controlled? Perhaps luck, fate or randomness, but it is easy to understand why such forces beyond one's control can become hypostasized in the form of heroes, superheroes, lesser divinities, deities or their representatives. Indeed, social insecurity seems to drive people to religion while some degree of security seems to alienate others from any need for religion. It is also easy to understand why offerings and sacrifices may be deemed expedient in order to steer the whims and moods of fickle, capricious and impulsive gods in a way that would secure their favour. Such sacrifices elicited the ridicule of Israel's prophets and the vehement critique whenever such sacrifices are brought to Yahweh with a similar pretence. The danger is of course that one can easily blame that which is beyond one's locus of control for any misfortune. If one cannot blame the enemy, why not blame the gods?<sup>45</sup>

Such prophetic critique invites the need for more clarity on how Israel's God is different from the gods of Canaanite fertility cults, for example Baal and Ashera. What kind of God is this? It is clear that the favour of this God cannot be induced by bribes. It is not like playing the lottery either. However, there is no simple answer here given contesting theologies already embedded in the Old Testament. For Christians the best available clue to God's identity and character may be found in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, later proclaimed as the Messiah,

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<sup>45</sup> See Midgley, Mary, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature*, New York: Routledge, 1995, 42.



the Christ. This too remains open to contestation as is amply evident in debates on the historical Jesus, the Christ of faith and the manifold cultural faces of Jesus. Such debates continue nowadays in terms of critiques of race, gender, class, industrialised capitalism and Empire, e.g. in the context of feminist theology, liberation theology, black theology, eco-theology and postcolonial theology, albeit that such critiques do not always (despite the rubric of *theology*) focus on God's identity and character. There are some innovative exceptions such as an emphasis on the feminine face of God, the God of the underdogs, of the poor, oppressed and marginalized, the black Christ, the nurturing womb of the Mother, the life-supporting and life-changing Breath of God and so forth. These debates are important and have to be related ecumenically to the Trinitarian heart of the Christian (Nicene) confession. Such debates cannot but be situated in the context of interreligious dialogue, debates on secularism and multi-faith collaboration on anything that is of common but penultimate concern. Seeking full clarity would underestimate the divine Mystery but not even approaching such Mystery will be spiritually empty.

## **6.5 So what about Climate Change and Food Insecurity?**

There is no shortage of lobbying groups positioning themselves on public debates on climate mitigation and adaptation. There is likewise no shortage of proposals on how to address hunger, food insecurity, development needs, widening economic inequalities, rampant unemployment or violent conflict. Yet solutions remain elusive to say the least. In such a context Christians may need a moment to meditate on appropriate responses rather than to merely reiterate prophetic critique and calls for actions, crucial as that would obviously remain. There is a

need for wisdom, vision and discernment amidst the cacophony of lobbying voices.

Such meditation may take many forms in different contexts, including Bible study, liturgical renewal, prayer, spiritual disciplines such as celebrating the holy communion, fasting, manual labour and the cultivation of the virtues of gratitude (for food and rain), frugality, generosity, hospitality, justice and wisdom. In such meditations it would be wise to reflect *theologically* on the symbolic meaning of words such as climate (air, being a feather on the breath of God), food (its production, distribution and consumption<sup>46</sup>), eating (absorbing other metabolisms – which always involves a degree of force unless what is eaten includes only fruit, nuts and seeds – as in the holy communion<sup>47</sup>) and water. It may suffice here to give two related examples of such meditation, returning to the South African context sketched above.

The historically deeply divided Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting Reformed Church in the Western Cape have a long-standing joint project on reintroducing a common lectionary in reformed congregations. We are currently planning towards the Season of

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<sup>46</sup> The annual meeting of the Theological Society of South Africa, 11-15 July 2016, will be “From farm to fork: Theological and ethical reflection on the production, distribution and consumption of food”.

<sup>47</sup> I am currently teaching a postgraduate module on “Religion and food contestation” within the context of a Mellon-funded project on “Food Contestation: Humanities and the Food System” housed within the Centre of Excellence in Food Security, located at the University of the Western Cape. In this project we are exploring the interface between gender and food security and the social construction of the symbolic meaning of food. One crucial aspect is to understand the very act of eating. This is indeed contested terrain with Darwinian, capitalist, ascetic, puritan, vegetarian, vegan and feminist perspectives coming into play. The crucial theological question is how the act of eating (and the degree of violence involved) has to be understood in the context of the Christian affirmation of the goodness of God’s creation. For a delightful South African contribution to this debate, see Versfeld, Marthinus, *Food for Thought: A Philosopher’s Cook-book*, Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1983.

Creation in September 2017. There are three core texts for the relevant Sundays, namely Exodus 3:1-15, 12:1-14 and 14:19-31. All three (the burning bush, the first Passover and the crossing of the Reed Sea) are foundational within the Judaeo-Christian tradition. They tell of the presence and mighty acts of God in the midst of an enslaved people. Given the impact of food insecurity amidst the current drought (food insecurity is likely to prevail in the southern Spring of 2017, awaiting a new rain season in most areas) we will raise the question: what can we expect God to be doing in this context? What can we still pray for? Can God, in order to bring relief, change weather patterns that we are changing in a different direction?

In another project, still in an early planning phase, Ezra Chitando and I are hoping to put together a volume of essays provisionally entitled “Praying for Rain? African Perspectives on Religion and Climate Change”. Would it make sense to pray for rain if we know that droughts are related to El Niño and that El Niño is aggravated by anthropogenic climate change?

These are pertinent questions that will bring into play confessional differences, contextual needs and underlying worldviews. It will also bring into play scientific insights and ongoing debates on divine action in the world. Our sense is that Africans need to contribute to global and ecumenical discourse in this regard.

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## ECO-THEOLOGY STRATEGY

### The Calling of Influencing Key Drivers

*Christoph Stückelberger*

#### **7.1 500 Years of Creation Theology, 50 years of Eco-Theology**

Eco-theology is not only a topic of the last decades, but is as old as theology itself throughout history.

The Old Church: creation theology as always part of faith and doctrine, even though not with a direct link to environmental destruction, but with reference to God the creator and sustainer of the creation.

In Reformation it is impressive that all reformers – even though concentrated on salvation of human individuals – always that non-human beings will be part of eternal life in heaven. No salvation of humans without salvation of the whole creation was their faith.<sup>48</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Pietism emphasised individual salvation. There was a disconnection to technology and responsibility of

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<sup>48</sup> See Stückelberger, Christoph, *Umwelt und Entwicklung. Eine sozioethische Orientierung*, Stuttgart 1996, 133-142.



churches for science and technology. This is one reason why churches did not interact with new technological developments by setting ethical and religious benchmarks.

In the 20th century: Eco-theology was rediscovered step by step, as early as 1925 by the Religious Socialist Leonhard Ragaz in Zurich,<sup>49</sup> then by Karl Barth in Basel.<sup>50</sup> From the 1970ies, a broad literature on eco-theology, eco-ethics and eco-praxis emerged.

Let me add my own history of dealing with eco-theology in the last four decades. 1979, at the age of 28, I was invited by my ethics professor Arthur Rich in Zurich to publish my first book, my master thesis, on a new lifestyle which respects environment and development.<sup>51</sup> 1986 I initiated and founded together with the great ecumenist Lukas Vischer the Swiss Association Church and Environment OeKU.<sup>52</sup> It continues since thirty years to work with parishes for eco-theology and eco-praxis. 1989 I represented the Conference of European Churches CEC at the multi-stakeholder Conference on Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change in Washington and sensitized by it initiated 1990 the first church campaign on Climate Change in Switzerland with the motto: "Reduce each year fossil energy by 2%". If this slogan was implemented in society, we could have solved the climate issue. The figures were on the table, the measures needed were clear. 1996 I published my habilitation on Environmental

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 159-162.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 156-159. See Link, Christian, *Schöpfung, Vol. 1*, Gütersloh 1991, 257-329.

<sup>51</sup> Stückelberger, Christoph, *Aufbruch zu einem menschengerechten Wachstum. Sozialethische Ansätze für einen neuen Lebensstil*, Zürich 1979, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1982.

<sup>52</sup> Ökumenische Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kirche und Umwelt, [www.oeku.ch](http://www.oeku.ch)

Ethics.<sup>53</sup> I continue to support ongoing concrete actions, green churches, also by worldwide teaching.<sup>54</sup>

## **7.2 Survey 2016: Some Findings and Challenges**

The *Global Survey on Eco-theology, Climate Justice and Food Security in Theol. Education and Christian Leadership Development* is an important survey on efforts on all continents.<sup>55</sup> The final report will show more details. At this place I want to draw the attention only on *five key recommendations*:

- Extension of resources and simplified access to resources. Online availability deserves first priority as form of distribution.
- Provision of resources in catchy ways. Therefore, these types of resources should be prioritized as the junctions to connect, focusing on liturgies.
- Improvement of inter-connected collaboration. The various “inter” seem to be beneficial for many participants and were often emphasised in the survey.
- To raise the number of institutions who provide ETCF-related lessons, is a key connector to raise awareness and knowledge, mainly for future ministers and church affiliated persons.
- Awareness-raising. Faith-based organisations and churches should not be the odd person out when it comes to environmental and climate issues. Public relations for the non-affiliated public is not of utmost priority, but should not be neglected.

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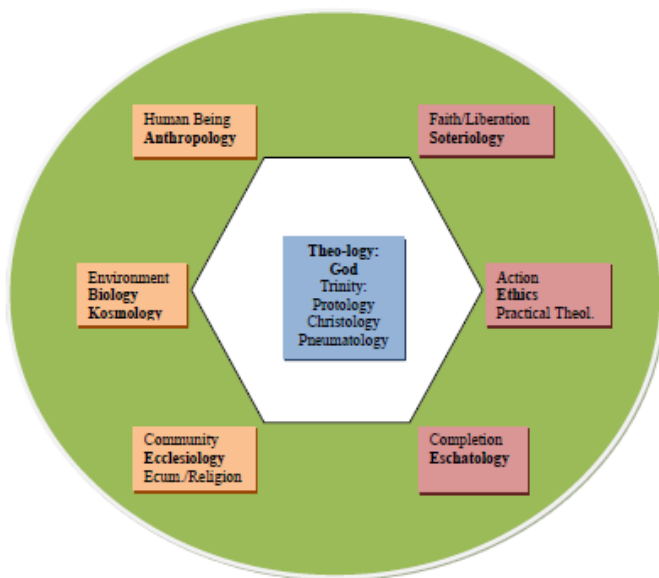
<sup>53</sup> Stückelberger, Christoph, *Umwelt und Entwicklung. Eine soziaethische Orientierung*, Stuttgart 1996.

<sup>54</sup> See a compilation of my texts on Eco-theology in Stückelberger, Christoph, *Global Ethics Applied, Vol 2 Environmental Ethics*, Globethics Readers Series, Geneva 2016.

<sup>55</sup> See in this volume pages 77ff.

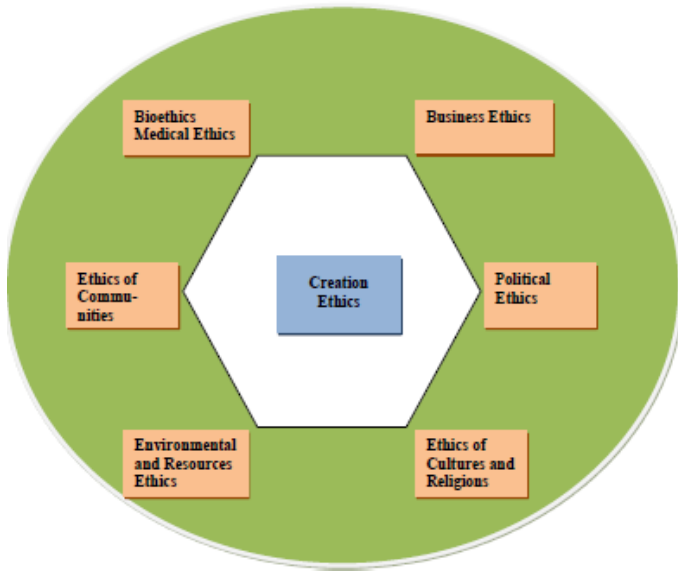
### 7.3 Theological Themes

In Eco-theology there is often a one-sided emphasis on Protology, the doctrine of creation and the beginning of the world. We rarely find deep considerations on Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, and Eschatology. We need to include all theological disciplines in Eco-theology!



### 7.4 Ethical Themes

In Creation Ethics we observe often a one-sided emphasis on Environmental Ethics in a narrow sense of the relation between human beings and nature. But the environment cannot be improved if we do not include more often ethics of economy, politics, technology, cultures, religions and media.



## 7.5 Church Actors

Churches and church-related institutions have manifold forms and specific chances and limitations related to environmental engagement

- Individual Christians as private persons
- Individual Christians in their professional professions
- Informal groups of Christians (e.g. bible study groups, action groups)
- Parishes
- Denominational churches (majority and minority churches)
- Christian movements, organised action groups, associations
- Academic and research institutions
- Interfaith activities
- National Councils of Churches

- Ecumenical associations on all levels up to the World Council of Churches and the Vatican.

## **7.6 EcoTheolStrategy (ETS as Contribution to SDG 2030)**

In the last five decades, many very valuable contributions on eco-theology and eco-ethics have been written. Theologians and churches are good in arguments and statements, but they are often weak in strategies to influencing key drivers of development. An Ecological Theological Strategy (EcoTheolStrategy ETS) is needed. The churches could have much greater influence if they developed clearer strategies based on sharp analyses of power structures. Such a strategy is also an important contribution to the UN sustainable Development Goals SDGs.

### ***7.6.1 The Calling for Influencing Key Drivers***

Churches and theological institutions need a clearer analysis of power: Which are the key drivers of transformation? Which are the key strategies for transformation?

Mission as *missio* and calling of God is the call to transform the individual and the world in the light of God's spirit and the perspective of God's Kingdom. Key drivers of transformation today are technologies, economy, ideologies, religions and cultures.

I mention eight domains of influencing drivers of development. The following order means: I emphasize first those underdeveloped in churches and church-related organisations (CROs).

### ***7.6.2 Influencing Technological Innovation***

Theologies and churches have to analyse the worldview (visions, dreams, "The Silicon Valley Paradigm") and the means behind the technological innovation. Technological innovation is not neutral as it is

often seen, but is driven by certain visions, values and ideologies. Research ethics and innovation ethics is a key contribution to Eco-theology.<sup>56</sup>

Influencing technological innovation should happen in three phases:

1. Development of research projects and definition of priorities including ethical criteria (R&D phase)
2. Legislation for new technologies (implementation phase)
3. Consumption and recycling in the use of the technologies (sustainability phase, combined with 2).

### ***7.6.3 Influencing Investors and Business***

*The Investors community*, especially “Institutional Investors Group on Climate Change” IIGCC,<sup>57</sup> a global alliance of investors, mainly pension funds, for climate/ carbon-neutral investments, has a very great influence on environmentally relevant investments. Church should be more actively interact with them. At least two of the 120 members are church-related investment funds from Great Britain.<sup>58</sup> It goes in the right direction, but more church funds should join.

*Cooperation with Christian Entrepreneurs*: Christian entrepreneurs can play a key role in promoting green business (e.g. in China). The associations of catholic (e.g. BKU Bund Katholischer Unternehmer in Germany), protestant (e.g. VCU Verein Christlicher Unternehmer der Schweiz), orthodox (e.g. Association of Russian-orthodox entrepreneurs in Russia) and ecumenical entrepreneurs (e.g. Uniapac, the global

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<sup>56</sup> See Bastos de Morais, Jean-Claude/ Stückelberger, Christoph (eds.): *Innovation Ethics. African and Global Perspectives*, Geneva: Globethics Publications, 2014, free download at [www.globethics.net/publications](http://www.globethics.net/publications).

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.iigcc.org>. The 120 institutional members represent 13 trillion Euros in assets!

<sup>58</sup> Central Finance Board of the Methodist Church, Church of England.

association of Christian entrepreneurs) can play an important role for environmental economy.

*Example Vatican Strategy:* The Vatican has a clearer strategy than protestant institutions in including high level scientific experts and also entrepreneurs in discussing and advising on core church texts such as the Encyclica “Laudato Si” of Pope Francis. This created a large publicity and media coverage.

#### **7.6.4 Influencing Politics: BRICS**

*BRICS/ BRICSTIN:* The BRICS countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, and the coming key economic players Turkey, Indonesia and Nigeria (TIN) are key actors for environmental protection and climate issues. This is one strategic reason why Globethics.net opened Regional Programmes/ National Contacts in these BRICSTIN countries!

*Churches and religious organisations in these countries* should be especially strengthened in their EcoTheolstrategy. The leverage for real impact on the environment is larger than in other developing countries.

*Example China:* Green churches in China have an enormous potential with 50-100 Mio Christians. E.g. Globethics.net with its Leadership Centre offered trainings in China and Geneva for Christian Entrepreneurs and church leaders and it supported the opening of the Amity International Office in Geneva<sup>59</sup> on 9 March 2015 to strengthen advocacy work of Chinese Christian NGOs including advocacy for climate change.

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<sup>59</sup> Amity is a thirty years old Christian development and emergency aid agency, founded by the China Christian Council CCC/ TSPM with its headquarter in Nanjing/China. [www.amityfoundation.org](http://www.amityfoundation.org)

### **7.6.5 Influencing Theologies and Ideologies**

*De-legitimize violent extremism*<sup>60</sup> with religious justifications as abuses of religion is very important not only for peace, but environmental stability. There is no environmental protection without peace and social justice. This is still true and reflects the holistic view of the biblical shalom which includes social, environmental, economic and security aspects of peace. *Promote peaceful transformation.*

*De-legitimize apocalyptic end-war (Armageddon) and Promote that only God is judging history and is mastering time/ kairos.*

*De-legitimize Christian fatalism: fatalism is sin. Promote life-supporting action as an expression of faith and response to God's Alliance.*

*De-legitimize technological and economic mono-cultural optimism and promote economic, technological and cultural diversity as biodiversity.*

*De-legitimize populist, absolutist order politics and promote a culture of trust in God's providence in times of chaos.*

### **7.6.6 Influencing by Liturgy and Spirituality**

*Strengthen Eco-spirituality* means: unveil the energy coming from biblical visions of God's kingdom and life. Experience of the "alternative which is possible" (experience: clean air and stars on sky in the Swiss Alps for Christian Entrepreneurs from Beijing).

*Enable processes of mourning and hope:* Mourn on end of (over-) consumption and discover the liberating potential of the "Age of Less" and of a new lifestyle.

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<sup>60</sup> See the statement on 6 March of the interfaith consultation in Nairobi, organised by Globethics.net: <http://www.globethics.net/de/-/press-release-christians-and-muslims-cooperate-to-overcome-violent-extremism>.



*Collection of prayers:* Express cry, mourning, joy, thankfulness and responsive faith in action in prayers. Churches also need to help believers to reformulate their prayers, e.g. praying for rain or sun should be replaced by praying for the wisdom, access to information and the courage to be involved in actions for climate justice.

### **7.6.7 Influencing by Information and Education**

Information and education are core areas of churches and they invested most of their energy in environmental concerns in these activities. This remains important, but the question is which forms and instruments of education are the most effective with the greatest impact.

German and Swiss Churches have been active in broad environmental campaigns for decades. But more and more churches and church-related agencies on all continents are active in information campaigns and education efforts.

Some examples:

- The Suba Environmental Education of Kenya SEEK<sup>61</sup> seeks the transformation of the greater Suba area in Kenya by providing opportunities for the young and old to know God through the wonders of His creation, while becoming environmentally literate, able to address environmental issues in a Biblical way that cares for both people and the earth. It combines mission and environment.
- An example for access to information is the Globethics.net online Library, e.g. with a special collection on Climate Ethics.<sup>62</sup> Download of over four million documents is for free via the internet.

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<sup>61</sup> [www.missionwild.org/index.php/about](http://www.missionwild.org/index.php/about).

<sup>62</sup> [www.globethics.net/library](http://www.globethics.net/library).

- An example for broad campaigning: “Zukunftsfähiges Deutschland” was a very comprehensive large study and related to a large ecumenical campaign for the profound transformation of society. It was an action by Bread for the World, BUND and the Wuppertal Institute.<sup>63</sup>
- Examples for Eco-spirituality are manifold, e.g. Earthhealing<sup>64</sup> or movements in India.<sup>65</sup>

### ***7.6.8 Influencing by Church Actions***

The Conference on Eco-theology in Volos, Greece, showed manifold encouraging examples for church-related actions presented from Korea, the Ecumenical Church and Environment Network ECEN, the United Evangelical Mission UEM, from Rwanda, Latvia, Lebanon etc. These actions are very important signs of hope and have a concrete impact.

But churches and church-related organisations such as development and mission partners should reserve more funds and human resources for advocacy and ecumenical voices such as climate justice of the World Council of Churches. Churches are often not present and therefore not heard in international fora and the UN decision-making bodies. If only one additional percent of the funds invested for environment on parish and province/ diocesan level was spent for global ecumenical advocacy, the churches voices would be better heard.

### ***7.6.9 Influencing by Networks***

In an interconnected world based on internet and social media, networks are powerful instruments and must be part of the

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<sup>63</sup> [www.zukunftsfachiges-deutschland.de](http://www.zukunftsfachiges-deutschland.de)

<sup>64</sup> [www.earthhealing.info](http://www.earthhealing.info)

<sup>65</sup> [www.religiousindia.org/tag/eco-spirituality](http://www.religiousindia.org/tag/eco-spirituality)

EcoTheolStrategy. Some encouraging examples of such faith-based environmental networks are:

- Climate Justice networks<sup>66</sup>
- European Christian Environmental Network ECEN<sup>67</sup>
- Evangelical Environmental Network EEN<sup>68</sup>
- Ecumenical Water Network<sup>69</sup>
- Globethics.net.<sup>70</sup>

All these different activities together, not isolated, can build the Ecumenical Environmental Strategy EcoTheolStrategy.

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<sup>66</sup> [www.ienearth.org/category/climate-justice/](http://www.ienearth.org/category/climate-justice/) (Indigenous Environmental Network), [www.iicat.org/climate-justice-movement](http://www.iicat.org/climate-justice-movement) (Climate Justice Movement), <https://climatejusticeaction.net/en> (Climate Justice Action), [www.parisclimatejustice.org](http://www.parisclimatejustice.org)

<sup>67</sup> [www.ecen.org](http://www.ecen.org),

<sup>68</sup> [www.een.org](http://www.een.org)

<sup>69</sup> [www.oikoumene.org/activities/ewn-home.html](http://www.oikoumene.org/activities/ewn-home.html)

<sup>70</sup> [www.globethics.net](http://www.globethics.net)

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## GOD'S LIFE-GIVING CHARACTER

### And the Double-Dimension of Sin in Paul's Romans: A Revisit of Romans 8:20 in the Context of Ecological Crisis

*Dennis T. Solon*<sup>71</sup>

#### **Abstract**

In his letter to the Romans, Paul shows God's character as life-giving. This premise suggests that the sufferings of the world that lead to decay as described in Rom 8:18–30 are not directly attributable to God. Thus, other elements in creational existence could also play a negative role. An understanding of Paul's hamartiology in view of a double-dimension of sin could guide readers in discerning a meaning of Romans 8:20 in the context of ecological crisis.

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<sup>71</sup> Dennis. T. Solon is Assistant Professor for Biblical Studies, Silliman University Divinity School, and currently coordinator of the International Center for Mission Studies in Asia (ICMSA), Silliman University.

## 8.1 Introduction

My task today is to share something from my own context with regard to Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security and how we in the Philippines do theological education in such a context. In our small theological faculty of Silliman University, a subject on *Creation Theologies* has been integrated in the revised basic curriculum since 2009 as a dedicated course that deals with ecotheological issues. The idea is that Eco-theology is incorporated also in other theological disciplines, such as Ethics, Practical Theology, and Biblical Studies. A New Testament Seminar on Romans, which I handled last year, has offered exciting paths toward understanding Romans in today's context of ecological crisis and social injustice.

Like many theological schools and seminaries in Asia, we in the Philippines do not have the luxury of having updated resources for theological education, such as books and journals. Such a lack of resources calls for conscientious creativity in doing theological education. That is the case in our small theological faculty at Silliman University, where especially the area of Biblical Studies remains a weak link. Always available, however, is an equally significant source for doing theological reflection – our own experiences as a people.<sup>72</sup> Given the scarcity of resources, a method some scholars call *constructive or contextual Biblical hermeneutics* becomes appealing.

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<sup>72</sup> See the overview of Kinast, Robert, *What are they saying about theological reflection*, New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2000.

## **8.2 Early Struggle of Understanding God in Contexts of Natural Calamities**

In order to put my own interpretive method in context, I would like to share a personal story: On the night of 1 September 1984, I heard strong winds accompanied by heavy rains. Minutes later, a neighbour tried to convince my family to leave our house and stay in his family's home over the night. As a young boy, I followed suit along with my other family members, without completely understanding what was going on. Not long after our quick evacuation, I heard a whirling of strong winds above the house of our neighbour, hitting trees and other objects. After some moments there was silence, then suddenly, the hurling winds came again. There were sounds of iron sheets thrown away, banging posts and walls. At times they came with other objects pummelling our neighbour's house. Everybody inside looked scared and worried. I was silently wondering what could have happened to our house: *What about my friends, where are they now? Are they safe?*

In the morning the next day, after the rain and winds subsided, I rushed to check our house and my toys. The roof of our house was completely gone. Everything was wet. Our cabinets lay flat on the floor. Some of my toys were destroyed, while some were nowhere to find. This was the aftermath of typhoon Ike (local name "Nitang") that left the southern and central area of the Philippines with more than 1,000 people dead.<sup>73</sup>

I grew up early in life learning an important Christian understanding that "God is love" and that "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so". But at that very moment, I was looking for validity and veracity of such Christian expressions: *How can a loving God allow such things to happen? Are they part of God's love for me?*

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/pnabg249.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnabg249.pdf).



### **8.3 Paul and the Ecological Crisis: Some Impulses**

My recent preoccupation of Paul's letters has reinforced my interests in discerning God's activities in the world and in understanding the situation of the created order. For the interest in time, I would like to summarize only two themes from Paul's letter to the Romans.<sup>74</sup>

#### ***8.3.1 Paul's Understanding of God: God as Creator and Constant Giver of Life.***

In his letters, Paul pays considerable attention to God and God's action. His letter to the Romans alone mentions "God" 143 times and has more occurrences of the word than the gospels of Matthew and Mark combined. While many gods in Paul's context were connected with violence, exploitation and oppression, his God is very much identified with peace, compassion, encouragement, and justice. Paul refers to God as the subject who does things. For him, God is the source of love and at the same time actualizes love (e.g., Rom 5:5, 8); God is the author of grace and peace (1:7). God is the author of justice (cf. 1:17–18).

For Paul God is not so much known for who God is but for what God is doing. In the first chapter of the letter, Paul portrays God as correcting the offenders – those who do not give God due praise and honour (cf. Rom 1,24ff). In chapter three, God is described as justifying the offenders (but also implicitly their victims), through the death of Jesus Christ (Rom 3,21ff). And in Rom 4:17, Paul strikingly expresses it: God gives life to the dead. The verbal phrase "to make alive" comes

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<sup>74</sup> Some of the arguments contained in this short essay are based on my published dissertation: *Rechtfertigung der Sünder und Solidarität mit den Opfern. Eine befreiungstheologische Auslegung des Römerbriefs*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2015.

in present participial form *zoopoiountos*. It literally conveys an idea of God *who continually gives life*.

Paul's point is clear: God is and remains pro-life. God is against anything that endangers life. God's commitment to life is powerfully manifested in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (4:17). Christ's resurrection, which demonstrates that God is a God of life, can inspire Christ-believers today to fight ecological degradation, all forms of injustice and the violence of poverty because these are subtle forces of death that slowly bring helpless victims to the grave.

### **8.3.2 Paul's Hamartiology**

In our context in the Philippines, Paul is often criticized for seeing human beings as generally sinners, without consideration of various human situations and without distinguishing between rich and poor, between doers of injustice and their victims. The result is: People tend to turn to the Gospels when it comes to issues concerning social justice.

We could find a solution by looking into the concept of sin in Paul writings, and that is in view of the victims of sin. My contention is: Paul in his expressions about the sin of humankind also has in view the suffering of the people caused by others' sins.

A very familiar expression is found in Rom 3:23: "all have sinned and lack the glory of God." It describes the *conditio humana* in general sense, i.e. all have been found guilty beyond reasonable doubt. Everybody has been affected by God's wrath (ὀργή θεοῦ; Rom 1:18). In Romans, sin (ἁμαρτία) is an overarching terminology for impiety/godlessness (ἀσέβεια) and injustice (ἀδικία). *Asebeia* is a manner of living without sense of accountability to God. *Adikia* is a manner of living without a sense of accountability to others, causing harm and pain on other beings. The two – ἀσέβεια and ἀδικία – are closely related.

Sin, as I perceive it in Paul's letter to the Romans, has two dimensions: the active dimension, i.e. the sin itself; and the passive

dimension, that is, the suffering caused by that sin. Paul makes this implicit in Rom 1-3. Sin may also mean suffering as a result of someone else's sin. With this understanding we can fine-tune our definition of injustice: Injustice is an offense, whereby an agent inflicts involuntary pain or suffering on another individual or entity.

The understanding of God as author and giver of life and its benefits, as well as that of the active and passive aspects of sin can aid in making sense with Romans 8:20 today.

“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope” (ESV).

This verse is part of the section (Rom 8:18–30), where Paul deals with the reality of suffering. Notably, the second part of this verse (Rom 8:20) is skipped by Somen Das when he quotes it in his article “Biblical Foundations of Ecumenism through Asian Eyes”.<sup>75</sup> I believe that the second line is equally crucial in discerning Paul's message for today's context of ecological crisis and social injustice. Paul's perceptions about the world and humankind are indicated as follows:

- 1) The creation experiences suffering in the form of subjection to futility (*mataioteti he ktisis hypetage*). The creation (*ktisis*) could refer to both human and non-human;
- 2) The suffering of the creation is involuntary (*ouch hekousa*). In other words, the suffering is not because of the creation's own guilt (cf. Menge: “nicht durch eigene Schuld”<sup>76</sup>); and
- 3) An unnamed external agent (through a pronoun) is referred to as the cause of subjection/subjugation of the creation (*dia ton hypotaxanta*).

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<sup>75</sup> Das, Somen, “Biblical Foundations of Ecumenism through Asian Eyes”, in: Antone, Hope/ Werner, Dietrich et al. (eds.), *Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism*, Oxford: Regnum, 2013, 115-122, here: 119.

<sup>76</sup> The editors could no reconstruct the reference for this quotation.

The question now is: Who can be identified as agent of the creation's subjugation? Various proposals have been offered: Adam (G. Lampe),<sup>77</sup> humankind (J. Lambrecht),<sup>78</sup> and the fleshly nature of humankind (as a "body of sin").<sup>79</sup> Some Bible translations, however, present God as the agent of subjugation, e.g. the Good News Translation/ Today's English Version and many of those who follow the Dynamic Equivalence translation principle.

"For creation was condemned to lose its purpose, not of its own will, but because God willed it to be so. Yet there was the hope" (TEV).

A very common local Bible in the Philippines, *Ang Bag-ong Maayong Balita Biblia (ABMBB)*, is also apparently based on such a translation principle:

"Kay gitugotan sa Dios nga mahimong kawang ang kabuhatan, dili tungod sa kaugalingong pagbuot niini kondili tungod sa pagbuot sa Dios. Apan bisan pa niini, nagpabilin ang paglaom." English: "For God permitted it that the creation becomes futile, not due to its own will, but due to the will of God. But in spite of this, it remains in hope" (translation D.S.).

Similarly, the German *Gute Nachricht Bibel* conveys the idea about God's direct involvement with the suffering of creation:

"Denn alles Geschaffene ist der Sinnlosigkeit ausgeliefert, versklavt an die Vergänglichkeit, und das nicht durch eigene Schuld, sondern weil Gott es so verfügt hat. Er gab aber seinen Geschöpfen die Hoffnung".

In view of those who unnecessarily experienced or are experiencing the unbearable pain of losing their homes, properties, livelihood and loved ones as a result of natural calamities, I find the understanding

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<sup>77</sup> Lampe, Geoffrey W.H., "New Testament doctrine of ktisis", in: *Mid-Stream 4*, 1964, 71-83.

<sup>78</sup> Lambrecht, Jan, "The Groaning of Creation: A Study of Rom 8:18-30", in: *LouvSt 15*, 1990, 3-18.

<sup>79</sup> Solon, Dennis, *Rechtfertigung der Sünder*, 210ff.

based on Rom 8:20 to the effect that suffering is willed by God to be less helpful. It could lead many people to fatalism and to concede to hopelessness since suffering is authored by God anyway. What about the many innocent children and women who got killed by tsunamis and other natural disasters? What about those who are being victimized by development projects that actually only cater to the whims of the privileged?

Rainer Stuhlmann is correct when he writes that nowadays societies are more doer-oriented (*Auf die Täter fixiert*) and tend to forget the victim of human offenses.<sup>80</sup> Taking for instance the Mining Act of 1995 in the Philippines, it has caused not only the loss of sources of living and militarization in the affected regions, but also various forms of physical ailments. These are sufferings that cannot be readily attributed to God. Rather, they are sufferings that are caused by the unjust activities of power-holders. The same thing can be applied to many recent natural calamities in various tropical regions borne by climate change. Indeed, one can raise doubts as to whether these sufferings can be directly attributed to God. Perhaps indirectly, one may say, since God is construed as all-sovereign. But could we not also consider the many stakeholders, who have exacerbated the ecological crisis or at least accelerated climate change because of their own drive for profit, as perceivable culprits? Then, as a result, peoples from other parts of the world are suffering – those who did not practically take part in ecologically destructive activities.

An understanding about the double dimensions of sin (*hamartia*) could help readers in making sense of what Paul says in Rom 8:20. The passive *hypetage* – that the creation has been *subjected* to futility – namely, as a result of foreign sin or external offenses (here we can

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<sup>80</sup> Stuhlmann, Rainer, “Auf die Täter fixiert”, in: *Zeitzeichen*, 4/2011, 35-37.

include social injustice as well as environmental exploitation or ecological injustice) – can relate to the passive aspect of sin. Moral responsibility of human actions is inherent in this passive statement. Nevertheless, every human activity and event within the ecosystem cannot escape God's justice/ righteousness (*dikaio syne*).

## **8.4 Conclusion**

In contexts of ecological crisis and social injustice, Romans 8:20 could find meaning today when it is read in view of Paul's understanding of God (God's justice) and human sin (its active and passive aspects). The statement from Paul invites readers to think of suffering as a result of human sins, not just their own, but also those of others. Inflicting suffering is not God's main business, but to create and to uphold life.

Awareness of human sin [and, we can include here, God's forgiveness] calls for a positive response by means of repentance (*metanoia*; Rom 2:4). Related to repentance is what Paul calls "the renewal of the mind" (*anakainosis*; Rom 12:2). *Anakainosis* is crucial since it entails joining the Creator's cause to promote and uphold life – the life of the ecosystem and the life of humankind in its holistic sense.

Paul, in the midst of many existential sufferings of the creation, is not ready to give up his hope for the fullness of salvation through God's intervention. May all people who live in God's *oikoumene* also live in that hope and join God's cause for the salvation of the world, here and now.

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## FROM MISSIO DEI TO MISSIO CREATORIS DEI

### Toward an African Missional Christology of Jesus as the Ecological Ancestor

*Kapya Kaoma*<sup>81</sup>

As negative human attitudes toward earth continue to undermine the quality of life across the globe, Christianity is witnessing a growing ecological consciousness. This consciousness has redefined Christian spirituality and discipleship to include human attitudes toward the creation. Since 1984, Anglicans have consistently attached creation care to Christian mission, spirituality and identity. “To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth”, is the

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Anglican fifth mark of Christian mission. Patriarch Bartholomew of the Orthodox Church has declared environmental irresponsibility a “crime against the natural world” and “a sin.”<sup>82</sup> Aside from linking justice to creation care, the World Council of Churches 2014 *Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* regretted that “the planet sits at the brink of disaster and life itself is imperiled.”<sup>83</sup> In 2015, Pope Francis released his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Addressed to all humanity, the Pontiff writes,

*Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth. The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes, such as those which even now periodically occur in different areas of the world. The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability before those who will have to endure the dire consequences.*<sup>84</sup>

Among those to endure the dire consequences, the Pontiff argues, are future generations of life and the poor in developing nations and Africa in particular.

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<sup>82</sup> Bartholomew and John Chryssavgis, (ed.), *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2012, 195.

<sup>83</sup> World Council of Churches, *Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2014/an-invitation-to-the-pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace> (accessed 30 April 2015).

<sup>84</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, Brooklyn: Melville House, 2015, 161.

But long before *Laudato Si'*, the *Earth Charter* challenged humanity to choose “to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life.”<sup>85</sup> Since “we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny”, the *Earth Charter* demanded major paradigm shifts in the conception of the natural world. Such shifts, however, are equally needed in the conception of Christian mission and the work of Jesus Christ (Christology).

## **9.1 From Missio Dei to Missio Creatoris Dei**<sup>86</sup>

The vulnerability of Africa to the ecological catastrophe is a missional invitation to theological and ethical reflections and actions planted in African worldviews. Christian mission is not church or human centered, but God centered. It emanates from the Triune God, and we, Christians are invited to participate in the mission of God (*missio Dei*). In this regard, Christian Mission is joining God in proclaiming and performing God’s rule on earth. The church’s participation in the *missio Dei*, however, is planted in the mission of Christ (*missio Christi*), and empowered by the *missio Spiritus* (the mission of the Spirit). Thus, participants in the *missio Dei* respond to what God is already doing on earth. Amidst the occurring ecological crisis, for example, Christian mission ought to participate in the *missio Dei* of loving and caring for the creation as God’s sacred garden. This understanding proposes two paradigm shifts in Christian thought – the mission theology of God as

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<sup>85</sup> *The Earth Charter*, [http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme\\_a/img/02\\_earthcharter.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_a/img/02_earthcharter.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> The following section is part of my reflections on Christian mission and Earth care, originally presented at the Edinburgh 2010 Missionary Centennial Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland, June 2010. See “Missio Dei or missio Creatoris Dei: Witnessing to Christ in the Face of the Occurring Ecological Crisis,” In *Mission Today and Tomorrow*, Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, eds., Oxford: Regnum Books, 2011.

the Creator, who loves, cares for, and sustains the creation (*missio Creatoris Dei*), and the Christology of Jesus as the ancestor of all creation.

### ***9.1.1 Christian Mission as Missio Creatoris Dei***

The theological and ethical implications of God as the Creator and owner of the entire creation are many. First, just as humanity finds its source in God the Creator, the source and owner of the creation is God. Second, God is not absent from this earth. Every space is sacred ground – pointing to the fact that the natural world is sacred and how we relate to the creation is a gospel and Christian mission issue. Third, it points to the affinity of Christ with the creation – suggesting that the cosmos is a beneficiary of the salvation procured by Christ. Finally, the Spirit of God never left this earth – the Spirit moves on earth just as the Spirit did in the beginning (Gen.1:2). Thus, the creation is the witness to the True Creator God:

*The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.  
Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.  
They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.  
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world (Ps. 19:1-4).*

Consequently, Thomas O. Chisholm's hymn *Great is Thy faithfulness* reflects this theological truth when he presents the entire creation as joining "in manifold witness" to the Creator. He writes,

*Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,*

*Join with all nature in manifold witness  
to thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

God's great faithfulness, mercy and love are equally the gauge of justice and love on earth. The exploitation of earth follows the exploitation of the poor, thus creation care is a justice issue. Yet, the plight of earth and the poor are also missional invitations to work for the liberation of the poor and the earth. This entails the recognition of the intrinsic value of all beings in the universe from the Creator's perspective. In the words of Pope Francis, no creature "is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God."<sup>87</sup>

The creation is not divine, but the natural world has sanctity by virtue of the creation's origin, and of the divine presence in the cosmos. Irenaeus (120–202) speaks to this truth when he writes "The initial step for a soul to come to knowledge of God is contemplation of nature."<sup>88</sup> Irenaeus words are also echoed in Pope Francis's Encyclical when he argues that a vital ecology ought to "recover a serene harmony with creation" as well as the contemplation of "the Creator who lives among us and surrounds us."<sup>89</sup> The cosmos, the Pontiff asserts, "unfolds in God, who fills it completely."<sup>90</sup>

It is only within the sacredness of the creation that humanity can experience the Creator. This conception of spirituality invites a shift from experiencing God apart from the creation to seeing the Creator God in the natural world. Our responsibility to one another, future generations and the ecological community are aspects of the *missio Dei*

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<sup>87</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 84.

<sup>88</sup> In *The Green Bible*, NRSV, New York: HarperOne.

<sup>89</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 225.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, 233.

(the mission of God), who creates, loves and sustains every creature – big and small. As missionaries, we are invited to accompany the Creator in caressing the entire cosmos (*missio Creatoris Dei*). The mission of the Creator God is not anthropocentric, but ecological in applications. Morally, the belief that the *missio Dei* concerns human life (*imago Dei*) aside from the natural world can translate into a belief that we own this earth. The reality is that YHWH is the ultimate owner, and the God of the land. In fact, God owns, loves and sustains the entire creation to which we are only a very small part. In this regard, the *missio Creatoris Dei* as opposed to *missio Dei* puts the creation at the heart of the mission of the Creator God.

But this shift is not limited to mission theology – it is equally needed in Christology. If Jesus is understood anthropologically, then his love, care and redemption only apply to humanity. However, once Jesus is understood ecologically, the application of the mission of Christ and his redemptive work extends to the entire universe. It is to this element we now turn.

## **9.2 Christ the Ecological Ancestor – Toward an African Ecological Christology<sup>91</sup>**

African thought places emphasis on respect for elders – in Africa, seniority brings wisdom. As the Bemba of Zambia say, *umukulu apusa akabwe, tapusa cebo* (an old person can miss a stone, but not a wise word). Again, *akanwa kamwenfu takabepa* (the old mouth with a beard does not lie). These sayings speak to hierarchical organization of

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<sup>91</sup> I discuss this subject at length in my two books, Kapya J. Kaoma, *God's Family, God's Earth: Christian Ecological Ethics of Ubuntu* Zomba: University of Malawi Kachere Press, 2013; *The Creator's Symphony: African Christianity, The Plight of Earth and the Poor*, Dorpspruit, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2015.

African community cultures. Just as the living elders are respected, they too must respect “the seniority of the ancestral spirits.”<sup>92</sup> Since ancestors are a vital link between various life forces in African worldviews, they belong to the higher hierarchy of spiritual beings associated with the Supreme Being.

The authority of ancestors is derived from the religious worldview that informs African ontology. While they rank above the living elders, ancestors are not above the Creator. Nonetheless, ancestors are involved in the very conception of life – family, clans, community, and the visible and the invisible worlds. For this reason, ancestors “do not occupy a single ‘position’ in a structural sense but are embodied in a number of different ways in a wide range of activities and material culture. These multiple manifestations suggest a variety of possible identities for ancestors rather than a unified model.”<sup>93</sup> Whereas ancestors can be said to be “biologically dead”, they are understood as alive. In this case, they are the “living dead” elders who are the guardians of the land, life and morality. It is this worldview that informs ancestral Christologies in African theological thought.

Jesus as our ancestor is one of the prominent themes in Christian theology in Africa. Charles Nyamiti presents Jesus as the ancestor.<sup>94</sup> To François Kabasélé, Jesus is an elder brother-ancestor.<sup>95</sup> Bénézet Bujo proposes the Christology of Jesus as the proto-ancestor, healer and

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<sup>92</sup> Jomo Kenyatta *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal life of the Gikuyu*, London: Secker and Arburg, 1938, 255.

<sup>93</sup> John C. McCall, “Rethinking Ancestors in Africa”, in: *Journal of the International African Institute* 65, no.2 1995, 258.

<sup>94</sup> Charles Nyamiti, *Christ As Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective*, Gweru : Mambo Press, 1984.

<sup>95</sup> François Kabasélé, “Christ as Ancestor and Elder Brother,” In Robert J. Schreiter, (ed), *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, 116-127. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991.

master of initiation.<sup>96</sup> Gift Makwasha of Zimbabwe seems to follow Bujo in his theology of Christ as our ancestor. Following the role ancestors play in Shona cosmology, Makwasha proposes the tripartite conception of Jesus as the family, tribal and national ancestor. Unlike other theologians, Makwasha moves ancestors from their traditional role to include the post-colonial African context; arguing that Jesus has a role to play in contemporary national states – thus Christ is the national ancestor.<sup>97</sup> Roman Catholic Bishop Dieudonné Watio does not only associate Jesus with the ancestors, but raises another important question as to the relationship between Christians and ancestors. Watio writes,

*the cult of ancestors is not idolatry, but rather an expression of filial piety. It seems to me that if a good catechesis about the mediation of saints and ancestors were to be given to our Christians, and if for its part the Church could accept the need to look more seriously into the cult of the ancestors in order to capture better its spirit and actual function, then Christian recourse to and invocation of the ancestors would be possible, just as it is now for the Christian saints.*<sup>98</sup>

Michael C. Kirwen shares Watio's observation when he compares the cult of ancestors to "the veneration of saints." But Kirwen also explores the role of ancestors in the traditional art of healing. Comparing *n'gangas* (diviners) to pastors or missionaries, Kirwen argues that African traditional religious thought has "a purer notion of the

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<sup>96</sup> Bénézet Bujo, *African Theology in Its Social Context*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992.

<sup>97</sup> Gift Makwasha, *Not Without My Ancestor*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Boston University, 2009.

<sup>98</sup> Dieudonné Watio, *Le culte des ancêtres chez les Ngyemba (Ouest-Cameroun) et ses incidences pastorales*, dissertation, Université of Paris-Sorbonne, 1986, 361-362.

uniqueness and unity of God than Christians do”.<sup>99</sup> It is within this context that he proposes the face of Jesus as the healer.

Whereas as the “healing face of Jesus” is acceptable to theologians, it can be contested once it is associated with the traditional office of *n’ganga* (traditional medium) – the very title Matthew Schoffeleers employed to explain the “Christological crisis” in African thought. Schoffeleers notes, “Africans find it difficult to integrate the person of Jesus Christ in their belief system, either because he is automatically associated with the West and the colonial past, or because his very essence is supposed to be incompatible with autochthonous [indigenous] religious conceptions.”<sup>100</sup>

Schoffeleers’s observation sought to address the African face of Jesus as *n’ganga*, which contemporary mainline Christianity considers sinful. In *God’s Family, God’s Earth*, however, I note that Schoffeleers’ challenge speaks to the selective use of African traditional symbols and concepts in the development of Christian theology.

According to Kwame Bediako, the multiple faces of Jesus “are indicative of the way the primal imagination grasp the reality of Christ in terms in which all life is essentially conceived as spiritual.”<sup>101</sup> The spiritualizing of all life in African ontology invites the multi-functional role of ancestors – thus Jesus our ancestor needs to fit into this cosmology in which all life is spiritual. That said, it is vital to note that ancestors do not occupy one office in African ontology, and neither does Christ in scriptures and Christian traditions. For example, Jesus is Lord,

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<sup>99</sup> Michael C. Kirwen, *The Missionary and the Diviner: Contending Theologies of Christian and African Religions*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987, 24.

<sup>100</sup> Matthew Schoffeleers, “Folk Christology in Africa: The Dialectics of the Nganga Paradigm”, in: *Journal of Religion in Africa* 19, Fasc. 2, June 1989, 157. Also published in Blakely, Thomas D./ van Beek, Walter E.A./ Thomson, Dennis L. (eds.), *Religion in Africa: Experience and Expression*, London: James Currey, 1994, 73-88.

<sup>101</sup> Kwame Bediako, *African Christianity*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.



master, teacher, friend, life, the good shepherd, the way, the truth, and prophet among many other titles. These Christological titles point to how the church understands Jesus and his relevancy to people's lifeworlds – something we see in the development of Christian theology in Africa. It is from this perspective that we explore the ecological Christology in Christian thought.

### **9.3 The Ancestor Cult and the Land in the Hebrew Bible**

Whereas Christ the ancestor is usually associated with life in heaven, African ancestors are concerned with life on earth which is their home and our home. This observation is not unique to Africa, but extends to how indigenous peoples such as Native Americans comprehend ancestors – they are present within the creation – in the waters, animals, trees, and snakes etc. If ancestors are concerned with earth, then Jesus our ancestor ought to be understood from the perspective of the earth. Besides, associating Jesus Christ with ancestors implies locating him into the daily lives of all God's people and in the environment in which they exist.

The cult of ancestors is the foundation of the biblical faith, one can argue. Aside from YHWH being the God of the land, the promise to Abraham is land based – it was a promise of occupying the land on earth as opposed to going to heaven. The entire history of Israel is land centred – thus Israel's cult of ancestors was meant to secure their rights to the land of the promise. For this reason, the Hebrew Bible continuously references ancestors or forefathers as the basis of divine favour. It is within the cult of ancestors that Israel's life, identity and destiny are realized. Through Abraham and Sarah, the Israel of the living is directly linked to that of the *living dead* – ancestors.

When God called Moses at Mount Horeb, Yahweh self-identified as “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6). The identification of God with the bush and the command to Moses to remove his sandals reveal the sacredness of the creation. Whereas God used “human” images (angels) to Abrahams, the bush was the vehicle through which Yahweh revealed Godself to Moses.

Besides, ancestors are critical to the realization of divine promises to future generations. Israel is constantly reminded of the historical relationship between Yahweh and Israel’s ancestors. To some extent, the past and not the future is the testimony of Yahweh’s faithfulness to Israel. It is the past that informs the future – only by believing just as Abraham did is the nation to enjoy the fruits of the land Yahweh gave to their ancestors.

Like in African spirituality, Israel’s ancestors though dead are alive – they are the living dead. To Jesus, for example, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the God of the living and not the dead (Mk 12:17; Lk 20:38; Mt 22:32). Yet the God of Abraham is also the God of Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Naomi, Esther, David and many more. Whereas every generation had its own names it considered the archetype and epitome of obedience to Yahweh, the ancestor cult was the chain that linked generations to one another and ultimately to the Creator God. It is from this perspective that biblical genealogies must be understood.

#### **9.4 Ancestors in the Christian Bible**

The reader of the Bible is confronted with lists of names which may be perceived as meaningless. Yet those lists are critical to Israel’s self-understanding and identity. The ancestry tree is not only about the individuals, it is also about Yahweh’s dealing with the people of God.

Just as the Hebrew Bible considered genealogies critical to Israel's identity, Gospel writers did the same. According to William Barclay, Jews took their genealogies very seriously since one's life was told from the perspective of ancestry – thereby determining one's identity. Any person who could not trace the lineage, Barclay argues, “lost the right to be called a Jew and a member of the people of God.”<sup>102</sup> In order to plant Jesus in the history of the people of God, for example, gospel writers traced his ancestry: “An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1); “Jesus was about thirty years when he began his work. He was the son (as was thought) of Joseph son of Helli... son of Judah, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham... son of Adam, son of God.” (Lk.3:23-38). To Mark, Jesus was the son of God. The gospel of John lacks the genealogy but provides a prologue which locates Jesus in God – Jesus is the Creating Word. In other words, Matthew and Luke provide us with the human ancestors of Jesus while Mark and John provide his divine ancestry.

Barclay argues that while genealogies “may seem to be uninteresting” to the reader, to a Jew, “it would be a most impressive matter that the pedigree of Jesus could be traced back to Abraham.”<sup>103</sup> Raymond Brown shares this understanding. Aside from arguing that Jesus is identified as a son of David and Abraham to illustrate his identity in a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles, Brown posits that genealogies are/were expressions of one's identity and descent from ancestors.<sup>104</sup>

In addition, genealogies directed one's expected role in life. In other words, they established the *cooperate personality* whereby an individual

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<sup>102</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Louisville, Westminster: John Knox Press, 1975, 14. Many African cultures share this view.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, 15

<sup>104</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1977, 64-66.

was expected to replicate his or her ancestor's role within the covenant of Yahweh. Since David was a successful king, the future son of David would be expected to follow and fulfil his father's footsteps. But ancestry also established one's role in regard to certain offices. For one to be a priest, one was expected to trace his ancestry to Aaron before being admitted into Temple services. All these perspectives controlled the gospel writers when they addressed the pedigree of Jesus.

It is important to note that the Near East respected one's ancestry. Forgetting one's ancestry had serious negative implications. Paul, for example, boasted of his zeal in keeping the traditions of his ancestors (Gal. 1:14). When his authority was disputed, he wrote, "if anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew (Phip.3:4-6). By arguing from his Jewish ancestry, Paul established his direct link to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and ultimately to Yahweh. Since Jews were children of Abraham, they had the right to benefit from the favour that God granted to Abraham – the land and all the earth's natural goods. Moreover, the biblical phrase "son of..." and the command to honour one's parents was not limited to the living, but extended to the living dead. It is from this perspective that Jesus' claim to have existed "before Abraham was born" (John 8:59) was considered disrespectful and blasphemous.

Jesus' discourse with the Samaritan woman is also centred on the cult of ancestors. "Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (Jn.4:20-26). To the Samaritans, their ancestral shrine was Mt. Gerizim, while the Jews held Jerusalem as the sacred space. Jesus, however, challenges both Samaritans and Jews to abandon their traditional manner of

worship and to accept the code brought by the Christ. Just as Jesus reduces the authority of Jewish and Samaritan ancestors, the authority of African ancestors is similarly reduced. Jesus brings about a new birth and a new community in which all peoples and the entire creation can worship God through *one ancestor*, who exists from the beginning.

## 9.5 Christ as the Ecological Ancestor

Jesus as our ancestor should not be limited to humanity alone; he is an ancestor to the entire cosmos. If Jesus is “the first born of all creation” (Col. 1:17), then he is an elder brother to every creature. As the origin of all creation, Jesus is the Lord and the ecological Ancestor of *all* life. As John Wesley writes, “I believe in my heart that faith in Jesus Christ can and will lead us beyond an exclusive concern for the well-being of other human beings to the broader concern for the well-being of the birds in our backyards, the fish in our rivers, and every living creature on the face of the earth.”<sup>105</sup>

The gospel of John testifies to the ecological ancestry of Christ when it states that “through him, all things were made and without him, nothing made was made” (Jn 1:3). As the origin of all creation, Jesus is not just the provider of abundant life to the cosmos but also the guardian of the universe in its totality. As the Nicene Creed declares, “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only son of the father... through him *all things* (beings) were made.” Although the Nicene Creed limits redemption to humanity, an ecological creed ought to accept Christ as the redeemer, guardian and ancestor of all the creation.

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<sup>105</sup> In Anthony Campolo, and Mary Albert Darling, *The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism, and Justice*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007, 55.

The implication of Christ as the cosmic ancestor is clear. Like African theologians, Jewish scholars limited ancestorship to humanity, and saw Abraham as their ancestor – they were children of Abraham. However, Jesus declared himself to be above Abraham and therefore the ecological Ancestor to the entire creation, to whom the Jewish, Samaritan and by extension African ancestors descended from; “before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:59). While this verse can be understood as referring to the divinity of Christ, it is vital to the Christology of Jesus as the ecological ancestors. The *I AM* is the origin of all the creation;<sup>106</sup> and the ancestor of the entire cosmos. Thus, Jesus is the abundant life and liberator of the groaning creation (Romans 8:22).

## **9.6 Final Observations**

The mission of the Creator God is founded on God’s own creative and sustaining love for the creation. The Creator declared creation “*very good*” and our negative attitudes towards the natural world are compromising the sacramental web of life. Moreover, every creature (big and small) exists to worship the Creator: “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (Psalm 150:6). As servants of God, and participants in the mission of the Creator God, caring for the creation is our sacred mission.

The single origin of the creation has implications for Christian ecological ethics, mission and theology. The mission of the Creator God

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<sup>106</sup> The question of the salvation of ancestors is hereby resolved. If the Abraham was justified based on his relationship with the I AM, there is enough room to argue that before our African ancestors were even born, Jesus existed. In this case, they saw the day of the Lord and rejoiced. However, like the Jews, many theologians are likely to question when and how Jesus met our ancestors. His answer remains the same, before your “ancestor was born, I AM.”

and the Christology of Jesus as the ecological Ancestor ought to inform economic policies. Capitalistic policies of limitless growth exploit the natural goods while increasingly harming the poor. “Even if one can agree with the Neo-Böserupian assumption that development in agriculture coupled with sound government policies can address Africa’s food shortages, the future of food security ought to be addressed in the context of consumption of available goods.”<sup>107</sup>

The mission of the Creator God should confront the unjust global economic and political systems contributing to the environmental crisis. But this is not all; capitalism harms the poor. Here, the global shocking economic imbalance needs illuminating: less than 20% of global North residents gluttonously consume 80% of natural goods while every 3 second someone dies from hunger – salient injustices that demand immediate attention. Amidst the growing ecological crises; and amidst the exploitation of the poor, Christians can hardly remain neutral but denounce the effects of capitalism on God’s people and God’s earth.

Furthermore, Christ the supreme guardian of the land demands that we examine our attitudes toward earth. The theological notion of resident aliens, which can sometimes negate earth as our home in favor of our heavenly home, demands revisiting. If we view ourselves as strangers on earth, then destroying earth simply accelerates our arrival to our heavenly city thus contributing to land degradation with dire effects on food security, especially in Africa. Poor people are both the “victims and agents of environmental degradation”, the Southern African Development Community rightly noted. Nonetheless, the poor are forced into destroying their environment to survive; hence addressing poverty is critical to food security.<sup>108</sup> The United Nations Food and

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<sup>107</sup> Kaoma, Kapya J., *God’s Family, God’s Earth: Christian Ecological Ethics of Ubuntu*, Zomba: University of Malawi Kachere Press, 2013, 169-170.

<sup>108</sup> SADC, “Environment and Sustainable Development”, <http://www.sdc.int/>

Agriculture Organization noted environmental degradation has detrimental impact on food security and is responsible for the declining yields in many parts of Africa.<sup>109</sup>

Accepting earth as our permanent home has practical implications for our relationships; human to human, and nature to human. For instance, rather than promising the poor a better world to come, Christianity must address socio-political and economic injustices that have forced the majority into abject poverty. Acknowledgement, in practice as well as in theory, of earth's status as our sacred home, is also fundamental to food security. For the earth to produce abundantly, we need to care for our planet. Our lives depend on the earth's wellbeing—destroying the land is akin to setting our home on fire while inside. To ensure our own and food security, ethicists, missiologists and theologians ought to engage economic and political issues from the perspective of the *missio Creatoris Dei*.

Finally, understanding Christ as the ecological Ancestor has implications for how we relate to earth and one another. Since all creatures trace their ancestry in Christ, we are one family of ontologically related beings. As moral beings, we, humans are obliged to repair the damage caused and being caused to our nonhuman brothers and sisters of the earth community. In ecological terms, sin is not just limited to human actions against fellow humans, but now extends to nonhumans in the universe. Thus, our relationship with the nature loving Creator should inform our relationships with one another, the natural world, and ultimately with Jesus Christ, the ecological Ancestor of all life.

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issues/environment-sustainable-development/ (accessed 10 May 2016).

<sup>109</sup> United Nations, *Land and Environmental Degradation and Desertification in Africa*, FAO Corporate Document, 2007, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x5318e/x5318e01.hlm> (accessed 10 April 2016).



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## POPE FRANCIS' ENCYCLICAL *LAUDATO SI'*

*Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon*

### **10.1 Introduction**

As some of you may already know, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been the first one in the Christian world to draw the attention of the world community to the seriousness of the ecological problem and the duty of the church to voice its concern and try to contribute with all the spiritual means at its disposal towards the protection of our natural environment. Thus, back already in the year 1989, Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios issued an Encyclical to the faithful Christians and to all people of good will, in which he underlined the seriousness of the ecological problem and its theological and spiritual dimensions. This was followed by a series of activities, such as international conferences of religious leaders and scientific experts, as well as seminars for young people, church ministers etc. under the auspices of the present Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, aiming at the promotion of an ecological consciousness among the Christians in particular and more widely in the community of men and women.

The issuing of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* is, therefore, an occasion of great joy and satisfaction for the Orthodox. On behalf of them I should like to express our deep gratitude to His Holiness for raising his

authoritative voice to draw the attention of the world to the urgent need to protect God's creation from the damage we humans inflict on it with our behaviour towards nature. This Encyclical comes at a critical moment in human history and will undoubtedly have a worldwide effect on people's consciousness.

Those who read the Encyclical will be impressed by the depth and the thoroughness with which the ecological problem is treated and its seriousness is brought out, together with concrete suggestions and proposals on how to act in order to face its consequences. There is in its pages food for thought for all: the scientist, the economist, the sociologist and above all the faithful of the church. My own comments will be limited to the richness of theological thought and spirituality of the Encyclical. Time and space prevent me from doing full justice to the treatment of these aspects. I shall limit myself to the following points:

The theological significance of ecology; The spiritual dimension of the ecological problem; and The ecumenical significance of the Encyclical.

## **10.2 Theology and Ecology**

What does ecology have to do with theology? In the traditional manuals of theology, there is hardly any place for ecology and the same is true for the academic curricula of the theological schools, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. The Encyclical devotes a whole chapter (ch. 2) to show the profound ecological implications of the Christian doctrine of creation. It points out that according to the Bible "human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships with God, with our neighbour and *with the earth itself*" (par. 66). This third relationship, i.e. with the earth, has been very often ignored by Christian theology to such an extent that the American historian Lynn

White, in a now famous article in the periodical *Scientist* (1967), would accuse Christian theology for being responsible for the modern ecological crisis. For it is true that in Christian theology the human being has been so exalted above material creation as to allow humans to treat it as material for the satisfaction of their needs and desires. The human being has been de-naturalized and in its abuse and misuse of the biblical command to the first human couple – “increase and multiply and subdue the earth” (Gen. 1.28) – humanity was encouraged to exploit the material creation unrestrictedly with no respect for its integrity and even sacredness.

This attitude to creation did not only lead to a misuse of the biblical doctrine but at the same time contradicted fundamental principles of Christian faith. One of them is the faith in *the Incarnation of Christ*. In assuming human nature, the Son of God took over material creation in its entirety. Christ came to save *the whole* creation through the Incarnation, not only humanity; for according to St. Paul (Rom. 8.23) “the whole creation groans in travail and is suffering” awaiting its salvation through humanity.

The other fundamental principle of Christian faith that has important ecological implications relates to the very heart of the church, which is *the Holy Eucharist*. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the church offers to God the material world in the form of the bread and the wine. In this Sacrament space, time and matter are sanctified; they are lifted up to the Creator with thankfulness as His gifts to us; creation is solemnly declared as God’s gift, and human beings instead of proprietors of creation act as its *priests*, who lift it up to the holiness of the divine life. This brings to mind the moving words of St. Francis of Assisi with which the Encyclical opens: “Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth”. As St. Gregory Palamas and other Greek Fathers would put it, the whole of creation is permeated by God’s presence

through His divine energies; everything declares God's glory, as the Psalmist says, and the human being leads this cosmic chorus of glorification to the Creator as the priest of creation. This way of understanding the place and mission of humanity in creation is common to both Eastern and Western Christian tradition, and is of particular importance for the cultivation of an ecological ethos.

### ***10.2.2 The Spiritual Dimension***

As it emerges clearly from the Encyclical, the ecological crisis is essentially a *spiritual problem*. The proper relationship between humanity and the earth or its natural environment has been broken with the Fall both outwardly and within us, and this rupture is *sin*. The church must now introduce in its teaching about sin the sin against the environment, the *ecological sin*. Repentance must be extended to cover also the damage we do to nature both as individuals and as societies. This must be brought to the conscience of every Christian who cares for his or her salvation.

The rupture of the proper relationship between humanity and nature is due to the rise of *individualism* in our culture. The pursuit of individual happiness has been made into an ideal in our time. Ecological sin is due to human greed which blinds men and women to the point of ignoring and disregarding the basic truth that the happiness of the individual depends on its relationship with the rest of human beings. There is a *social* dimension in ecology which the Encyclical brings out with clarity. The ecological crisis goes hand in hand with the spread of social injustice. We cannot face successfully the one without dealing with the other.

Ecological sin is a sin not only against God but also against our neighbour. And it is a sin not only against the other of our own time but also – and this is serious – against the *future generations*. By destroying our planet in order to satisfy our greed for happiness, we bequeath to the

future generations a world damaged beyond repair with all the negative consequences that this will have for their lives. We must act, therefore, responsibly towards our children and those who will succeed us in this life.

All this calls for what we may describe as an *ecological asceticism*. It is noteworthy that the great figures of the Christian ascetical tradition were all sensitive towards the suffering of all creatures. The equivalent of a St. Francis of Assisi is abundantly present in the monastic tradition of the East. There are accounts of the lives of the desert saints which present the ascetic as weeping for the suffering or death of every creature and as leading a peaceful and friendly co-existence even with the beasts. This is not romanticism. It springs from a loving heart and the conviction that between the natural world and ourselves there is an organic unity and interdependence that makes us share a common fate just as we have the same Creator.

Asceticism is an unpleasant idea in our present culture, which measures happiness and progress with the increase of capital and consumption. It would be unrealistic to expect our societies to adopt asceticism in the way St. Francis and the Desert Fathers of the East experienced it. But the spirit and the ethos of asceticism can and must be adopted if our planet is to survive. Restraint in the consumption of natural resources is a realistic attitude and ways must be found to put a limit to the immense waste of natural materials. Technology and science must devote their efforts to such a task. There is a great deal of inspiration and help that can be drawn from the Encyclical itself in this respect.

Finally, spirituality must penetrate our ecological ethos through *prayer*. The Encyclical offers some beautiful examples of how to pray for the protection of God's creation. From the prayers cited at the end of the Encyclical, I find the following extract moving:



*O God, bring healing to our lives,  
that we may protect the world and not prey on it  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.  
Touch the hearts  
of those who look only for gain  
at the expense of the poor of the earth.  
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature  
as we journey towards your infinite light.*

At this point I should like to mention that the Ecumenical Patriarchate decided as early as 1989 to devote the 1st of September of each year to praying for the environment. This date is according to the Orthodox liturgical calendar, going back to the Byzantine times, the first day of the ecclesiastical year. The liturgical service of the day includes prayers for creation and the Ecumenical Patriarchate commissioned a contemporary hymnographer from Mount Athos to compose special hymns for that day. The 1st of September each year is now devoted by the Orthodox to the environment. Might this not become a date for such prayer for all Christians? This would mark a step towards further closeness among them.

This brings me to my last comment on the Papal Encyclical, namely its ecumenical significance.

### ***10.2.3 The Ecumenical Significance of the Encyclical***

There are in my view three dimensions to ecumenism. The first we may call ecumenism in time, an expression frequently used by one of the greatest Orthodox theologians of the last century, the late Fr. Georges Florovsky. By this we mean the effort of the divided Christians to unite

on the basis of their common Tradition, the teaching of the Bible and the Church Fathers. This is the object of the theological dialogues which are taking place in the Ecumenical Movement of our time and it seems to be the predominant form of ecumenism.

At the same time, an *ecumenism in space* is also practiced through various international institutions, such as the World Council of Churches and similar ecumenical bodies which bring together the divided Christians so that the different cultural contexts in which they live may be taken into consideration in the search for unity. This has brought together Christians from Asia, America, Europe, Latin America etc. – an expression of the universality of the Christian church.

To these two dimensions which have dominated the ecumenical scene for the last hundred years we must add, I think, a third one which is usually neglected, namely what I would call an *existential ecumenism*. By that I mean the effort to face together the most profound existential problems that preoccupy humanity *in its entirety* – not simply in particular places or classes of people. Ecology is without doubt the most obvious candidate in this case.

I believe that the significance of the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'* is not limited to the subject of ecology as such. I see in it an important ecumenical dimension in that it brings the divided Christians before a common task which they must face together. We live at a time when fundamental existential problems overwhelm our traditional divisions and relativize them almost to the point of extinction. Look, for example, at what is happening today in the Middle East: do those who persecute the Christians ask them to which church or confession they belong? Christian unity in such cases is *de facto* realized by persecution and blood – an ecumenism of martyrdom.

The threat posed to us by the ecological crisis similarly bypasses or transcends our traditional divisions. The danger facing our common

home, the planet in which we live, is described in the Encyclical in a way leaving no doubt about the existential risk we are confronted with. This risk is common to all of us regardless of our ecclesiastical or confessional identities. Equally common must be our effort to prevent the catastrophic consequences of the present situation. Pope Francis' Encyclical is a call to unity – unity in prayer for the environment, in the same Gospel of creation, in the conversion of our hearts and our lifestyles to respect and love everyone and everything given to us by God. We are thankful for that.

## CREATION, HISTORY AND THE CHURCH

### Towards an Orthodox Eco-Theology and Social Ethics

*Nikolaos Asproulis<sup>110</sup>*

#### **11.1 Introduction: A Look to the Present Reality**

In recent years, global community experiences unprecedented situations of political, social and financial instability due to the accumulation of acute problems which influence people's lives not only on the individual level but also towards the balance of the interpersonal relations and their reference to natural environment. Following often an extremely rationalist and individualist worldview and being addicted to an unlimited supremacy over nature for many centuries, the human being was trapped in his narcissism and his ardent desire for power. Seeking for the constant increase of the economical profit in combination with the irrational and avaricious consumption of the natural recourses and sources of energy, the especially (post)modern human attempted to give meaning to his existence in terms of radical

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*immanence*, with concerted actions towards a utilitarian model which prioritizes the individual ephemeral enjoyment and wealth accumulation, while neglecting the future of creation or the goods' equalizing and social justice.

In this perspective, the current dominant anthropological model of *homo economicus*,<sup>111</sup> as it is evidenced by our gloomy economic situation which is an after-effect of the extreme neo-liberal economic theory<sup>112</sup> put forth by the audacious capitalism,<sup>113</sup> along with the refugee and migrant crisis<sup>114</sup> which afflicts during the last years the whole European continent and especially the Mediterranean basin, as a result of the war and religious fundamentalism in Middle East, thought that he could *ex officio* play the role of the King and the Lord of the World and of History in the place of the very Almighty God the Father.

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<sup>111</sup> For a general overview of the concept of *homo economicus* cf. among others, Persky, Joseph, "The Ethology of Homo Economicus", in: *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 9 (2) 1995, 221-231.

<sup>112</sup> For the dominant neoliberal economic theory see: Bresser-Pereira, Luiz C., "Assault on the State and on the Market: Neoliberalism and Economic theory", in: *Estudos Avancados*, 23, (66) 2009, 7-22; Clarke, S., *The Neoliberal theory of Society*, <http://homepages.warwick.ac.uk/~syrbe/pubs/Neoliberalism.pdf>; Howard, M.C./ King, J.E., *The Rise of Neoliberalism in Advanced Capitalist Economies: A Materialist Analysis*, Hampshire: Palgrave, MacMillan, 2008; Bresser-Pereira, Luiz C., "The global financial crisis, neoclassical economics, and the neoliberal years of capitalism", in: *Revue de la régulation* [En ligne], 7, 1er semestre, Spring 2010, <http://regulation.revues.org/7729>; Peters, Michael, "Neoliberalism", in: *Encyclopaedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*, <http://eepat.net/doku.php?id=neoliberalism>; Larrea Gayarre, José, "The Challenges of Liberation Theology to Neoliberal Economic Policies", in: *Social Justice: a Journal of Crime, Conflict and World Order* 21.4, Winter 1994; Patomaki, Heikki, "Neoliberalism and the Global Financial Crisis", in: *New Political Science*, 31, (4), 2009, 431-442.

<sup>113</sup> Kotz, David, *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberal Capitalism*, Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press, 2015.

<sup>114</sup> For detailed information on the current refugee and migrant crisis, see the official website of the European Commission: [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/refugee-crisis\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/refugee-crisis_en), and the website of Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/tag/europes-migration-crisis>.

However, the reality humanity experienced the past few years made prominent in the most tragic way the deficiency and the dead ends of the predominant anthropological model, which in the end threatens creation itself with annihilation.

## 11.2 The Role of Religion and Christianity

It is true indeed, that religions in general, and Christian churches in particular, including Orthodoxy, consciously or not, served various expressions of spirit of this world, to such a degree that they were identified with unfree, suppressing and totally destructive structures, attitudes and actions. At the same time, many were the voices of eminent representatives of churches at an individual and collective level, who made a decisive contribution with their example and work (academic, pastoral and missionary) to the utterance of another morality, of another alternative way of life concerning the very composition of human being and the adjustment of one's own relations with global humanity and natural environment.<sup>115</sup>

It is a common place, that both the continuing environment destruction, a fact evidenced once more in the last United Nations

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<sup>115</sup> See for example: Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I in Chryssavgis, John (ed.): *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2011; idem in Chryssavgis, John/ Foltz, Bruce (eds.), *Towards an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment Nature and Creation (Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Thought)*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2013; Tutu, Desmond, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York: Doubleday, 1999. See also Battle, Michael, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*, Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2009; Williams, Rowan, *Where God Happens: Discovering Christ in One Another*, Boston, Massachusetts: New Seeds, 2007 as well as the Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudatio Si': On care for our common home*, a document of great importance, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) (accessed 21 July 2016).

Climate Summit (Paris, December 2015)<sup>116</sup> and the progressive deepening of social and economic inequalities between North and South, which is responsible for the impoverishment of part of the population, are only mere manifestations related to the critical question of the identity of human being. Consequently, as it is noted in many ways among others, but in particular by His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia,<sup>117</sup> anthropology lies at the core of theological, philosophical and wider concern. It is obvious that the way each tradition defines human's identity, leads to an equivalent anthropological model, a fact which highlights directly or indirectly the important moral responsibilities related to the ecological problem or the domination of extreme capitalistic management models of economical and natural wealth.

### **11.3 The Role of the Orthodox Church and its Theology in the Present Situation**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and even more in the early 21<sup>st</sup>, Eastern Orthodox Christianity has been confronted with many unprecedented challenges which call for a radical re-evaluation of its identity, and nature of its witness to the world. The various transformations and rapid changes at the political, social and spiritual levels during those years have highlighted the need for a sincere meeting of the Orthodox Church and theology with the quests, the challenges and problems of the postmodern pluralist society, which often seems to move without a

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<sup>116</sup> See the Paris summit agreement here: [http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris\\_nov\\_2015/application/pdf/paris\\_agreement\\_english\\_.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/paris_nov_2015/application/pdf/paris_agreement_english_.pdf) (accessed 20 July 2016) where it is stressed the need to respond “to the urgent threat of climate change on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge”.

<sup>117</sup> Ware, Kallistos, *Orthodox Theology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, foreword by Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Doxa & Praxis Series, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012.

compass. The necessity of a meeting and an open and constructive dialogue between Orthodoxy and the surrounding world is not a demand primarily imposed upon the church by the current context; it is mainly the result of its deep theological consciousness and faith.

On one hand, the fundamental belief in a Triune God being in himself and self-revealed in creation and History as a constant *dialogue* in communion of love and freedom, and on the other hand the reality of the divine-human dialogue as it is expressed primarily in the very event of the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God in history, confirm and express the deep roots of the dialogical and relational nature of ecclesiastical Orthodoxy.

Through the experiences of daily practice, the inherent nature of this openness, and the dialogical character with the Other, the church will soon realize that her very being passes through the fruitful and lasting meeting with the contemporary, real world, with its various impasses and possibilities. This world is quite different from the glorious historical or imaginary past that offers to the church only an illusion of security and purity from the alleged un-cleanliness of the contemporary secularized society.

Although for decades this fruitful encounter with the demands of (post)modernity was postponed or caused feelings of fear and hesitation among the Orthodox,<sup>118</sup> this meeting is now shown to be not only

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<sup>118</sup> For an exploration of the difficulties of this still pending discussion between Orthodoxy and modernity see among others: Kalaitzidis, Pantelis, *Orthodoxy and Modernity. Prolegomena*, Athens: Indiktos Publications, 2007, (in Greek); Valliere, Paul, "Russian Orthodoxy and the challenge of modernity: the case of Archimandrite Makary", in: *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 22.1, 1978, 3-15; Stoeckl, Kristina, "Modernity and its Critique in 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian Orthodox Thought", in: *Studies in East European Thought*, 58, (4), 2006, 243-269; Willert, Trine/ Molokotos-Linerman, Lina: *Innovation in the Orthodox Christian Tradition?: The Question of Change in Greek Orthodox Thought and Practice*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2012; Makrides, Vasilios, "Orthodox Christianity, Modernity and Post-Modernity: Overview, Analysis and Assesement", in:



necessary but also inevitable as long as the church herself and her theology remain receptive before the creative and refreshing breeze of the Spirit. The *Paraclete* calls her in a prophetic way to constantly preach the gospel, to work for the continuing and ever-new incarnation of God's word, by seeking to address soteriologically the problems and the existential needs of humanity, as the predominant environmental problem or economic discrimination make evident.

Orthodoxy, despite the enormous progress in growing and consolidating the principles of democracy, human rights, freedom of speech, dignity and self-worth of the human subject,<sup>119</sup> remains constantly hesitant or takes a defensive attitude towards the challenges facing the context of the 'open society'<sup>120</sup> and a pluralistic world where the encounter and coexistence of various values, traditions and ideologies is neither easy nor always possible without problems. Today, various tensions and difficulties are observed in contemporary European societies, such as the revival of totalitarian ideologies that seek due to the economic crisis to exploit the passions and weaknesses of people, diverse cutting trends and the restriction of civil liberties and democratic values due to the resurgence of religious fundamentalism, which in the name of God and religion is ready to bloody all of humanity, the systematic demoralization and removal of the anthropological constants of dignity, freedom, equality, the current neo-liberal economic model

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*Religion, State and Society*, 40 (3-4), 2012, 248-285, Papanikolaou, Aristotle, "Orthodoxy, Post-Modernism, and Ecumenism: The Difference that Divine-Human Communion Makes", in: *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 42 (4), 2007, 527-546. See also my "Is a dialogue between Orthodox theology and (post) modernity possible? The case of the Russian and Neo-patristic 'Schools'", in: *Communio Viatorum* LIV, (2), 2012, 203-222.

<sup>119</sup> See below, for the official synodical document on the 'Mission of the Church in the modern world', which was approved by the Panorthodox Synod held in Crete, Greece in June, 2016.

<sup>120</sup> For an overview of Karl Popper's political philosophy and his defense of the "open society" see <http://www.iep.utm.edu/popp-pol/> (accessed 21 July 2016).

that seriously afflicts the once balanced relationship between human beings and creation itself, etc. Against these challenges, Orthodoxy is able to offer hope and an alternative way of life, by helping people to look to the future with greater faith and optimism.

Although the Orthodox Church has not always risen to the occasion, it has kept more or less, at least in theory, alive the fundamental truths of its tradition (its own ‘first things’) in many aspects of its life, a fact which is reflected both in the constant liturgical experience and life, and in various actions occasionally taken in order to address in the most expedient way the consequences of the environmental, economical and finally anthropological, spiritual and ethical crisis (e.g. the initiatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate concerning the environment).<sup>121</sup> Despite, however, the conscientious efforts made by enlightened Hierarchs or prominent theologians,<sup>122</sup> worldwide, Orthodoxy shows great difficulty in following the developments either on a local or a global level, unable to offer in a persuasive or realistic way responsive solutions to the urgent problems and challenges of our time. Following the traditional (successful or not it does not matter) crisis management models such as its valuable and particularly useful charitable and pastoral work, the Orthodox Church is in most of the cases incapable to show the appropriate flexibility in adopting new methods and means which are available so as to reinforce its overall witness. At the same time, while the problems day to day are distended, many voices come to surface calling in an almost passive attitude against the daily challenges or even in an escape from history, for the sake of soul’s salvation or *theosis* which is considered as an individual achievement.

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<sup>121</sup> See above.

<sup>122</sup> Among others, Metropolitan John D. Zizioulas of Pergamon, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware of Diokleia, Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania et. al.

At the same time, in the area of (Orthodox) theology there are some individual but not at all organised efforts, especially in the past few years (2012),<sup>123</sup> for an utterance of a ‘political’ word, taking into account the contemporaneous interplay between secularization and globalization, attempting to converse and be related to the surrounding world by virtue of a topical existential *re*-interpretation of the tradition’s richness. Most of the times, however, this theology, even though it should be the critical voice of the church, continues navel-gazing, restricted to a sterile and unfruitful study of the tradition, neglecting the need that the Word of the Gospel should be constantly re-incarnated according to the patristic ethos in any context, so as to properly address the questions of (post)modern human being. While many challenges and questions are naturally and totally unpredictable by the patristic tradition, Orthodox theology often shows a tendency to follow a ‘theology of repetition,’<sup>124</sup> that is unable to understand or even receive the surrounding rapidly changed reality, which cannot be addressed by simply quoting the Fathers. What is needed in this regards is a new model of doing theology, a way that will existentially interpret the ecclesial doctrines and tradition, avoiding a sort of ‘patristic fundamentalism,’ making then evident its relevance for the contemporary world.

It seems that Orthodoxy’s often overemphasized liturgical and eschatological character and nature becomes an unexpected obstacle towards its historic and social engagement in the existential and real

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<sup>123</sup> See for instance: Papanikolaou, Aristotle, *The Mystical as Political. Democracy and non Radical Orthodoxy*, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 2012; Kalaitzidis, Pantelis, *Orthodoxy and Political theology*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012.

<sup>124</sup> A term often used by the eminent Russian theologian Georges Florovsky, [Cf. his “St Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers”, in: *Sobornost*, 4, 1961, 165-176] in order to denote an uncritical and sterile use of the tradition (especially liturgical and patristic) without any effort towards interpretation.

problems of humanity itself, presenting a situation where it seems that ‘Orthodoxy itself came to a halt before (post)modernity.’<sup>125</sup> In this case, any foretaste in this life of the eschatological way of being in the Kingdom of God – where any sort of inequality, divisions or injustice and oppression will be overcome – becomes impossible, if not mere imagination.

#### **11.4 From *Personhood* through *Eucharist* to *Priesthood of Creation*: Towards an Orthodox Eco-Theology and Social Ethics**

The very complex and urgent issues that have emerged from the above-described situation, raise in a radical way many theological and *moral* questions. In this context, (Orthodox) Christian theology is necessitated to present its forsaken proposals in order to heal humankind’s wounds. Evidently, the positive role that could be played by theology is frequently ignored in the midst of many political and diplomatic attempts to overcome conflicts. Theology, however, has the means (persuasion, love, freedom, etc.) and the power (*diakonia* and martyrdom) to inspire a dynamic new theological paradigm toward world reconciliation by virtue of a both necessary and creative re-interpretation and contextualization of some fundamental aspects of its doctrinal truths<sup>126</sup>.

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<sup>125</sup> Cf. Kalaitzidis, Pantelis, *Orthodoxy and Modernity*, op. cit.

<sup>126</sup> For what follows one should consult the following works by Zizioulas, John D., *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985; *Communion & Otherness*, McPartlan, Paul (ed.), London: T&T Clark, 2006; *The One and the Many. Studies on God, Man, the Church, and the World Today*, Edwards, Gregory (ed.), California: Sebastian Press, 2010; *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, Tallon, Luke B. (ed.), London: T&T Clark, 2011; “Person and Nature in the Theology of St. Maximus the Confessor”, in: Vasiljević, Maxim (ed.),

(a) The gospel of Jesus Christ, as it has been proclaimed by the apostles and further conceptualized and experienced by the church, constitutes the most adequate and at the same time critical model which determines the context of our relations to the other human beings, communities, cultures, as well as to the entire creation. Since Christ was crucified on behalf of humanity, in order to abolish slavery to evil (beginning from ‘the last enemy’, i.e. death and including every kind of evil that threatens the very being of humanity and cosmos), how can we then, claiming to follow in his steps as individual Christians or official churches, continue to commit any kind of atrocities to our ‘neighbour’ and to our ‘Oikos’? Christ gives us the capacity to offer unconditional forgiveness and love to any other, by receiving both the person of the ‘other’ as well as the whole creation and offering them to God the Father, who will eschatologically fulfil by the Spirit their longing towards the divine-human/creation communion. In this context, the *Cross* of Christ constitutes the ultimate paradigm for one’s social life providing the necessary model for a *kenotic* (self-emptying) way of life, as unconditional *love*, at various levels.

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*Knowing the Purpose of Creation Through the Resurrection: Proceedings of the Symposium on St. Maximus the Confessor*, Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press and The Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University of Belgrade, 2013, 85-113; “Trinitarian Freedom: Is God free in Trinitarian life?”, in: Maspero, G./Wozniak, R. (eds.), *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology, Disputed Question and Contemporary issues in Trinitarian theology*, Edinburg: T&T Clark, 2012, 193-207; “Relational Ontology. Insights from the patristic thought”, in: Polkinghorne, John (ed.), *The Trinity and an Entangled World*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Cambridge U.K., 2010, 146-156; “Eschatologie et Société”, in: *Irénikon*, 73 (3-4), 2000, 278-297; “Déplacement de la perspective eschatologique”, in: Alberigo, G. et al. (eds.), *La Chrétienté en débat*, Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1984, 89-100; “Eschatology and History”, in: Wieser, Thomas (ed.), *Cultures in Dialogue: Documents from a Symposium in Honor of Philip A. Potter*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985, 30-39; “Eschatology and History”, in: Wieser, Thomas (ed.), *Whither Ecumenism?*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986, 62-71, 72-73, etc.

(b) Furthermore, it must be stressed that Jesus Christ by his whole life and redemptive work proleptically offers to the contemporary world a real foretaste of the ‘trinitarian play’ (in Jean Luc Marion’s wording)<sup>127</sup> which will be accomplished in the kingdom of God. In other words, Christ, on the basis of the divine economy, has reintroduced the whole creation into its trinitarian and filial state. In this context the intra-trinitarian relations of mutual communion and otherness can be transferred and realized through the ecclesial body of Christ within the present historical and cosmic reality. *Personhood* is now for humanity a possible and historic way of being, which constitutes the ultimate gift of the absolute ‘Other’, God the Father in Christ by the Holy Spirit. This way of being, where communion and otherness, freedom and love are narrowly correlated, offers the possibility for a new model of interpersonal relations. In this dimension every kind of conflict could be surpassed and the ‘other’ would no longer be ‘our Hell’ (J. P. Sartre). This new *hypostatic* and *ecstatic* way of being, however, namely *personhood*, becomes a reality only insofar as it presupposes an *ascetics* of freedom, considered as freedom for the other, realized in this case as responsibility and moral obligation in view of the entire creation.

(c) But how and where can this new way of being become a reality? How is it possible to abolish all the brutal violence present in our times, which is characterized by so many conflicts? As the churchman Desmond Tutu, who has experienced many difficult situations, once stated ‘there is no future without forgiveness’<sup>128</sup>. According to this perspective, churches can play a decisive role concerning the overcoming of the various conflicts. The *eucharistic* and *eschatological*

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<sup>127</sup> Marion, Jean Luc, *Prolegomena to Charity*, Lewis, Stephen (trans.), New York: Fordham University Press, 2002, 142.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Desmond, Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, op. cit.

nature of the church forms a dynamic context within which the preservation or even the transformation of the world can take place. Christian community itself as the body of Christ draws its identity from the Kingdom to come, which means that it does not have the right to be identified with any kind of worldly and always unjust political orders, ideologies or economical systems. The church lives in this world but it does not belong to this world. In the sense of ethical *praxis* or moral action, this means that human *personhood* is not what one is in its present state, but what one will be ‘at the last day,’ according to the eschatological ontology that defines one’s own and creation’s being not from the past but from the future. This eschatological reality, although it seems to give a second place to any human efforts towards social justice, food security or protection of the environment, does not, however, prevent the church from entering into a close but always critical cooperation (without, however, adopting any atheistic prerequisites or compromising its own truth) with diverse individual or collective groups or ideologies (e.g. liberalism, liberal democracy, etc.) that share a common and honest concern for the dignity, freedom and the rights of all human beings as well as for the integrity of creation, while at the same time struggle against various modes of evil present in the world.

(d) Moreover, the Eucharist as the communion-event *par excellence* constitutes the appropriate framework, a new mode of communal life, in which every kind of division or exclusion can be overcome (national, religious, or racial, social, and so on; cf. *Gal.* 3:28). In this understanding, the human acquires the capacity to forgive the other, to make peace with the world, because in the face of the Other one recognizes an icon of Christ or rather Christ himself. In the early church, Eucharist was considered as a synaxis of all the people of God and creation itself in order to thank God for the very gift of existence. By entering the world into Liturgy, the church refuses to accept the

corruption and sin of creation, sanctifying the offering to the very Creator: ‘We offer to you these gifts from your own gifts in all and for all’ (according to the *Epiclesis* found in the Anaphora-Eucharistic Prayer, of the divine liturgy in use in Orthodox Church). The Eucharistic reception of creation, despite its corruption and sin, confirms that creation itself is still the creation of God, away from any Manichean or Gnostic understanding of it. Its offering to God does not intend to negate its very being and status as creation, but mainly brings to the fore its hidden due to sin, truth. Here is where the important role of the human being emerges. As John D. Zizioulas aptly puts it:

*“The priest is the one who freely and, as himself an organic part of it, takes the world in his hands to refer it to God, and who, in return, brings God’s blessing to what he refers to God. Through this act, creation is brought into communion with God himself. This is the essence of priesthood, and it is only the human being who can do it, namely, unite the world in his hands in order to refer it to God, so that it can be united with God and thus saved and fulfilled. This is so because, as we said earlier, only the human being is united with creation while being able to transcend it through freedom. This role of the human being, as the priest of creation, is absolutely necessary for creation itself, because without this reference of creation to God the whole created universe will die. It will die because it is a finite universe, as most scientists accept today. This is theologically a very fundamental belief, since the world was not always there, but came into being at some point and, for this reason, will ‘naturally’ have an end and come into non-being one day. Therefore, the only way to protect the world from its finitude*



*which is inherent in its nature, is to bring it into relation with God.*"<sup>129</sup>

Despite any, often justified, reservations due to the intense focus on humanity one might have, taking as our starting point the loving-communal-sacrificial *ethos*, as it was manifested in the self-revelation of the Triune God in Christ in history and the entire world, along with the *personal* mode of being that summarizes its whole soteriological proposal, the theology of the Orthodox Church is able to propose a different model of life and social coexistence where the respect of personal freedom and difference, as well as the respect of the creation's integrity, will constitute a fundamental *cultural* condition. The anthropological ideal of *personhood*, as it has emerged and developed through time in the experience and life of the church and is still witnessed throughout the ecclesiastical tradition, without being the only or dominant proposal in the *public* area, constitutes the most valuable gift that Orthodoxy can offer in view of addressing the various closely interlinked anthropological as well as ecological challenges. Without forgetting its *eschatological* identity, the active presence of the church in the public area, apart from obsessions deriving from any favourable or privileged treatment due to its glorious historical role, as well as absolutely respecting the conditions and rules of this area, will be able to offer various guarantees for its seamless process in History, focusing not only on the human's pain relief, but also on the care for the interception of the various problems which threaten the very existence of creation.

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<sup>129</sup> Zizioulas, John D., "Proprietors of Priests of Creation" in: *The Eucharistic Communion and the World*, Tallon, Luke (ed.), London: T&T Clark, 2011, 137.

## 11.5 Conclusion: Further Challenges to Orthodox Theology

In this perspective, a series of critical questions come to surface referring to the position and role of the Orthodox Church and theology in the contemporary world, their potent to discuss fruitfully not only with the progressive trends of society, but with other religious traditions and cultures as well, in the view of dealing with critical issues related to the environmental, economical, moral and spiritual crisis.

Is the living ecclesiastical consciousness allowed in the context of the present globalised society to keep retreating into its shells, without a reference or at least an honest dialogue towards other Christian traditions, which due to their historical consistency can offer their valuable experience from their successful or not meeting with the various aspects of modernity and particularly post modernity, secularization and post secularization? Is Orthodoxy able to emphatically utter a speech of love and solidarity towards every human, regardless religious, social and cultural origin, following in this respect the paradigm described in the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' (Luke 10: 25-37)? Is the ethos and the way of life Orthodoxy proposes compatible with the liberal values and features of our contemporary world, and which alternative and social solution of management concerning the natural and economical wealth could Orthodoxy propose?<sup>130</sup> To what extend is the anthropological model of the human being, as a 'priest of creation,' realistic and which are the practical consequences on the

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<sup>130</sup> Towards this direction, see for instance: Bulgakov, Sergei, *Philosophy of Economy. The World as Household*, Catherine Evtukhov (trans.), Yale University Press, 2000. See also Payne, Daniel/ Marsh, Christopher: "Sergei Bulgakov's 'Sophic' Economy: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective on Christian Economics", in: *Faith & Economics* 53, 2009, 35-51; Stanchev, Krassen, "Sergey Bulgakov and the Spirit of Capitalism", in: *Journal of Markets & Morality*, 11, (1), 2008, 149-156.

dealing with the rapid deterioration concerning the terms of ecological crisis, social injustice and inequality? Is orthodox theology able to systematically utter a contemporary ‘political theology,’ which, although founded in a hermeneutic updating of its fundamental faith principles, will pursue to highlight the ethical parameters of ecclesiastical experience, incarnating the truth of the Gospel in any circumstance and always aiming at the foretaste of the divine-human communion in herein History, however, away from fallacious expectations of messianic and revealing type? Can Orthodoxy, respecting its history and tradition, recognizing, however, it’s possible historical failures or deficiencies, anatomize its tradition from the beginning in a creative way in order to meet the exigencies of time?

Regarding this urgent mission and role of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary world, the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church (June 2016, Crete, Greece), convening after centuries of synodical *aphasia*, clearly stated,<sup>131</sup> that:

*The yearning for continuous growth in prosperity and an unfettered consumerism inevitably lead to a disproportionate use and depletion of natural resources. Nature, which was created by God and given to humankind to work and preserve (cf. Gen 2:15), endures the consequences of human sin: For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation*

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<sup>131</sup> See the official synodical document “The mission of the Orthodox Church in the today’s world”, [https://www.holycouncil.org/official-documents/-/asset\\_publisher/VA0WE2pZ4Y0I/content/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world?\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_VA0WE2pZ4Y0I\\_languageId=en\\_US](https://www.holycouncil.org/official-documents/-/asset_publisher/VA0WE2pZ4Y0I/content/mission-orthodox-church-todays-world?_101_INSTANCE_VA0WE2pZ4Y0I_languageId=en_US) (accessed July, 21, 2016).

*groans and labors with birth pangs together until now (Rom. 8:20-22).*

*The ecological crisis, which is connected to climate change and global warming, makes it incumbent upon the Church to do everything within her spiritual power to protect God's creation from the consequences of human greed. As the gratification of material needs, greed leads to spiritual impoverishment of the human being and to environmental destruction. We should not forget that the earth's natural resources are not our property, but the Creator's: The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world, and those who dwell therein (Ps. 23:1). Therefore, the Orthodox Church emphasizes the protection of God's creation through the cultivation of human responsibility for our God-given environment and the promotion of the virtues of frugality and self-restraint. We are obliged to remember that not only present, but also future generations have a right to enjoy the natural goods granted to us by the Creator.*

Obviously the continuous discussion of issues related to creation and human survival, constitutes not only a moral duty but a central *existential* concern of the living ecclesiastical experience, which is expressed and culminated in the eschatological transformation of creation into New Creation in the Kingdom of God.

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## **THE ROLE OF CHURCHES IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE: CASE STUDY OF RWANDA**

*Gloriose Umuziranenge*<sup>132</sup>

The world climate is increasingly changing, causing troubles to environment and we need to act urgently if we are to avoid an irreversible build-up of greenhouse gases (GHGs) and global warming at a potentially huge cost to the economy and society worldwide.<sup>133</sup> The huge challenges of food shortage hitting many countries in Africa as a result of the droughts devastate countries. Kenya, Ethiopia and southern Sudan provide visible examples.<sup>134</sup>

Rwanda is a highly populated and landlocked country located in East Africa. In Rwanda, the potential of agricultural production is relatively high and human activity has been changing the natural ecosystems through agriculture while urbanization is at glance. Population pressure has pushed farmers into increasingly fragile lands. This has resulted in habitat loss and degradation, in the pollution of the soil, water and

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<sup>133</sup> OECD 2008, 5.

<sup>134</sup> CIGI 2009, 9.

atmosphere, soil erosion, as well as climate change. In addition, some species have been lost and ecological processes impaired especially within the protected areas of the country. The aggressive deforestation in the country from 1990 to 2003 following war and genocide against Tutsi including other violent conflicts in neighbouring countries were another factor contributing to that. There was further tree clearing for settlement as Rwandans were returning back home after the genocide, with additional refugees who were hosted from the warring neighbouring countries Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. It is well noted that more than 96% of Rwandan households in rural and urban areas use trees as a source of energy and more than 60% of the urban population use charcoal as a source of energy especially for cooking.<sup>135</sup> This explains why little tree cover remains in a nation called ‘the country of one thousand hills’.

Moreover, the reducing water levels in the major lakes, the unpredictable weather changes, drought, land slides and flooding of the rivers in western Rwanda led to the death of dozens of people and destroyed roads and other infrastructure, as well as significant amounts of agricultural production, swept by the flooding, and houses, leaving many people homeless. High degradation of the natural forests and wetland areas, water, air and soil pollution and the declining productivity of arable lands and triggered a worsening of the food security situation, malnutrition and poor health throughout the country.<sup>136</sup>

The Government of Rwanda put much effort in addressing such problems through national environment policies and poverty alleviation strategies for the better use of natural resources. Churches and parishes in Rwanda guided by the National Environment Plan in their

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<sup>135</sup> CPR 2012.

<sup>136</sup> UNDP 2012.

development plans are not left behind and find it necessary to engage in different activities related to environment conservation. Therefore, Churches put an emphasis on the promotion of sustainable environment for holistic development through promoting livelihood support and sustainable environment programs such as community afforestation programs, sustainable agriculture at household levels, as well as the promotion of energy saving technologies, i.e. stoves and solar lighting for a clean environment.

Protestant churches in Rwanda under the Protestant Council of Rwanda (CPR), created in 1963, are today involved in environmental conservation projects. Member churches involved in these projects are the Association of Protestant Churches in Rwanda, the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, the 7th Day Adventist Church, the Free Methodist Church, Baptist Union Church, the Association of Baptist Churches, Nazarene Church, Lutheran Church, Evangelical Church of Friends, the Salvation Army and the nine Dioceses of the Anglican Church in Rwanda. Practically, these churches are contributing in addressing climate change and engage programs which protect, promote, rehabilitate and fight against climate change. The projects aim at mobilizing both pastors and lay Christians in parishes and educate them through seminars, short courses and workshops on the issue of environmental degradation due to climate change.

In 2011, CPR organized a church leader seminar on the role of churches in sustainable environment, and this seminar came up with a statement called “CPR’s Theology of the environment”. The statement contains church leaders’ commitment to protect the environment. It became very popular particularly as CPR is implementing actions in collaboration with World Alliance for the conservation of the environment, a UK based organization founded by the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip, husband of the Queen of Great Britain and

supported by the UN, World Bank. The statement was published in a book called “Many Heavens - One Earth, Our Continent. Stories of African Faith Commitments”.<sup>137</sup>

During the workshop on the role of churches in addressing climate change held in Nyamata (Rwanda) on 16-18 March, the Anglican Bishop of the Shyogwe diocese said that climate change may cause troubles to human being. Thus, it is the responsibility of the Church to take care of the environment as the bible says in Genesis 2:15: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work and keep it.” He equally argued that God gave mankind a command and told him that he must tend or keep the garden. Therefore, as good stewards we have a big responsibility to take care of the environment. The Bishop emphasized on the role of churches in educating people on the issue evolving climate change and pass on the message of mitigation, adaptation and prevention of the effects of climate change in various communities in Africa. He said that church leaders must get involved in addressing effects of climate change because it has become one of the greatest challenges in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

The Shyogwe Diocese of the Anglican Church has initiated a project called Rural Development Inter-diocesan Service (RDIS) under the sponsorship of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) and Bread for the World, religious organisations based in Germany. The aim of the project is to engage community and address challenges of climate change. The stove project under RDIS is a good example of many measures that can be taken to protect the environment. It is very important in reducing the cutting down of trees for firewood and charcoal. The president of the cooperative making stoves emphasized on the role of RDIS that “the project is of great importance as before we were very poor and now we

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<sup>137</sup> Many Heavens - One Earth, Our Continent, ARC, 2012.

are able to earn money and save for our future, we are able to make 10 stoves individually. Each Stove costs 10,000 Rwandan francs, we are able to buy our food, pay school fees for our children, pay health insurance and the cooking process has become very easy for us.” The project will have a good impact on environment protection as it will ensure the sustainable and equitable use of resources without degrading the environment or risking health or safety. It will prevent and control the degradation of land, water, vegetation and air, conserve and enhance natural and man-made heritage, including biological diversity of unique ecosystems, improve the condition and productivity of degraded areas, raise awareness and understanding of the link between environment and development, promote individual and community participation and promote international cooperation.

The workshop on the role of churches in addressing climate change highlighted challenges that churches are facing such as low community awareness about the risks of climate change which constitutes an obstacle to ownership of protective measures, the lack of knowledge and skills among community and church members in relation to climate protection, difficult cooperation between environment actors (churches, civil society, foreign agencies and government services), the lack of resources to implement projects to address climate change, the absence of measures of law enforcement in some countries, illegal exploitation of natural resources, including minerals and timber, land grabbing and the replacement of food crops by eucalyptus and a high development rate/economic improvements without taking account its consequences on the environment.

The participants in the workshop highlighted solutions to include and strengthen climate justice and environment protection in churches, develop a policy to make climate change a crosscutting issue and mainstream it in all church programs, cooperate with other churches and

institutions (NGOs, government etc.) in addressing climate change issues wherever possible, create a network of churches in the Great Lakes Region to promote climate justice and environmental protection, mainstream climate justice in our churches, facilitate the exchange and dissemination of relevant materials and networks on the youth action plan and environmental projects, implement similar projects like RDIS in other member churches as development projects, including training and support, and facilitate exchange of experiences with churches having such projects, promote conservation agriculture for land restoration through agro forestry, reforestation, and other modern land friendly farming techniques, integrate eco-theology/theology of creation and environment in theological and other training programmes including development programs.

PIASS, as a higher learning institution owned by Protestant Churches in Rwanda addresses some of the challenges. It has an undergraduate program of Natural resources and Environment Management that train Rwandese on the issue of environment protection and conservation. In addition, PIASS committed to develop and start a new program on eco-theology at master level.

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## ECOLOGY OUTSIDE OF THEOLOGY

### The Paradox of Theological Education in Belarus

*Natallia Vasilevich*<sup>138</sup>

#### 13.1 Introduction

In the 1990s, Belarus became a champion of teaching ecological awareness courses in the university framework: compulsory courses were introduced in the curriculum, and, in 1992, a unique ecological research and educational institution named after Soviet human rights activist and dissident Andrey Sakharov was established. Involvement of the Belarusian Orthodox Church and its units in raising eco-awareness is also significant, e.g. vast foreign church-related humanitarian aid and ecumenical cooperation connected to ecological topics, a unique department on ecology of the Hrodna diocese<sup>139</sup> and visible presence of

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<sup>138</sup> Natallia Vasilevich is an Orthodox theologian and political scientist from Minsk, Belarus. Currently, she is chairing the Belarusian cultural and educational establishment Centre Ecumena and writes her PhD in the University of Bonn on the social teaching of the Orthodox Church in the framework of the Holy and Great Council.

<sup>139</sup> Ecological department of the diocese of Hrodna, official web-site, <http://www.orthos.org/eparhiya/otdely/ekologicheskii> (accessed 27 July 2016). That is the only diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church were such a

events with strong ecological content in the framework of activities of the Youth Union of the Belarusian Orthodox Church and Synodal Department for Youth Affairs of the Belarusian Orthodox Church.<sup>140</sup>

### **13.2 Ecological Topics in the Curriculum of Theological Education: Focus on Security and Radiation**

Paradoxically, eco-theology was at the same time rather absent from theological education in Belarus. Ecological topics were included in theological modules of the faculty of theology (European Humanities University) only in 1998 with the introduction of the first educational standard of theology: of the Moral theology course Church and ecology was merely the last topic.<sup>141</sup> This was an achievement, which, however, diminished in the following years.

After the Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church<sup>142</sup> were accepted in 2000, this document started to play an important role in the framework of Moral theology. The document was promising for boosting eco-theology as it included a whole chapter dedicated to relations of the church to ecological problems. The Russian Orthodox Church declared its “deep concern” for ecological problems as

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department exists. Since 9 years, Hrodna diocese organises annual Orthodox ecological youth gatherings.

<sup>140</sup> See “The Church and Environment Program (Main activities: 2014-1016)”, <http://tvorenie.by/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-Church-and-Environment-Program-2014-2106-1.pdf> (accessed 27 July 2016).

<sup>141</sup> Образовательный стандарт. Высшее образование. Специальность Г.01.02.00 Теология.

Утвержден и введен в действие приказом Министра образования от 30.12.98 г. № 697 [Educational Standard. Higher Education. First Degree. Speciality Г.01.0 2.00 Theology. Adopted and enforced by order of the Minister of education 30.12.1998 г. № 697].

<sup>142</sup> Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church, 2000. Web-site of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, <http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/3/14.aspx> (accessed 27 July 2016).

“the problems generated by the contemporary civilisation” (XIII.1). It proposed theological reflection on the relationship between humanity and nature (XIII.2) as well as unity and integrity of Creation as a basic principle to address ecological issues (XIII.4) and it took responsibility to raise public awareness on the problems of ecological crisis and insisted on the necessity “to introduce ecological education and training” (XIII.3). However, in the new educational standard of theology adopted in 2008<sup>143</sup> the only related topic in the framework of the Moral theology course with reference to the social document of the Russian Church was bioethics, while Church and ecology completely vanished. In the latest standard of 2013<sup>144</sup> there was no more space, neither for the course on moral theology at all, which used to be the last resort for possible eco-theological reflections, nor for any other form of eco-theological topics.

Educational standards which are the legal document setting requirements to the content and amount of information to be delivered in the curriculum of the specific courses consist of three parts: a general scientific module, a humanitarian module and a professional specific

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<sup>143</sup> Образовательный стандарт Республики Беларусь. Высшее образование. Первая ступень. Специальность 1-21 01 01 Теология. Квалификация теолог-религиовед. Преподаватель этики, эстетики и культурологии. Утвержден и введен в действие постановлением Министерства образования Республики Беларусь от 12.06.2008 г. № 50 [Educational Standard of the Republic of Belarus. Higher Education. First Degree. Speciality 1-21 01 01 Theology. Qualification specialist in theology and religious studies. Lecturer in ethics, aesthetics and culturology. Adopted and enforced by decree of the Ministry of education 12.06.2008 № 50].

<sup>144</sup> Образовательный стандарт высшего образования. Высшее образование. Первая ступень. Специальность 1-21 01 01 Теология. Квалификация теолог-религиовед. Преподаватель этики, эстетики и культурологии. Утвержден и введен в действие постановлением Министерства образования Республики Беларусь от 30.08.2013 №87 [Educational Standard of higher education. Higher Education. First Degree. Speciality 1-21 01 01 Theology. Qualification specialist in theology and religious studies. Lecturer in ethics, aesthetics and culturology. Adopted and enforced by decree of the Ministry of education 30.08.2013 №87].

module. Being absent from the professional theological and humanitarian modules, in all three above mentioned educational standards, the ecological courses at the same time were included in the general scientific part. The standard of 1998 contained two compulsory courses on ecology:

Basics of ecology, consisting of 32 hours<sup>145</sup>, and Protecting inhabitants and economic objects in emergency situations (including radiation security), consisting of 68 hours.

To be graded for the first course, students were required to know the ecological consequences of professional decisions of specialists (meaning their own decisions as theologians), to analyse the ecological life of society as well as to know about the influence of human activities on the environment and about scientific and practical measures to protect plant and animal kingdoms. The program of the course of Basics of ecology touched upon the following topics: the general idea of an ecosystem, energy and nutrition cycles, soil, climate, ecology of community and successions and – the largest topic – radiation and Chernobyl: radiation, ionising radiation and its doses, natural sources of radiation, the anthropogenic radiation background, the situation with radioactive emission in Belarus before and after the Chernobyl disaster. The second course on emergency situations focused on the Chernobyl disaster more closely and had practical orientation: medical consequences, radioactive hygiene, norms of radioactive security and sanitary rules of work with radioactive substances, use of radiometers and dosimeters. Not surprisingly, Chernobyl was not only the centre of ecological education, but became its over-expanded centre covering the course almost entirely.

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<sup>145</sup> In Belarusian academic system length of the course and its components is counted in hours (1 academic hour consists of 45 min). Auditorial hours are the lectures, seminars and practical lessons delivered in the university.

The educational standard of 2008 was adopted when the theological faculty was transferred from the EHU to the Belarusian State University and transformed into the Institute of Theology. In this standard, the course Basics of ecology got the following addition in its name: and of saving energy. The course was enlarged in length, now consisting of 52 hours (34 auditorial). It became larger than Moral theology (46 hours and 34 auditorial) but continued to be one of the smallest courses of the entire curriculum. It now aimed at developing skills of theological students in “finding foundations for ethical approaches and the role of Christian organisations in solving environmental problems” and it lost topics connected to radiation. The latter were completely erased from this basic course and moved to the second one Protecting inhabitants and objects in emergency situations. Radiation security (102 hours; 68 auditorial) which had more of a civil defence training character.

Basics of ecology and saving energy included the following issues: principles, approaches, laws of ecology, the relationship of man and nature in their dynamics of development, basic concepts of classical ecology (environmental factors, biosphere, ecosystem, biocenosis, population and others), socio-environmental laws and norms of behaviour that allow the continued existence and development of mankind, the global environmental crisis, its causes and consequences, the measures necessary to overcome it, the ecological situation in the Republic of Belarus, renewable and non-renewable energy sources and, lastly, the concept of energy security of Belarus. The student was expected to learn the following issues: cosmic conditions which provide life on Earth, the doctrine of biosphere, the law of unidirectional energy flow in the biosphere, the doctrine of the noosphere, the sequence of concepts describing the functional ecosystem of any rank, historical types of interaction between society and nature, socio- and ecological systems and their components, biospheric functions of mankind and the

notions and concepts public health, demography, urbanization and urban ecosystems and, furthermore, scientific, philosophical and religious grounds of environmental values. The course was expected to develop the following skills: to orient oneself in the specificity of structure and specific problems of classic ecology, and ecology of human being, both global and social, to be able to find ecological components, ecological interactions, ecological conflicts, to explain the chemical basis of substance cycle and of energy conversion, to explain causes of diversity of living substance and individual ecosystems, to use information on the greenhouse effect and environmental pollution to prevent environmental hazards, to explain the role of population and organisms in an ecosystem, to explain the causal relationship of ecological and evolutionary phenomena and the human impact on ecological effects, to explain and justify the idea of the path of 'sustainable' development, environmental activities and culture as well as possible ways of their implementation and to show the role of economics and law in dealing with environmental problems. The content of the course seems to be very rich, addressing not only practical, but also theoretical problems, but being one of the smallest courses in the curriculum hardly all of these topics can be covered in detail.

The course *Protecting inhabitants and objects in emergency situations. Radiation security* consists of the following components: characteristics of the source of emergency situations, prognosis of situations during technogenic disasters, individual and collective means of protection against chemical injuries, classification of fires according to fire sources, means and methods of firefighting, fire prevention, protection of population during the war from conventional munitions and weapons of mass destruction, organisation of measures to eliminate the consequences of the accident, methods for detection and measurement of ionising radiation sources, protection against

radioactive radiation and practical recommendations for the population living in the contaminated areas.

In the educational standard of 2013, the shift of basic ecology to the concept of security became quite significant. The course was renamed to Security of human life and activities and inherited the same 102 academic hours in the curriculum, while Basics of ecology and saving of energy were just merged into it. Topics of global environmental problems, ensuring environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources now go hand in hand with protecting the population and facilities from emergencies, first aid in emergency situations, energy-saving technology at home, work security, sanitation requirements for work environment and industrial safety. Concerning radiation issues there was also quite an important shift: radiation safety was balanced with the topic of ensuring energy security and energy independence of the Republic of Belarus. This shift is connected to a governmental project of building a new atomic plant and to the vanishing of the Chernobyl topic from the official public discourse. The knowledge required from the student also became less humanitarian and more normative and legal: legislation in the sphere of fire and radiation security, protection of population and territories from emergencies, main principles, means and methods of protection from emergencies, basics of rational use of environment, measures to prevent ecological adversities of geospheres, priorities of state policy in sphere of energy saving and legislation in the sphere of working safety.



### **13.3 The Main Factors Shaping Ecological Awareness in Belarus and its Profile**

According to Belarusian philosopher Valiantsin Akudovič, the history of Belarus in the twentieth century could be summarised by the following few words: Revolution, War, Melioration, Chernobyl and Independence.<sup>146</sup> Two of these have significantly contributed to the eco-awareness of society, culture and politics, shaping its specific profile.

Melioration is considered by Akudovič to be the greatest apocalyptic event as the landscape of the whole country, its archetype, has been transformed (meliorated means “bettered”) from the natural image of forests and swamps to an agricultural, anthropogenic scenery of fields. The intensive draining of swamps, especially in the South-Western region of Palesie in the 1950-1970s, allowed to introduce more than 2 million hectares of lands to agricultural use. Draining was presented by Ivan Mielež in one of the most famous and important Belarusian epics “People of the Marsh”<sup>147</sup> as a great hope of people since it had great economic and social significance. However, melioration led to the destruction of natural ecosystems, i.e. “radical transformation of hydra, thermal, agrochemical regimes of the territories, profound change of spatial structure and external appearance of landscapes, decrease of biological diversity and abundance of many species of plants and animals, replacement of the original dominant groups with new ones”.<sup>148</sup> The economic effect was also diminished as

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<sup>146</sup> Акудовіч, Валянцін, “Мэліярацыя”, in: Слоўнік Свабоды. XX стагоддзе ў беларускай мове. Радыё Свабодная Еўропа / Радыё Свабода, 2012, 263. [Akudovič, Valiancin, “Melioration”, in: Dictionary of Liberty. XX century in Belarusian language, Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, 2012, 263.]

<sup>147</sup> Мележ, Іван, Людзі на балоце, Мінск: Попурі, 2015. [Mielež, Ivan, People of the Marsh, Minsk: Popurri, 2015.]

<sup>148</sup> Рассашко, И.Ф. et al., Общая экология. Тексты лекций для студентов специальности 1-33 01 02 «Геоэкология», Гомель: ГГУ им. Ф. Скорины,

after years of agricultural use much of the drained peat soil and its agricultural potential were lost. At the same time, in the common, not philosophical, conscience, melioration was a rather regional and very specific phenomenon, fully outperformed by the other factor – the Chernobyl disaster.

Chernobyl, a small town in Ukraine close to the Belarusian border whose name is derived from a wormwood, was an apocalyptical disaster not only in the figurative sense being commonly referred to as apocalyptic<sup>149</sup> and also not only due to the fact that its name partly had black<sup>150</sup> in it, but also because it had a symbolic connection with a biblical disaster found in the Book of Revelation: “The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water— the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.” (Rev 8:10-11) The radiological disaster at Chernobyl atomic electric station had a crucial influence on shaping all of society after 1986. According to the UN report “Chernobyl: the true scale of the accident”,<sup>151</sup> there were 200,000 emergency workers, 350,000 were persons were evacuated (116,000 immediately after the disaster) and 270,000 still live in the most polluted territories and, among those, around 100,000 still receive higher doses of radiation. One of the consequences of the disaster was an increasingly

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2010, 216-217. [Rassashko, I.F./ Kovaleva O.V./ Kruk A.V.: General Ecology. Texts of Lectures for the Students of Speciality 1-33 01 02 “Geoecology”, Homel: HSU of Skaryna, 2010, 216-217.]

<sup>149</sup> Адамовіч, Алесь, Апакаліпсіс па графіку, Мінск: Беларусь 1992. [Adamovich A., Apocalypse on schedule, Minsk: Belarus, 1992]

<sup>150</sup> Comp. “черный” (“chernyj”, “black” in Russian) with Чернобыль (Chernobyl).

<sup>151</sup> Chernobyl: the true scale of the accident. 20 Years Later a UN Report Provides Definitive Answers and Ways to Repair Lives. Joint News Release WHO/IAEA/UNDP. 5 September 2005, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2005/pr38/en/> (accessed 27 July 2016).

high level of thyroid gland diseases, including thyroid cancer and leukaemia. However, according to the conclusions of the above-mentioned report, even if in reality direct medical consequences of the disaster were not too dramatic, “widespread expectations of ill health and a tendency to attribute all health problems to radiation exposure have led local residents to assume that Chernobyl related fatalities were much higher than they actually were”, and it caused “stress symptoms, depression, anxiety and medically unexplained physical symptoms... including self-perceived poor health... People in the affected areas report negative assessments of their health and well-being, coupled with an exaggerated sense of the danger to their health from radiation exposure and a belief in a shorter life expectancy...”<sup>152</sup>

It was exactly in the framework of the “Chernobyl factor” when in 1991, during one of the UN events dedicated to aiding Belarus to overcome the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, a project of the International Ecological College as a tool to prepare professionals in different spheres connected to overcoming Chernobyl disaster emerged. The government of the newly independent Republic of Belarus as well as Chernobyl-aware organisations of civil society supported the project. A college was established and named after Soviet dissident and human rights activist with ecological awareness A.D. Sakharov in the very beginning of 1992. It united many specialists in different disciplines and became a central ecological educational and research organisation, not only in Belarus. In 2005, it received status of basic establishment for all the Commonwealth of Independent States (Organisation of cooperation of former Soviet Republics, excluding the three Baltic States). In 1994, it was transformed to an Institute, and in 1999 to a university. Since 2015, it is merged in the structure of the Belarusian State University.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

The institution deals not only with topics concerning radiation, radioactive pollution and its consequences for health and environment but also with other directions like new ‘cleaner’ energetic methods, energy saving technologies, ecological security, monitoring of environment and dealing with pollution of different kinds, with trash, plastic, etc.<sup>153</sup> This institution played a crucial role not only in preparing specialists in ecology (mainly of scientific direction) but also in promoting the very idea of the importance of the ecological education strongly connected to the reflections and research of the Chernobyl disaster on one hand, and of human rights, activism, advocacy framework on the other hand – the very reference to the name of the Andrey Sakharov, is symbolic for the ethos of the institution.

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<sup>153</sup> See the history of the institution at its official web-site: <http://www.iseu.bsu.by/institut/istoriya-new>



Chernobyl is an important reference point and metaphor in modern Belarusian culture.<sup>154</sup> Chernobyl has traumatised society significantly. Belarusian Nobel Prize winner Sviatlana Aleksijevič dedicated to the traumatic experiences her famous “Chernobyl’s prayer”<sup>155</sup> as the

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<sup>154</sup> See Yankuta, Anna, About Chernobyl in the Belarusian Literature, <http://survincity.com/2012/07/anna-yankuta-about-chernobyl-in-the-belarusian/> (accessed 27 July 2016).

<sup>155</sup> Алексіевіч, Святлана, Чарнобыльская малітва, Москва: Остожье, 1997.; Алексіевіч, Святлана, Чарнобыльская малітва: хроніка прышласці,

disaster had close connection to spirituality. This led the reflection on the trauma of Chernobyl in deep connection to religion: the famous icon Mother of God of Chernobyl's victims by Belarusian artist Ales Maračkin could be mentioned as an example (see picture), as well as the song "Children of Chernobyl" by Hanna Kazlova, with its presence of the prayer motive "Oh, God, save the destiny of Chernobyl children."<sup>156</sup> Belarusian anthropologist and theologian Elena Romashko considers the religious and mythological connotations of the radiation unavoidable.<sup>157</sup> Yet, this specific Belarusian phenomenon is often out of analysis of Chernobyl's influence on the church and religious life.<sup>158</sup>

Chernobyl children also was an important and archetypical concept in the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s. The foreign aid towards Belarusian government, NGOs and churches was so enormous that it can hardly be estimated. To understand the scale, only one – however the largest – foundation, Chernobyl children, provided humanitarian aid to 2 million people (the whole population is 10 million). 600,000 Belarusian children travelled abroad for health reasons. Only in the 1990s, medical drugs with a total cost of half a million USD were imported; in Germany alone there were more than 250 Chernobyl initiatives, including church ones.<sup>159</sup> Due to the specific organisation of German social system, where

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Мінск: Гронка, 1999. [In English: Alexievich, Svetlana, *Voices from Chernobyl*, Gessen, Keith (transl.), New York: Picador, 2006.]

<sup>156</sup> "Выратуй, Божа, лёс, дзецям Чарнобыля" (Bel.)

<sup>157</sup> Romashko, Elena (2016), "Religion and 'Radiation Culture': Spirituality in post-Chernobyl World". Web blog post, in: *Material Religions*. 1 June 2016, <http://materialreligions.blogspot.de/2016/05/religion-and-radiation-culture.html> (accessed 27 July 2016).

<sup>158</sup> Zwalen, Regula, "Die Russische Orthodoxe Kirche und Tschernobyl", in: *RGOW* 4, 2016, 22-23.

<sup>159</sup> See more about the activities of the foundation Chernobyl children and its cooperation also with church organisations: Тамковіч, Аляксандр, *Філасофія дабрыні: ад катастрофы да Сада Надзеі*, Мінск, 2016. [Tamkovič, Aliaksandr, *Philosophy of Good: from Catastrophe till the Garden of Hope*, Minsk, 2016.]; See about Chernobyl politics: Sahn, Astrid, *Umwelt- und energiepolitische*

church related Catholic and Protestant diaconic organisations and churches themselves play a very significant role, there was also very intensive ecumenical cooperation as many projects in Belarus funded by Protestant and Catholic partners were implemented in Belarus by churches.<sup>160</sup> Chernobyl aid and references to Chernobyl played a significant role for Belarusian parishes. In the beginning of the 1990s, in Minsk only there were two newly established parishes directly dedicated to Chernobyl: the Parish of the icon of Theotokos “Joy of all in sorrow” – the stone of the monumental church for the victims of Chernobyl was symbolically engraved on the fifth anniversary of the catastrophe, 26 April 1991<sup>161</sup>; and the Parish of the icon of Theotokos “Seeker of the perished” built in the memory of liquidators and victims. The capsule there was engraved by the President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenka himself on 26 April 1996.<sup>162</sup>

Visible change of the official discourse on Chernobyl occurred in the second half of 2000s and was connected to the governmental decision to build a new atomic plant in Belarus. The decision was taken in 2008 and, as a new concept of energetic independence of Belarus started to dominate the official discourse, Chernobyl vanished.<sup>163</sup> This

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Handlungsoptionen in der Ukraine und der Republik Belarus (1990-1995). Ihre Bedeutung für nationalstaatliche Legitimation und überregionale Kooperation, Dissertation, Frankfurt, 1998.

<sup>160</sup> See Тамковіч, Аляксандар, *op.cit.*, Sahn, Astrid, *opt.cit.*, Васілевіч, Наталля, “Сацыяльная работа цэркваў”, in: Асамблея (1), 2009, 13-16. [Vasilevich, Natallia, “Churches’ social work”, in: *Asambleja* (1), 2009, 13-16.]

<sup>161</sup> See history of parish: <http://sobor.by/10Years.php?lang=de> (accessed 27 July 2016).

<sup>162</sup> See history of parish: <http://nevsky.by/hram/prihod-ikony-bozhiej-materi-vzyskanie-pogibshih/> (accessed 27 July 2016).

<sup>163</sup> See Степанов, Андрей, *Политика Чернобыля в Беларуси в 1986-2008 годах: формирование и проявления дискурс-коалиций*, Докторская диссертация, Вильнюс, 2010 [Stepanov, Andrey, *Politics of Chernobyl in Belarus 1986-2008: formation and expression of discourse coalitions*, Doctoral dissertation, Vilnius, 2010].

development also explains the shift from Chernobyl and general ecological topics to security, energetic security and civil defence discourse in the courses on ecology.

The third factor to influence the necessity and content of teaching ecology in Belarus was the popularity in the intellectual circles of the 1990s of ideas of Russian/ Ukrainian philosopher and scientist Vladimir Vernadsky, especially of noosphere,<sup>164</sup> which was closely connected not only to science but also to so called Russian cosmism, which included spiritual, esoteric and even occult elements,<sup>165</sup> and therefore represented an alternative to Orthodox and Christian theology spirituality. And according to Vernadsky, it is neither philosophy, nor religious faith or political doctrine, but science which plays the role of the global “reasonable” force.<sup>166</sup> The concept of noosphere introduced in Soviet discourse and developed by Vernadsky constitutes an optimistic idea of harmony of the co-existence between humanity (life substance) and environment (insentient substance), and manifests a new stage in the evolution of the universe, where the human being plays a role of a geological global force, which also corresponds to the Soviet political model: “the ideas of our democracy are in unison with spontaneous geological process, with laws of nature, they are in accord with noosphere. We can be sure in the future. It’s in our hands.”<sup>167</sup> On the one hand, Vernadsky’s potential for ecological thinking is recognised

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<sup>164</sup> See Фесенкова, Л., “Учение о ноосфере в современной экологической ситуации”, in: *Высшее образование в России* (1), 2008, 142-147. [Fesenkova, L., “Doctrine of Noosphere in Contemporary Ecological Situation”, in: *Vyssheye obrazovaniye v Rossii* (1), 2008, 142-147.]

<sup>165</sup> See Hagemester, Michael, “Russian Cosmism in the 1920s and Today”, in: Rosenthal, Bernice Glatzer (ed.), *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997, 185-202.

<sup>166</sup> See Фесенкова, Л., *opt. cit.*, 143-144.

<sup>167</sup> Вернадский, Владимир (1944), “Несколько слов о ноосфере”, <http://vernadsky.lib.ru/e-texts/archive/noos.html#tthFtNtAAB> (accessed 27 July 2016).



due his conclusions about biological and human influence of the environment to be geologically significant.<sup>168</sup> On the other hand, doubted, due to the utopian character of the noosphere concept.<sup>169</sup> In any case, from the curriculums on ecology we see the significant role of Vernadsky ideas to promote ecological awareness in the post-Soviet situation more influential than Christian eco-theological reflections.

### **13.4 Conclusion**

Ecological topics were in strong focus of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, which took place in Crete, 19-26 June, 2016. Three documents closely deal with them: 1.) the Message of the Council (par. 8), which derives ecological crisis from moral causes, which could be overcome by cultivation of “stewardship” consciousness towards Creation; 2.) the Encyclical of the Council, which not only diagnoses spiritual and ethical roots of the ecological crisis (par. 14), but also blames the development of science and technology as a threat of the destruction of natural environment (par. 11). The latter document deals not only with moral theology and ascetics but also involves liturgical theology and speaks about the sacramental relationship to Creation, which widens the theological potential of ecological matters; and 3.) the document on the Mission of the Church complying the theological triad of morality/ ascetics and sacraments with the dimension of the social and environmental responsibility of the Church (par. 10).

Despite the comparatively important place occupied by the ecologically related course in the university curriculum and the development of Orthodox networks and programs on ecological topics,

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<sup>168</sup> Weart, Spencer R., *The Discovery of Global Warming*, London, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 14-15.

<sup>169</sup> See Фесенкова, Л., *opt. cit.*, 146-147.

eco-theology is almost absent from theological education. However, ecological activities develop on the level of environmental activism. Three leaders of the green movement of Belarus are related to the Orthodox Church: Yaroslav Bekish, coordinator of the Green network of Belarus, is graduate of the Theological Faculty of EHU; Sergej Yushkevich, coordinator of program 'The Church and Environment' of the NGO Centre for Environmental Solutions, is graduate of the Institute of Theology of Belarusian State University; and Eugene Lobanov, secretary of the Youth Union of the Belarusian Orthodox Church, is ecologist and director of the Centre for Environmental Solutions. Hopefully, this church-related environmental activism will become leaven for the development of eco-theology in Belarus, both outside and inside the academia.

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# DEALING WITH ECO-JUSTICE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE ORTHODOX TRADITION

## Challenges and Dilemmas

*Ekaterini Tsalampouni*<sup>170</sup>

### 14.1 Introduction

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has often been described as the century of environmental degradation and social unrest. It seems that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is going to be an even more turbulent one with mass relocations of human populations, religious conflicts, an unprecedented wave of refugees, upheavals of poorer groups, huge inequalities in food and wealth distribution, and increasing environmental challenges. Moreover, the sad experience of the previous decades has made it clear that ecology, politics, and economics are closely connected. Indeed, social justice cannot be understood in a vacuum and separated from a just

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management of environmental resources. The fact that a growing human population uses powerful industrial technologies in order to meet its consumption needs and greed leads to inequalities, injustice, and uneven distribution of wealth, on the one hand, and to the over-exploitation of nature, on the other. This is a clear sign that social and ecological issues are interconnected.<sup>171</sup> This close link between them is also made evident in the definition of ecological crisis provided by James Martin-Schramm and Robert Stivers:

*Environmental degradation is a product of five interrelated causes: (1) too many people, (2) some of whom are consuming too much, (3) using powerful technologies that frequently damage nature's ecosystems, (4) supported by economic and political systems that permit and even encourage degradation, and (5) informed by anthropocentric attitudes towards nature.*<sup>172</sup>

Martin-Schramm and Stivers' description, undoubtedly, points to human beings as the main perpetrators and the actual factors of the environmental crisis. More specifically, in his classical paper of 1967 Lynn Townsend White pointed to our Judaeo-Christian tradition in its western reception as the true cause of the environmental exploitation and degradation.<sup>173</sup> According to Lynn and other critical voices, the creation story in the first chapters of Genesis as well as the hierarchical cosmology that they presupposed provided the ideological ground for the development of Western anthropocentrism and for the misuse of the earth. Indeed, the divine command "conquer the earth and dominate

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<sup>171</sup> Horrell, David G., "Ecological Hermeneutics: Reflections on Methods and Prospects for the Future", in: *Colloquium* 46 (2), 2014, 139-165, esp. 139.

<sup>172</sup> Martin-Schramm, James B./ Stivers, Robert L.: *Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case Method Approach*, Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2003, 10.

<sup>173</sup> White, Lynn, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", in: *Science* 155 (3767), 1967, 1203-1207.

everything in it” (Gen 1:28) seems to have been understood literally and to have contributed to the acute environmental problems of today: climate change and over-warming, pollution, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation, species extinction, over-population, and over-exploitation of natural resources. Moreover, this domineering attitude acts also as the ideological background of our social structures and relations and leads to inequalities and injustice. This intrinsic connection between social and environmental injustice led to the realization that human societies cannot flourish if nature does not flourish as well and that the poor of our “brave new world” are not only humans experiencing injustice and marginalization but also non-human forms of life.<sup>174</sup>

Therefore, eco-justice, i.e. an understanding of justice in the context of a new ecological awareness, arose. From the perspective of this understanding fairness and common good do not refer to humans only but have also to be extended to the realm of non-human creation. Eco-justice, in fact, means both ecological wholeness and economic and social justice<sup>175</sup> and its basic norms are solidarity with other people and creatures, ecological sustainability, sufficiency in organized sharing, and socially just participation in the decisions about the management of community good for the good in common and good of the commons. In William Gibson’s words, “eco-justice [also] recognizes in other creatures and natural systems the claim to be respected and valued and taken into account in societal arrangements ... The concern for

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<sup>174</sup> Pope Francis clearly demonstrates the connection between injustice to the creation and injustice to the poor in his recent encyclical letter, *Laudato Si*, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_encyclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_encyclica-laudato-si.html) (accessed 29 July 2016).

<sup>175</sup> William E. Gibson (ed.), *Eco-Justice: The Unfinished Journey*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, 7.



ecological soundness and sustainability includes but transcends the concern of humans for themselves.”<sup>176</sup>

Interestingly, the discussion about eco-justice ethics has not played an important role in the Orthodox theological discourse so far with the exception of some notable contributions, like, for example, that of Paulos Gregorios<sup>177</sup> or of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.<sup>178</sup> In their majority, the Orthodox eco-theological studies offer a reflection from the perspective of systematic theology on the relations between humans, God and the rest of the creation and focus on creation theology. The practical aspect of these relations or even more the connection of environmental care and social justice remains a marginal issue in them. Moreover, most of these studies draw their arguments from patristic texts<sup>179</sup> and recently from the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Churches,<sup>180</sup> whereas biblical texts do not seem to play a pivotal role in

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<sup>176</sup> Gibson (ed.), *Eco-Justice*, 34.

<sup>177</sup> Gregorios, Paulos, *The Human Presence: An Orthodox View of Nature*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978.

<sup>178</sup> See, for example, the collected encyclical letters, addresses and statements of the Patriarch in Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch, *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I*, John Chryssavgis (ed.), foreword Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas, Grand Rapids/ Cambridge: Eerdmans 2009.

<sup>179</sup> See, for example, Belopopsky, Alexander/ Oikonomou Dimitri (eds.): *Orthodoxy and Ecology: Resource Book*, Bialystok: Syndesmos, 1996; Keselopoulos, Anestis, *Man and the Environment: A Study of St. Symeon the New Theologian*, Theokritoff, E. (transl.), Crestwood: Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001; Grdzeldze, Tamara, “Creation and Ecology: How Does the Orthodox Church Respond to Ecological Problems?”, in: *The Ecumenical Review* 54 (3), 2002, 211-218; Louth, Andrew, “Between Creation and Transfiguration: The Environment in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition,” in: Horrell, D. G. et al. (eds.): *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, Edingburgh: T&T Clark, 2012, 211-222; Chryssavgis John/ Foltz Bruce V. (eds.): *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2013.

<sup>180</sup> Theokritoff, Elisabeth, *Living in God's Creation: Orthodox Perspectives on Ecology*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 2009; Gschwandtner,

these discussions. Eco-justice ethics, therefore, is a path that has to be pursued by Orthodox theologians who have to turn to their tradition as a whole and involve it in their discussions of justice both social and ecological. In the rest of this article, some thoughts on the potential as well as the difficulties of such an endeavor will be presented.

## **14.2 A Different Cosmological Model**

Admittedly, the perception proposed by eco-justice also involves the deconstruction of the previously prevalent anthropocentric model and lays emphasis on the interconnectedness of all creatures, humans included. Hence, humans are not placed on the top of the cosmological pyramid anymore but are rather seen as an inseparable link in the environmental chain. The previous model that involved two poles, God and nature, and placed humans at the top of the pyramid of nature created relations of enslavement and domination.<sup>181</sup> As Elizabeth Dodson Gray demonstrated, it positioned different members of the creation and human society in a hierarchical order of power relations: God, men, women, children, animals, plants, and the earth.<sup>182</sup> In its more moderate version, this worldview understood human beings as the bridge between the rest of the creation and its Creator or as the mediators between the physical and spiritual worlds. However, even in

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Christina M., *The Role of Non-Human Creation in the Liturgical Feasts of the Eastern Orthodox Tradition: Towards an Orthodox Ecological Theology*, Durham Theses, Durham: Durham University, 2012, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/4424/> (accessed 29 July 2016).

<sup>181</sup> Jayanth, M., "Ecologization of Eschatology: an ecotheological understanding of human longing and fulfillment", in: *Disputatio philosophica* 3 (1), 2003, 55-74, esp. 60-61.

<sup>182</sup> Dodson Gray, Elisabeth, "Come Inside the Circle of Creation," in: Gibson, William E. (ed.), *Eco-Justice: The Unfinished Journey*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2004, 47-52, esp. 48.

this case, the unique position of humans was understood as a clear sign of their superiority often associated with the notion of *imago Dei*. This tendency is also evident in the work of some Orthodox thinkers who relate this mediating function of human beings to the idea of human distinctiveness.<sup>183</sup> Orthodox writers usually refer to patristic writings, like those of Athanasius, John of Damascus or most prominently of Maximus the Confessor who described human beings as a “microcosm” and a “macrocosm”. In Maximus’ words, humans are “a kind of natural bond mediating between the universal poles through their proper parts, and leading into unity in itself those things that are naturally set apart from one another by a great interval” (*Ambigua* 41),<sup>184</sup> a task achieved due to the human ability to understand the *logoi* of all creatures.<sup>185</sup> However, what is usually ignored in these theological discussions is the fact that Maximus also described cosmos (the world) as a “human being”<sup>186</sup> (or as μακράνθρωπος)<sup>187</sup> and he stressed the equal participation of both human and non-human creation in salvation.<sup>188</sup> John Zizioulas seems to have discerned the dangers deriving from overstressing human distinctiveness especially when understood in

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<sup>183</sup> Alfeyev, Hilarion/ Ware, Kallistos: *The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction to the Teaching and Spirituality of the Orthodox Church*, Jessica Rose (ed.), London/ Oxford: Darton Longman & Todd Ltd, 2004, 59.

<sup>184</sup> The translation is from Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor (Early Church Fathers)*, London / New York: Routledge, 1996, 155.

<sup>185</sup> Louth, “Between Creation and Transfiguration”, 217-220.

<sup>186</sup> *Mystagogia 7: PG 91*, 684D-685A.

<sup>187</sup> According to Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St Maximus the Confessor*, Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985, 74. However, Maximus himself does not use this particular philosophical term and prefers the term ἄνθρωπος when describing non-human creation.

<sup>188</sup> Bordeianu, R., “Maximus and Ecology: The Relevance of Maximus the Confessor’s Theology of Creation for the Present Ecological Crisis,” in: *Downside Review* 127, 2009, 103-126, esp. 114.

terms of power and dominion<sup>189</sup> and stated that this should be understood as the human drive towards creativity and love.<sup>190</sup> Moreover, and despite its theological value, it seems that the idea of human superiority due to either our distinct position within this world or our complexity cannot be supported by the results of biology or by our knowledge of the way ecosystems function; humans are not the only complex living beings and most ecosystems do not need us to thrive.<sup>191</sup>

The idea of humans serving as the microcosm and mediators of creation led to the model of human priesthood on behalf of creation, which is usually regarded as the most important Orthodox contribution to the ongoing eco-theological discussion. Contemporary Orthodox theology combines the idea of humans acting as mediators with the example of Jesus Christ as a priest and proposes the model of humans acting as the priests of the creation especially in a Eucharistic or liturgical context.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, they distance themselves from the prevalent model of human stewardship that has been proposed as an alternative solution to the previous model of power and exploitation.<sup>193</sup> Indeed, the idea of stewardship stresses the human obligation to act

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<sup>189</sup> See, for example, Sergei Bulgakov's assertion that "Between man's animal nature and his humanity lies an ontological hiatus, an abyss that cannot be overcome by any evolution", *The Lamb of God*, Jakim, B. (transl.), Grand Rapids / Edinburgh: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company/ T&T Clark, 2008, 175.

<sup>190</sup> Zizioulas, John/ Williams, Rowan: *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, McPartlan, Paul (ed.), London/ New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2007, 40.

<sup>191</sup> Conradie, Ernst M., *An Ecological Christian Anthropology: At Home on Earth?*, Aldershot, Hants, England/ Burlington, VT: Routledge, 2005, 117.

<sup>192</sup> Most prominently, see Zizioulas, John, *Η κτίσις ως ευχαριστία: Θεολογική προσέγγιση στο πρόβλημα της Οικολογίας*, Athens: Akritas Publ., 1992 [Creation as Eucharist: Theological Approach to the Issue of Ecology].

<sup>193</sup> See, for example, Hall, Douglas J., *The Steward, a Biblical Symbol Come of Age*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990. According to him human stewardship has the following aspects: theological, Christological, ecclesiological, anthropological, and eschatological.

wisely and treat the creation with respect.<sup>194</sup> However, it has often been criticized as eurocentric, colonial and white-oriented as well as anthropocentric.<sup>195</sup> On the other hand, the model of human priesthood seems to have also been suspected of latent anthropocentric aspirations,<sup>196</sup> especially because it presupposes the necessity of human intervention between the Creator and his creation, an idea that seems not to be supported by the biblical texts; according to them, creation can praise its Creator without human mediation and it had done so thousands of years before the appearance of the human race.<sup>197</sup>

It seems, though, that both models of stewardship and priesthood can provide the necessary ideological context for the application of eco-justice ethics as long as they are understood as metaphors that have their strong but also their weak points. They can be used in order to demonstrate human responsibility towards the rest of the creation but none of them can be regarded as the sole and self-evident truth. They gain their significance within certain theological contexts and when they are employed in order to serve the vision of the transformation of this world.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Hall, *The Steward*, 32-34.

<sup>195</sup> Conradie, Ernst M., *Christianity and Ecological Theology: Resources for Further Research*, vol. 11, Study Guides in Religion and Theology, Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2006, 128-131.

<sup>196</sup> One could also add its indirect androcentrism since in the Orthodox tradition (as well as in other Christian traditions) priesthood is a predominantly male function.

<sup>197</sup> Richard Bauckham, "Stewardship and Relationship," in: Berry, R. J. (ed.), *The Care of Creation*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000, 99-106, esp. 104.

<sup>198</sup> Conradie, "Interpreting the Bible Amidst Ecological Degradation", 132-133.

### 14.3 A Critical Reading of Tradition

In his brief critical study Lynn White concluded that the solution to our environmental crisis could be found in redefining our relationship to the creation and by rethinking our tradition,<sup>199</sup> an approach that could certainly lead to gaining an alternative worldview. It seems that Christian scholars both in the East and the West followed his advice and have been reading their traditions and text afresh and through the lens of ecological awareness. This is particularly evident in the case of biblical studies, where a hermeneutical approach called ecological hermeneutics has already emerged.<sup>200</sup> Despite the fact that its reception in the Orthodox world has been rather small for the time being it can certainly bring out those elements of the biblical texts that could contribute to the ecological discussion. Moreover, it can provide necessary methodological tools that can be applied in the interpretation of other parts of Christian tradition. This is of particular importance in Orthodox contexts where tradition occupies a prominent position. Furthermore, it seems to be compatible with the Orthodox understanding of tradition.

According to Orthodox theology, tradition is understood as a dynamic process and a continuum that contains different but interconnected records of the way the events in the history of salvation and their impact in the life of the community were understood and interpreted under the guidance of the Spirit. Consequently, none of the

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<sup>199</sup> White, "The Historical Roots," 1206.

<sup>200</sup> Paula Gooder, *Searching for Meaning. An Introduction to Interpreting the New Testament* (London / Louisville: SPCK / WJK, 2009), 192-198; Jonker, Louis/ Lawrie, Douglas (eds.): *Fishing for Jonah (anew): Various Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, Study Guides in Religion and Theology 7, Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2005, 219-226; Habel, Norman, "Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics", in: Habel, Norman/ Trudinger, Peter (eds.): *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, SBL. Symposium Series 46, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008, 1-8.

*moments* of this tradition can be regarded as an external static authority that regulates the rest of it. Furthermore, inspiration can be found in all aspects of church life and cannot be restricted to a set of texts or refer to the letter of biblical or other texts. This perception can create a hermeneutical framework within which the worshipping community re-reads and re-applies its texts and its previous experience (tradition) in new contexts and situations. This is of particular importance in developing an ecological theology and ethics and in dealing not only with the *easy* texts but also with those that pose difficult questions. It legitimizes alternative readings of tradition and demonstrates in David Horrell's words that "... a careful reading is *necessary* but not a *sufficient* condition for the development of an ecological theology and ethics."<sup>201</sup> Our interpretation needs to be informed by theological traditions and be engaged with contemporary science.<sup>202</sup>

In the context of our discussion, Norman Habel's distinction between "grey" and "green" texts could be proven useful. Habel describes as "grey" those texts that are "ecologically destructive, devaluing Earth and offering humans a God-given right to harness nature".<sup>203</sup> He also proposes a "green" reading of those "grey" texts through a process that involves three different stages: suspicion, identification, and retrieval.<sup>204</sup> In this process, it is initially necessary to detect and expose the anthropocentric texts or traditions. On a second level, the identification with earth and those oppressed will lead to reading the text from the perspective of the oppressed (human or non-human) and retrieve their suppressed voices that lay buried in the text.

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<sup>201</sup> Horrell, David G., *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*, Equinox, 2010, 119-120.

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*, 126.

<sup>203</sup> Habel, Norman, *An Inconvenient Text: Is a Green Reading of the Bible Possible?*, ATF Press, 2012, 2.

<sup>204</sup> *ibid.*, 51.

Although the claim of voices may seem rather arbitrary,<sup>205</sup> Habel's proposal provides us with a critical framework within which our texts or aspects of tradition could be read anew. More significantly, Habel proposes particular texts (Romans 8 and Colossians 1) that can serve as model "green" texts since they entail principles about how to read other biblical texts from an ecological perspective.<sup>206</sup> To these, one should add Jesus' sayings and deeds that demonstrate the nature of the Kingdom of God and redefine human relations to the rest of the creation. This kind of constructive selection, a kind of "green" canon within Christian tradition, could also be applied to other parts of the tradition. It could not mean a relativization of its importance as a whole, though. Nor should it present tradition apologetically by claiming that eco-theology in the sense that it is understood today is already present in various aspects of this tradition. Its task is rather critical and it includes, first, tracing all theological principles and every case of including non-human creation in various aspects of this tradition and, second, suggesting ways through which all these could contribute to the development of an eco-theology. Furthermore, by applying certain doctrinal lenses also derived from the tradition to the texts a formulation of eco-justice criteria will be possible.<sup>207</sup>

#### **14.4 Asking Difficult Questions**

Admittedly, this is not an easy endeavour. One should dare, though, to ask difficult questions regarding the texts and should explore what

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<sup>205</sup> Horrell, David G., "Ecological Hermeneutics: Reflections on Methods and Prospects for the Future", in: *Colloquium* 46 (2), 2014, 139-165, esp. 156-157.

<sup>206</sup> Habel, *An Inconvenient Text*, 114.

<sup>207</sup> Conradie, Ernst M., "Interpreting the Bible Amidst Ecological Degradation", in: *Theology* 112(867), 2009, 199-207, esp. 201; Horrell, "Ecological Hermeneutics: Reflections", 161.



role these texts played or could play in shaping our Christian ecological ethos.<sup>208</sup> In the rest of the paper, one particular case will be briefly discussed.

## 14.5 Radical Apocalyptic Expectations

Christian tradition preserves more than one version of the eschaton. This is particularly evident in the case of biblical texts. Passages like Rom 8:18-23 or Col 1 certainly preserve positive visions of the future. The continuity between old and new creation that these texts imply has environmental implications and is ecologically relevant. However, not all future visions are so hopeful. In fact, 2 Peter 3:5-13 is not an exception but there is a range of texts in the Bible that depict the destruction of this world (e.g. Ps 102:25-17; Mk 13:31; Heb 1:10-12). As Edward Adams correctly remarks “It is important, at least, to acknowledge that the New Testament has other ways of talking about the cosmic future and that Romans 8 is not the only statement on the matter.”<sup>209</sup> The exegete of the biblical text has, therefore, to acknowledge this diversity of biblical imagery regarding the end times. Such an acknowledgment, however, can lead either to somehow reconciling these versions or prioritizing one of them. This is a difficult decision that has to rest upon a well-substantiated set of theoretical and exegetical presuppositions.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> In this paper the distinction made by John Zizioulas between ethos and ethics is followed: “not an ethic, but an ethos. Not a programme but an attitude and a mentality. Not a legislation but a culture.”, “Priest of Creation,” in: *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives – Past and Present*, Berry, R. J. (ed.), London /New York: T & T Clark, 2006, 273-290, esp. 289.

<sup>209</sup> Adams, Edward, *The Stars Will Fall From Heaven: “Cosmic Catastrophe” in the New Testament and Its World*, 1 edition, London/ New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2007, 258.

<sup>210</sup> Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 113.

This decision, however, is of importance, since our eschatological expectation can formulate our ecological and social ethos. Indeed, although apocalyptic visions of the future may derive from a craving of justice, retribution or liberation, they usually presuppose that salvation will take place after the end of history and will affect only humans. Such visions also seem to reduce the Earth to merely the stage where the drama of salvation takes place and its destruction in the end of times is regarded as unavoidable and as the preamble of God's judgement and retribution. In Lorenzo DiTomasso's assessment, such apocalyptic apprehensions are incompatible with our ecological concerns because they promote a lack of concern for "all historical events including life."<sup>211</sup> Apocalyptic texts usually endorse a dichotomy between a transcendent reality and our own and view history as a series of events that highlight the conflict between the elected or to-be-saved ones and the other, i.e. those who are condemned to perish. Within this schema of conflict, the non-human creation is perceived as separated from human existence and as the fourth Other (the other three being God, the elected, and their enemies).<sup>212</sup>

Critical voices have already highlighted the consequences that a transcendent eschatological anticipation can have on the Christian perception of the environment and warned of the phenomenon of "heavenism"<sup>213</sup> that seems to favour an escapist vision of the future with

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<sup>211</sup> DiTomasso, Lorenzo, "The Apocalyptic Other", in: Collins, John J./ Harlow, Daniel C. (eds.): *The "Other" in Second Temple Judaism: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010, 221-246, esp. 243.

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, 230 and 243.

<sup>213</sup> According to Norman Habel heavenism is "a form of spirituality that tends to value all things associated with heaven to the detriment of Earth ... Those who espouse this spiritual view of reality tend to be more concerned about getting to heaven than caring for Earth. Heaven is eternal and sacred; Earth is disposable and mere matter. It is not really important what happens to Earth because it is only a temporary abode for humans; heaven is home." in: Taylor, Bron

a heavenly thereafter.<sup>214</sup> Closely related to this attitude is a clearly anthropocentric understanding of redemption “from the earth and not of the earth itself”.<sup>215</sup> The earth has been regarded as a wasteland of sorrows and exile and environmental calamities have been hailed as signs of the imminent end. Surprisingly, such positions are not only represented by certain Christian evangelical or fundamentalist circles in the USA,<sup>216</sup> the same fear, as well as a rather distanced and optimistic opinion regarding the end of the world, has also been expressed by some Greek Orthodox conservative groups:

*Based on the Holy Scriptures, the Church Fathers understand cosmos in relation to God and human beings. The cosmos has no existence and value by itself. It was created by God to serve the various human needs. The man is the king of cosmos, the crown of creation... Ecological disasters are according to this position the means of edification that God employs in order to nullify evil per se, namely moral and spiritual evil. ... The salvation of the world or its destruction is not in our hands, it is not our responsibility but it is the work of God's providence and God's responsibility. Even if we wanted to destroy the world we would not be able to do it, unless God himself allowed it. Alas if evil had such power. We would have ended up with eastern gnostic dualism. Our task is the salvation of our soul. This should be our*

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Raymond (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, London/ New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2005, s.v. “Earth Bible,” 516.

<sup>214</sup> Conradie, *Christianity and Ecological Theology*, 98.

<sup>215</sup> *ibid.*, 102.

<sup>216</sup> For a critical discussion see Maier, H.O., “Green Millennialism: American Evangelicals, Environmentalism and the Book of Revelation”, in: Horrell et al. (eds.): *Ecological Hermeneutics. Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, 246-265.

*sole pursuit and not that of the world's fate, which is known only to God and should not be of our concern.*<sup>217</sup>

Such aspirations, however, seem to discard any social or environmental involvement as secular and as being in conflict with the rigid distinction between material and spiritual world. Furthermore, they do not endorse eco-justice ethics, which are treated with suspicion and as the signs of New Age and unbelief. Reading, though, the texts out of their original context and uncritically can result in a negative stance and alienation. On the other hand, moderating their vision by prioritizing texts like those mentioned above enables us to appreciate the worldly and ephemeral through the lens of preserving as well as transforming God's creation in the light of the heavenly Kingdom.<sup>218</sup>

In a previous publication I proposed a model of dealing with such texts based on Paul Ricoeur's threefold schema of hermeneutical process (explanation – understanding – appropriation): reading of the texts in their original historical and social setting, acknowledging the history of reception and interpretation of these texts, and applying them in modern contexts. This hermeneutical scheme establishes a balance between modern exegetical methodological frameworks and theological tradition, between the perceptions of the Bible as a text written in a particular historical context and of the Bible as the living text of the worshipping Christian community at each moment of its history. Moreover, such a

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<sup>217</sup> Zisis, Theodoros, *Ορθοδοξία και Οικολογία: πατερικές θέσεις* [Orthodoxy and Ecology: patristic positions], Thessaloniki: Palimpsest, 1990, 9-17.

<sup>218</sup> Agourides, Savvas, "Ecology, Theology, and the World", in: Chryssavgis, John/ Foltz, Bruce V. (eds.): *Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration: Orthodox Christian Perspectives on Environment, Nature, and Creation*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2013, 81.

combination of past and present seems to be both fruitful and legitimate.<sup>219</sup>

## 14.6 Salvation, Transformation, and Transfiguration

In this context, it is of relevance to ask about the content of the word δικαιοσύνη (justice or righteousness) in the biblical tradition. It is a key idea both in Paul's writings as well as in Matthew's Gospel. Although it covers a wide semantic field ranging from God's salvation and trustfulness to the concrete everyday behaviour of each member of the community, the Old Testament background of the term is an important parameter that should always be taken into account in every discussion of the New Testament usage of the term. In the Old Testament understanding of δικαιοσύνη, the term does neither refer to individual human acts that comply with an ethical code nor a virtue but is the concrete and practical right conduct of a member of God's people toward God and the rest of the community. Thus, it is always understood within the context of election and salvation.<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, in an ecological or social context justice cannot be restricted to acts of retribution or even liberation but it also has a salvific content pointing towards the direction of healing, restoring or recapitulating. In this respect, it can easily combine the two soteriological metaphors that prevail in eco-theology, namely, the liberation of creation and the healing of the land.<sup>221</sup> Reconciliation is an important concept in this

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<sup>219</sup> Tsalamponi, Ekaterini, "Οικολογική ερμηνεία των βιβλικών κειμένων: το παράδειγμα των αποκαλυπτικών κειμένων" [Ecological Interpretation of the Bible: the Case of Apocalyptic Texts], in: *Theologia 85 (4)*, 2014, 303-327.

<sup>220</sup> Preuss, Horst D., *Theologie des Alten Testaments, Israels Weg mit JHWH* (vol. 2), Stuttgart/ Berlin/ Köln: Kohlhammer, 1992, 179-180.

<sup>221</sup> Conradie, Ernst M., "The Salvation of the Earth from Anthropogenic Destruction: In Search of Appropriate Soteriological Concepts in an Age of Ecological Destruction", in: *Worldviews 14*, 2010, 111-140, esp. 121.

context, too, as two key New Testament texts demonstrate: 2 Cor 5:19-20 and the Christological hymn in Col 1. Salvation, thus, could also be experienced as the restoration of peace and of broken relations and is closely related to the presence of God's Kingdom in this world. This new possible world leads to re-defining relations, reviewing priorities and necessities and introducing the eschaton into the linear dimension of history.

Matthew 6:25-34 is a clear demonstration of this. Two non-human humble co-inhabitants of this world – the birds and the lilies – come to the foreground serving as models and teachers of humans, in this case of the disciples and the members of the community. Actually, they are not just examples but witnesses of God's benevolent acts in this world and of his care for the entire creation. They urge with their attitude the members of the community to change their priorities and overcome their anxious pursuit of material happiness. Their foremost priority now should be God's Kingdom and God's justice, which if understood in the context of salvation should not be addressed only towards the rest of the humankind but can and should also embrace the whole creation. Thus, the message of Jesus' sayings can be of soteriological importance but can also have consequences on a very practical level for our contemporary societies where the very concept of *enough* has been lost.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> For an ecological reading of Matt 6:25-34 see Tsalampouni, Ekaterini, "Like the Birds of the Sky and the Lilies of the Fields: An Orthodox Eco-exegetical Reading of Matthew 6:25-34 in an Age of Anxiety", in: Koltsiou-Nikita, A. et al. (eds.): *A Testimony to the Nations: A Vigintennial Volume Offered to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki: Thessaloniki, 2011, 843-862 and from an eco-feministic perspective, Ibita, Marilou S., "Ecology, Economics and Gender in Matt 6:25-34," in: Fischer, Irmaud (ed.), *Gender Agenda Matters: Papers of the "Feminist Section" of the International Meetings of The Society of Biblical Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, 160-183.

Closely related to this perception of justice and salvation is the idea of the transfiguration and sanctification of the whole creation. According to this vision, all creatures will participate in the perichoretic communion of the triune God.<sup>223</sup> This certainly cannot mean a denial of any in-worldly involvement in the struggle for justice both social and environmental nor a naïve perception of a definite elimination of sin and evil already in our times. The tension that is created by the fact that salvation is a continuing process of transformation of the whole creation (humans included) that has already begun but awaits its eschatological fulfilment, should never be ignored. It creates the impetus for an active involvement in God's salvific work that has already started with the incarnation of the Logos.

## 14.7 In Conclusion

Turning back to the Orthodox tradition it seems necessary to make some suggestions regarding possible ways that this could be involved in a constructive dealing with eco-justice questions. It has already been noted that eco-justice is relational and contextual. Therefore, it is necessary, first of all, to become aware of our contemporary challenges and suggest ways of dealing with them by making use of the rich reservoir of our tradition. In this respect, a contemporary engagement with eco-justice should involve a plea for the poor and especially for the refugees, a plea for the earth, a plea for the whole creation.

On an eco-theological level, the textual tradition and especially the liturgical one could provide models of understanding our place in this world and our responsibility towards it. Admittedly, the Eucharistic, as well as the ascetic ethos, are two models of behaviour that have already

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<sup>223</sup> Boff, Leonard, *Trinity and Society*, Turnbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1988, 147.

been extensively discussed by Orthodox scholars.<sup>224</sup> However, what is usually missing is a practical elaboration of these models. For example, there is no explanation of what this anaphora of the world to its Creator might mean in everyday life and practice. Furthermore, a continuation of this eschatological Eucharistic experience and everyday existence needs to be established. Could, for example, such an ethos mean fighting for the rights of all oppressed beings? And how could this Eucharistic ethos contribute to the church's resistance to its assimilation with the unjust power structures of this world?

To this direction, other liturgical texts, for example, should be included and the above suggested critical approach should be applied to other aspects of our tradition. The former can demonstrate that the elements of nature are involved in the sanctifying acts of the church not as instruments for the achievement of human success and progress but also as co-participants in this foretaste of the eschatological consummation. A critical approach of our tradition, on the other hand, can make us aware of the anthropocentric dimension of some parts of it and help us reduce it or at least transform it into a constructive and "instrumental" anthropocentrism.<sup>225</sup> It could also eradicate any rigid distinction between care for the earth and care for oppressed people. Social justice is linked to justice for earth and cannot be treated separately.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Zizioulas, *Η κτίσις ως ευχαριστία*, 59-65.

<sup>225</sup> The term was introduced by David Clough, *On Animals: Systematic Theology*, London /New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012, xx, n. 21, and it refers to the role that human beings can play as God's instruments in the salvation of the whole creation. It must be juxtaposed to "teleological" anthropocentrism, which regards human beings as the main (or sole) recipients of God's salvation.

<sup>226</sup> Gschwandtner, *The Role of Non-Human Creation*, 183.



In Thich Nhat Hahn's words, we are asked "to hear within ourselves the sounds of the earth crying"<sup>227</sup> and I would add the sounds of all impoverished, oppressed victims of this world of the refugee children of men and the whole creation.

Orthodox theology should focus on self-reflection and self-criticism, reach an awareness of the ways evil has permeated our lives and ways of thinking and bravely suggest ways of dealing with the eco-justice challenges inspired and informed by the wealth of its tradition. Patriarch Bartholomew's words urge us to this kind of action:

*Whenever we narrow our religious life to our own concerns, then we overlook the prophetic calling of the Church to implore God and invoke the divine Spirit for the renewal of the whole polluted cosmos. For the entire world is the space within which this transformation is enacted. When we are transformed by divine grace, then we discern the injustice we are participants; then we labour to share the resources of our planet; then we realize that eco-justice is paramount – not simply for a better life, but for our very survival.*<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Gibson, *Eco-Justice*, 52.

<sup>228</sup> Patriarch Bartholomew, "Reflection on the Theme for the World Council of Churches General Assembly – São Paulo, January 2006, in: Chryssavgis, John (ed.), *Cosmic Grace – Humble Prayer*, 333-334.

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## **INTRODUCTION INTO THE OIKOS THEOLOGY MOVEMENT IN SOUTH KOREA**

*Hong-Eyul Hwang*

### **15.1 The Oikotree Movement**

The Oikotree Movement is a movement of movements striving for justice in the economy and the earth in the spirit of Accra confession and the AGAPE call. It has been initiated and sponsored by the WCC, CWM and WCRC. The Oikos Theology Movement in Korea is part of the Oikotree Movement.

About 10 theological professors got together in 2009 around their shared realization that current theological education was inadequate to cope with the challenges of the economic crisis, the ecological crisis, the spiritual crisis and the civilizational crisis.

The Oikos Theology Movement, responding to God's will in the face of these multifold crises that currently challenge the whole earth community, seeks to contribute to the creation of a life-promoting civilization, through the construction of alternative theological education. It is an attempt to construct a network of professors and pastors who are engaged in the issues of life, justice, peace and ecumenism in Korea, and to nurture a younger generation who are



committed to an ecumenical ministry for life, justice, and peace, through the Oikos School. The Oikos School will be presented below in more detail as practical experience.<sup>229</sup>



The three circles of the Oikos Korea symbol imply human beings, nature (the Creation), and God. Each circle, which is not closed, signifies the interrelation, interaction, and communication among humans, nature, and God. God is embracing the creation, and we human beings belong to the nature. These three circles also connote the triune God: God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sustainer.

## 15.2 The Oikos School

The Oikos Theology Movement in Korea decided to achieve its goal through the annual operation of an Oikos Summer School. The Oikos Summer School seeks to develop an alternative theological education system that responds actively to the issues faced by the whole life-community. It is an educational community comprising professors and pastors who agree with the general goal of the Oikos Theology Movement in Korea, and students who join in its programs. Not only professors but also students are deeply involved in the process of planning and carrying out the school programs. The program of the Oikos Summer School consists of Bible reflections and meditations, lectures by professors and/or guest speakers, theme presentations by students, panel/group discussions, singing and dancing for expressing the wholeness of body and soul, and in the sharing of life-giving meals. At the beginning, the program was prepared by the professors. Since the

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<sup>229</sup> for more information on the practical ways in which an Oikos Theological School is done see the video: [www.youtube.com/watch?V=Ww9CEursj5c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?V=Ww9CEursj5c)

formation of the Student Facilitation Group, the program has been organized jointly by this group and the professors.

From 2010 on, we have held the Oikos Summer School every August; and in addition, we held an Oikos Winter School in 2011 and 2012. In 2013, the students and professors of the Oikos School took a peace trip to Nagasaki, Japan, one of the two cities destroyed by the atomic bombings of 1945. The peace trip was led by a specialist in peace education, Rev. Sang-Eyoul Oh.

The objectives of the Oikos School from 2010 to 2015 were

- 1) To analyze the present situation of the Korean churches and theology in relation to the ecumenical movement.
- 2) To see and assess the life-destroying aspects of current world civilization, and to understand the ecumenical efforts to promote life in fullness, justice and peace, in relation to the WCC Busan Assembly theme.
- 3) To explore ways of doing theology for action on the issues of life, justice and peace for the world, from the perspectives of the divided Korean peninsula, Asia, the global village and the cosmic community.

## **15.3 Oikos Summer Schools**

### ***15.3.1 2010 Summer School***

In 2010 the Summer School was held from Wednesday August 18 to Friday August 20, at Hanmaeum Community in Changseong, Korea. Its theme was “With Soil, With Rivers, With God, and With Us: Doing Theology with Soil and Water!” 12 professors and 80 students from seven universities and seminaries, mainly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, participated in this Summer School. The theme was chosen in response to the government’s initiation of the so-called “Four Major

Rivers Restoration Project,” which was opposed by environmental specialists and many citizens. In this context, the participants reflected on rivers and soil from the perspectives of the Bible and faith. They meditated each morning on the Word of God, and on rivers and soil, before a table was set with rice cake and a bottle of drinking water. Eight professors and pastors made short presentations related to the theme. Through dance therapy, everyone experienced healing of body and soul. The common reflection of the students about this Summer School was that their encounter with professors and students from other universities/seminaries was a great experience, but that they were not accustomed to the ecumenical model of worship. The saying “You must not expect too much from your first attempt” was proved true at the first Summer School.

### ***15.3.2 2011 Summer School***

From Tuesday August 16 to Friday August 19, 2011, the Summer School was conducted with the theme “God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace.” 20 professors and 80 students from seven universities and seminaries attended. There were two theme presentations: The Korean Church and Ecumenical Movement, and The Historical and Theological Significance of the WCC 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly. Rev. Kyung-Jae Yoo lectured on the Korean church and the ecumenical movement. Dr. Rogate Mshana, Program Executive for Economic Justice at the WCC, dealt with the issue of justice and ecumenism, and Dr. Nishihara Renta, a member of the Central Committee of WCC, spoke on the earthquake and nuclear disaster in Fukushima, Japan. The culmination of this Summer School was the students’ presentations on eight issues: gender justice, multi-culturalism, animal rights, poverty and economic justice, climate change, nuclear energy, war and peace, and peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula. The students from each university/seminary decided on the topic relevant to their context or

interest and prepared their presentations by themselves. My students from Busan Presbyterian University chose the topic of nuclear energy; I just gave them some information on the topic, and on activists and NGOs working in this area. All of the professors were moved by the presentations. These were no longer just our students but had become of age in their own theological ways And they surprised us a second time. The Common Prayer by the Summer School participants, written by the students, was so touching that our friends translated it into 10 languages. You can read the Common Prayer at the end of this paper.

### ***15.3.3 2012 Summer School***

The 2012 Summer School ran from Monday August 20 to Thursday August 23, with the theme “God of Life, God of Justice, God of Peace, Deliver Us from Evil.” 80 students, 20 professors and pastors and six Oikotree roving faculty members participated in this Summer School. The students made presentations on the eight issues of gender justice, multi-culturalism, animal rights, poverty and economic justice, climate change, the nuclear threat, war and peace, and peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula. Each group of students was asked to suggest three actions to cope with its chosen issue, and this resulted in a code of action on the eight issues. Talking with the Oikotree roving faculty members was a new experience for both the students and the professors. The participants from that faculty were Dr. Dora Valentine (Cuba), Dr. Vuyani Vellem (South Africa), Mr. Martin Gueck (Germany), Dr. Evangeline Rajikumar-Anderson (India), Rev. Jennifer Leath (USA), Dr. Rogate Mshana (Tanzania), Dr. Sung-Won Park, and Dr. Yoon-Jae Jang (Korea). Students and professors enjoyed a theological talk show with Oikotree roving faculty members focusing on two questions: “What does the WCC theme mean in my context?” and “What are the current trends in theological education, what are the compelling challenges for alternative theological education and training, and what

would the Oikos Theology Movement look like in my context?” Students and professors alike appreciated the sharing with Oikotree roving faculty members through group talk and a global cultural festival. Though it was not easy for the students to understand the problems and issues of theological education in the different countries, they recognized that many of the issues were the same for all seminaries and universities.

#### ***15.3.4 2013 Summer School***

This Summer School took place from August 19 to 21, 2013, at Hanmaeum Community, just before the opening of the WCC Busan Assembly, with the school taking the form of a mock WCC Assembly. Professors introduced the themes of the official WCC documents—unity, mission, justice and peace—and reflected on those documents from their own perspectives. A Student Committee and Taskforce Teams had been organized earlier, during the 2012 Winter School. The Taskforce Teams included: spiritual life team, theme deliberations team, ecumenical conversations team, business sessions team, and teams on nuclear issues, religious pluralism, etc. Students and professors participated in the ecumenical conversations according to their own interests. The ecumenical conversations dealt with the five themes of economic justice and eco-justice, multi-faith realities, peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula, church renewal, and diakonia. The students were provided with information about GETI (Global Ecumenical Theological Institute) and KETI (Korean Ecumenical Theological Institute). The participants adopted the Message from the Oikos Summer School 2013, which was written by student representatives and a professor, and included their particular experiences, their encounters and their decisions on what should be done. During the WCC Busan Assembly, an Oikos Korea Madang and

an Ecumenical Café were operated by the Oikos Theology Movement in Korea.

### ***15.3.5 2014 Summer School***

This Summer School ran from Monday August 18 to Thursday August 21, 2014, with the theme “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace with the Bible.” Nine professors, 45 students from six universities and seminaries, two PCK youth representatives, and a member of Korean Christian Environmental Solidarity attended. Theme presentations dealt with the de-nuclearisation movement and inclusive community focusing on gender justice. There were two kinds of group discussions. One was student-initiated group discussions focusing on such issues as the story of Hagar and Sarah, ecumenical living in the church and the world, the meaning of Korean theology in Asia, general studies and theology, and the Bible and faith in today’s world. The other kind was professor-initiated discussions dealing with issues such as ecumenical worship, preaching eco-justice with meals, postmodern theology and ecumenism, life solidarity through death, prayer and action, de-nuclearisation movement in Busan, and the difference between Jesus’ peace and empire’s peace.

### ***15.3.6 2015 Summer School***

From Monday August 17 to Thursday August 20, 2015, this Summer School proceeded under the theme “Pilgrimage of Peace, Ways to Reconciliation.” Nine professors, 55 students from nine universities and seminaries including Methodist and Baptist seminaries, and representatives of PCK Youth took part. The location of the Summer School in Mount Jiri was tragic as well as beautiful, because it was a site of genocide during the Korean War. The theme presentations focused on remembrance of the wartime genocide, St. Francis of Assisi and eco-spirituality. St. Francis’ spirituality and eco-spirituality were affirmed as

contributing positively to the healing of historical wounds and to the opening of ways to reconciliation. The students of each university/seminary were asked to visit a place related to the theme of the Summer School. During the Summer School they shared their particular experiences of pilgrimage to Daejeon Prison (genocide), a “comfort women” demonstration, Gori Nuclear Power Plant in Busan, and the May 18<sup>th</sup> National Cemetery, and of a campus nature pilgrimage. The 2015 Summer School introduced the new programs of walking in silence, a visit to Sanchung Memorial Park, a lecture on Mt. Jiri history, and the recitation of poems. The participants adopted the Common Confession of Peace, Reconciliation and Pilgrimage from the Oikos Summer School 2015. This Common Confession includes reconciliation with oneself, reconciliation with neighbors, reconciliation with God, reconciliation with nature, and reconciliation with history.

## **15.4 Organisation and Methodology of the Oikos Summer School**

The preparation of the Summer School requires several meetings by the professors and the student representatives. Each professor should donate 200 dollars, and some of them become fund-raisers for the Summer School. At night the professors gather and talk about their married life, which can be a healing time.

Most of the professors have published books or written articles on issues of economic justice, eco-justice, gender justice, ecumenism, peace mission, life-giving mission, reunification of the Korean peninsula, multi-culturalism, climate change, life-giving meals, de-nuclearisation, or animal rights. No professor, however, can offer students lectures that deal with all of these themes. Only the Summer School is able to achieve this.

The methodology of Oikos Summer School consists of the three stages to see, to judge, and to act. The school encourages students to see the realities of the world and the church, to judge those realities from Biblical and theological perspectives, and to respond to those realities. In contrast, traditional theological education starts with theory, which it applies to reality.

The planning team for the Summer School tries to keep harmony among learning, spirituality and activities, aiming at the practice of integrated theological education. In traditional theological education the roles of professor and student are fixed. In the Oikos Summer School, however, professors can learn from students, and students can teach each other and professors as well. Thus, they can form a learning-and-teaching community.

Many students experienced ecumenical worship at the Oikos Summer School for the first time. And their response to it was not positive at the beginning. The Oikos Summer School, however, is the only chance for them to experience it.

Just as the Oikotree roving faculty participated in the Oikos Summer School, representatives of students and professors likewise attended ecumenical meetings such as the Youth for Eco-justice meeting held in Durban, South Africa in 2011, the Mission Pre-Event meeting of WCC held in Manila in 2012, the WCC Consultation on Poverty, Wealth, and Ecology held in Bogor, Indonesia in 2012, and the Oikotree Global Forum held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2013.

All of the above methods and outcomes can be called positive examples of alternative theological education.



## **15.5 Difficulties of the Oikos Summer School**

The change of students every three or four years is inevitable for alternative theological education. Some professors have recognized this Summer School as a starting stage, rather than a developmental stage.

The disparities among participants in their knowledge and consciousness of Summer School themes and issues is a cause of agony for the preparation of committee members, as they try to choose themes, aims and programs.

Following the immediate period after the WCC Busan Assembly, there has been a decrease in the number of Summer School participants. The fact that the Oikos Winter School was held only in 2011 and 2012 is evidence of this trend.

## **15.6 Tasks of Oikos Summer School**

We have many tasks. How can we increase the number of students from PCK seminaries/universities (as most of the professors work at PCK seminaries)? How can we make a more ecumenical Oikos Summer School, not only in Korea, but outside the country as well? How can we contribute to a paradigm change in Korean theological education? How can we share these experiences with global South/North seminaries and universities? In this respect, I want to convey thanks from the Oikos Theology Movement in Korea to all of you, who have offered us this opportunity to share our experience.

## **15.7 Suggestions for the Oikos Summer School**

This suggestion to expand participation from global South and North has been discussed several times among the professors, but owing to financial difficulties, it has never been acted upon. Could it ever be

possible for the Oikos Summer School to be a global summer school taking place every three years (with students and professors from Asian, African and Western seminaries/universities)?

During the last six years, the Oikos Summer School has been conducted at a fixed place. What about an Oikos Summer School on the move? Students from each seminary/university could visit green churches, eco-villages/communities, nuclear power plants, immigrant mission centers, and so on, choosing freely in relation to the theme of the Summer School; and come together for mutual sharing of those experiences.

The book *Climate Change: A Challenge to the Churches in South Africa* (2009), published by the South African Council of Churches, could be used as a textbook for the Oikos Summer School and the Korean churches, especially in the PCK Ecumenical Decade for Healing and Reconciling Life-community, to wrestle with climate change. The publication *Table of Life and World of Peace*, written in Korean by Dr. Kyung-Ho Chung, co-chair of the Oikos Theology Movement in Korea, could be used as a textbook on food security.

The aim of theological education is to reconnect members of the global life community (ontology), to understand knowing as reciprocal action between subject and object (epistemology), to encourage community-centred classes (education), and to be participants in the oikos of God taking responsibility for the oikos (ethics), as Parker J. Palmer said. In this respect, the Oikos Theology Movement in Korea and the Oikos Summer School will contribute to nurturing pastors and missionaries to cope with climate change and food security based on eco-theology.



## **CHRISTIAN HOPE IN REFLECTING THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Perspectives from ECEN

*Peter Pavlovic*

### **16.1 Theology of Hope Revisited**

Hope as the shaping category of theological vocabulary has recently become a frequently used term. This in reacting to multiple crises and calamities of the world we have to face nowadays. Climate change has a prominent place among them. The UN Climate conference in Paris was the focal place for the culmination of climate action in a political and diplomatic arena, as well as the place for manifold contributions from civil society. Churches were part of these efforts. The word “hope” has become one of the most frequently used terms in different contributions to climate talks. It was marked as the key theological building element in phrasing the Christian response to the challenge of climate change. It is, therefore, worthwhile to look at what sense can hope, as the theological category, contribute to framing churches’ response to climate change. The challenge theology has to face in this respect is twofold. On the one hand there is the task to avoid linking hope with elements not having support in Christian resources and thus capitulate to

secular and other influences. On the other side there is the challenge to really use the genuine richness which Christian insights offer on issues of climate change, it would be failure if we do not do so.

The outcomes of the Paris conference, in spite of positive reactions from different stakeholders all over the world has prompted, nevertheless, reactions coming especially from the scientific community that curbed overall enthusiasm. Steffen Kallbekken, Director of the Centre for International Climate and Energy Policy was in this respect clear: *'To have a two-thirds chance of limiting warming to 2C, emissions have to fall 40-70% by 2050. To have even a prayer of respecting the 1.5 C target, those mid-century cuts would have to be even deeper: 70-95%. These are dizzyingly difficult goals which effectively require the total decarbonisation of the world economy within four decades..... By the time the current pledges enter into force in 2020, we will probably have exhausted the entire carbon budget for the 1.5°C degrees target.'* Kevin Anderson, Deputy Director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in Manchester was, in this respect, even more direct when saying: *'the current text is not consistent with science.'*

Against this background the question which cannot be avoided is: what is exactly the substance of Christian hope in facing climate change? In the follow-up of Paris it might be worth some efforts to return to the roots and get firm ground under our feet. Then we can specify in what sense we talk about Christian hope when linking this specific virtue with our reflection of climate change.

## **16.2 Biblical Prophecies on Guard against False Hope, Wishful Optimism and Utopia**

The need of an active personal approach is underlined in elaborating on the distinction between hope and utopia. What do we hope for cannot be just expected. Jürgen Moltmann underlines that Christian hope is shaped by life, acting and by personal capacity for overcoming troubles and tribulations. The mission of Christians is not exhausted by spreading hope and faith, but by actually encouraging the change of life and current customs and practises. This includes active efforts on changing of existing social, economic and juridical structures. It is in this respect that Moltmann speaks about present and realised eschatology. '*Present eschatology means nothing else than creative expectation (schöpferische Erwartung)*'.<sup>230</sup> Theology of hope is an invitation to act. For Christians it means an invitation to a very specific type of an action marked by *metanoia* and calling, which refers to a specific wording of theology of reformation.

It may be particularly refreshing in this regard to read those texts written on the theology of hope at its apex, which focus on careful differentiation of hope from an earthly utopia. Jürgen Moltmann is in this respect clearly differentiating between salvation positivism (Heilpositivismus) and Christian hope: '*Christian hope is not utopia of faith*'.<sup>231</sup> He is in this regard very careful to distinguish Christian hope especially from Marxist ideology of achieving a wishful utopia though societal progress. The need of an active personal approach – a call for transformation is a substantial aspect of a distinction between hope and utopia.

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<sup>230</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of hope*, 304 ff.

<sup>231</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of hope*, 333.

In applying this approach and relating hope to the actual situation of the climate change narrative, doubts about the Paris outcomes cannot be avoided. Although many will argue that an idea of transformation is implicitly present in the final wording of the generally praised Paris agreement, the simple reality is that the term ‘transformation’ was carefully edited out of the final text. The document drafts initially proposed ‘pursuing of a transformation towards sustainable development’ as one of key aims of the agreement and the follow-up process, which the agreement was supposed to generate. However, in the final stages of the negotiations all instances in which transformation, similarly as justice or decarbonisation have been mentioned, were carefully edited out of the text. Commitment to transformation has been replaced by the commitment to mobilise financial funds for climate resilient developments. In an occasional commentary on the text this was even expressed as a positive step forward, while arguing that it is preferential to have a concrete text on financial transfers rather than something as vague as transformation. Even if a number of other reflections on the Paris outcomes would argue that the idea of transformation is present in the text, although not expressed verbally, suspicions remain. Is this narrowing down in wording indeed a correct reflection of the need of how climate change has to be faced?

A theological approach based on hope needs to be aware of this argument. Transformation, *metanoia*, needs to be an inseparable accompaniment of every Christian argument related to hope. The task is to be vocal about the need for transformation. If wanting to interpret outcomes of Paris positively, precisely this element must achieve a prominent position, not only for political and practical purposes. It is for the utmost theological reasons. There is no way to achieve what we hope for without *metanoia*, transformation. This is a theological experience, anchored in the sacred texts. In facing challenges of climate change,

added to which come insights of the science of climate change which offers warnings as well.

For faith communities reacting to climate change has become one of the popular strategies to call for temperance. This is a welcomed and encouraging step, especially for offering a frame for a meaningful personal action. A Christian response to climate change, a response taking into account the full concept of hope needs to go beyond it. Against this background the care for creation is more than simply a 'green theology.' It is a new and fresh look at theology, in which eschatology, in the sense of describing not only what will happen at the end of time, but which takes time seriously as a description of everyday reality, needs to be part of it. Theology developed in these terms is that of a realised eschatology. It is a counter dose in the society of spectacle, dominated by consumerism and cynicism. It is an incarnational theology which links 'word' with 'action;' the 'word' which is not just a sound, but the substance of the life of Jesus Christ, who is the word incarnated.

Incarnational theology of creation needs to look seriously at all aspects of life. Consequently, while seeking real signs of characterising such a community it leads then to the conclusion that it is not only openness, activity and responsibility which should play a role in this regard. Christian action is a call for transformation. But this cannot be just a transformation of external structures. It needs to take into account personal responsibility, not limiting itself to the acceptance of an abstract structural evil, or some kind of a mistake. The consequence of such an attitude will be a cultivation of gratitude and respect for others as well as to nature, and a cultivation of the link of the material (spacious) and the non-material (temporal). Jenson in this respect is underlining the importance of repentance, and, especially, the importance of the close relationship between the need for transformation



and the reality of God's judgment.<sup>232</sup> Talking about hope nowadays without taking into consideration all of these is neither credible, nor sincere and trustworthy from the theological perspective. As much as we cannot say anything else than hope is the one element without which the Christian message would lose its substance, at the same time this statement cannot go without the second part of the same sentence: hope without repentance, without transformation and without taking seriously the reality of God's judgment cannot be the Christian understanding of hope.

In order to stay consequent in talking about hope this might be perhaps the most demanding challenge: in a culture of a consumer society facing climate change to remind and to communicate the reality of God's judgment. This is, though, an unavoidable and substantial component of all biblical prophetic narratives about hope.

Care for creation is inseparable from taking care about the other. Ecological concerns of a Christian are not exhausted by taking care of nature. It is about the relationship to other persons and to God.

### **16.3 Where do we Stand**

The close link between theology and concrete action, characterised by prayer, engagement and transformation is the core task reflected in the works of European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN).<sup>233</sup> As an example offering guidance for the ECEN community we can offer a quotation from the key note speech of Bishop James Jones which was presented at the last major gathering of ECEN in 2014.<sup>234</sup> Bishop Jones

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<sup>232</sup> Robert Jenson, *Story and Promise*, 2.

<sup>233</sup> See: <http://www.ecen.org/>

<sup>234</sup> See: <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/JJ-address-ECEN-2014.pdf>

in outlining a strategy for Christian action on care for creation offers a consolidated package of five simple points related to the church's tasks and responsibilities facing the challenges of climate change:

- Prayer - at the heart of the Lord's Prayer is the petition that God's will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. This is a prayer for the earthing of heaven.
- Personal – Christians are encouraged to follow the example of Our Lord and teach the faithful to live accountable lives. We contribute to these ecological impacts through the choices we make as citizens and customers day by day about energy, food, water and transport..
- Parochial – Christians are encouraged to teach the second great commandment to love our neighbour as our self. Global issues can seem beyond the reach of the individual. Yet local Christian communities are set in neighbourhoods where we can show the love of God in action through caring for creation and restoring the local environment. It is at the parochial level in our local parishes that we can live out the Covenant between God and all the creatures of his creation (Gen 9,12). The Parish is where we localise the earthing of heaven.
- Political – Christians are encouraged to demonstrate through word and action that there is an inextricable link between the doctrine of justification by faith and the ethics of doing justice in the world. Lactantius, a 4th Century North African theologian, defined justice as: "The whole point of justice consists precisely in our providing for others through humanity what we provide for our family through affection."
- Planet – Christians are encouraged to enter into local alliances with Imams and Rabbis and other religious leaders, with members of other faith communities, and lead their

congregations into friendships that find common ground from our sacred texts about our shared responsibility for the future of the Earth.<sup>235</sup>

This is why Christian climate action can count on a growing number of positive examples spreading out in parishes and local communities as hopeful responses to 'end' resisting denial or despair. Disinvestment by churches and religious organisations from fossil fuels, the change of the consumerist attitude towards nature and living in gratefulness and respect have become a crucial priority for Messianic witness to climate justice in this regard. This is where the link to theology has to be visible.

There is no doubt that hope is unavoidable in Christian action related to care for creation. Hope, however, in a shape of hope which is reflected and qualified. Without taking hope in all its intricacy, it is then a very short distance to its degenerated face, or to cheap substitutes bearing the same name. Thus the content can be lost and instead of fulfilling a positive function it can become a misleading factor guiding towards a mistaken direction. We should not fall into this trap.

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<sup>235</sup> Bishop James Jones, ECEN Assembly 2014

## **ECO-THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVES FROM LATIN AMERICA**

*David Montealegre*<sup>236</sup>

The following essay presents some empirical analysis and considerations about the role of ecological reflection in protestant theological education institutions in Latin America. We do not pretend to present this analysis as a comprehensive picture of all realities in theological education. However, we maintain that after having worked for more than 6 years with protestant theological institutions in the region and after having seen several educational projects and their crisis from close distance, we can contribute some meaningful and relevant insights about the status of eco-theological reflection in Latin America.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> For more information on theological education in Latin America see: Matthias Preiswerk, *Contrato intercultural. Crisis y refundación de la educación teológica*, La Paz: Plural. 462 pp.

## **17.1 The Ecological Crisis as a Structural Crisis**

Talking about ecological issues today indisputably is involved with speaking of a fundamental crisis. The crisis we are facing is not just a problem or a difficult situation, but it points to a fundamental rift which exists in the current state and structure of our humanity. In other words, if we talk about ecology today we have to face some grave structural challenges of injustice within world society. However we believe that every crisis is also an opportunity, a situation which also provides some space capable of accommodating new and creative alternatives for alternative solutions.

The global ecological crisis today has reached unprecedented levels, as every day more forests cease to exist and no day is passing in our context, where we do not hear or read of foreign multinational companies which indiscriminately exploit Latin American soil and resources leaving indelible marks of destruction on the ecosystems of this region and the world.

The ecological or environmental crisis presents a structural crisis for at least the following reasons:

- 1) There is no element in nature that does not affect other elements. There is no ocean without ocean currents and ocean currents are not isolated from the wind. It is not possible to speak of crops without taking into consideration the rain and the seasons; it is not possible to refer the wealth of the soil and to leave aside the wealth of water.
- 2) It is not possible to speak of human beings without talking about the environment in which they live, breath, multiply and perform.
- 3) The relationship between nature and the human being is a relationship of dependency. There is a finite and directly

proportional relation between the human being and the resources that it takes for its subsistence.

Many have argued that climatic and environmental changes which we are experiencing now are not new, instead that these phenomena already existed in ancient times and that the planet has suffered very similar processes before. However, what those views do not recognize is the speed and extent at which these dramatic environmental changes are happening in our time.

If cooling cycles and global warming in the antiquity occurred every 10 million years or more, they now take place within a period of just few hundred years. The speed in which environmental changes occur today is 10 times higher than in previous eras.

Scholars have emphasized that the components of this planetary system are not working independently from each other, rather each element of what we know as reality is closely interrelated to other elements. The ecological balance of the planet therefore is a balance within a very complex structure, integrating multiple and variable components in a perfect fit which has given origin to life on this planet. Only this complex system of interrelation and perfect equalization keeps this planet alive as a whole. Any alteration of one of those elements directly affects everyone else and potentially endangers the survival of the whole system.

In the Latin American context many efforts have taken place to face the aggravating environmental crisis by multilateral actors (governments, companies, NGOs, universities, etc.) which try to reduce or stop the negative impact of these changes. It is very important that we also realize the special role and potentials which universities can and should play within these multilateral efforts in countering the ecological crisis. Those agents which deal on the platform of knowledge and undertake major programs of education have a crucial responsibility and

essential role to change our mindsets and the value systems and ethics which undergird environmental destruction.

We have looked at programs and trends in protestant theological education in Latin America as theological education could have a major role in deepening the understanding of ecological changes as structural challenge and should deepen special competence in this area. Actually protestant theological education has developed a special study area related to this ecological dimension. That field is called “eco-theology”. By this we refer to those efforts in theological reflection and research which address the environmental, ecological, and all other matters relating to the relationship between God, human beings and ecology in its broadest sense.

## **17.2 Theological Education as a Modularized Study – Limitations for the Role of Eco-Theological Orientation until now**

One of the key points which we have found out in looking at theological education curriculum and practices in Latin America today is that eco-theological education in Latin America is mainly treated within a context of modularized studies, i.e. as a study area and subject understood as one small area among many others, in theological education curricula (TE). Some modules in theological education are interrelated, some others are independent in the study programs. Courses on eco-theological reflection for most formal institutions of TE (universities, Bible schools, theological seminaries, etc.) are mainly independent and just one optional subject to work on; i.e. one additional option of the overall number of modules, courses and disciplines which a student must complete in order to forward and complete his or her theological studies. However the interrelationship and integration of

eco-theological reflection with other areas of theological knowledge often still is very poor, as courses on eco-theological reflection are almost never mentioned in the daily theological discussion or mainstream theological discourse.

In Latin America therefore while formal centers of TE recognize the need for eco-theological work and reflection in a general sense the actual space which is provided for it is very limited. The majority of theological education courses are related to other topics and it remains reduced to rather specific isolated seminars or small workshops on this subject. Thus, very often eco-theological reflection is nothing more than an annex to be treated in addition or even outside the compulsory and normal agenda of theological education.

A review of current curricula and course outlines of most institutions of theological education in Latin America clearly provides evidence that until now only a small space is provided for environmental and ecological issues within the general body of theological studies and knowledge in this context. However, there are also important positive exceptions with pioneering projects involving and integrating eco-theological reflection within other courses within the various theological study areas, namely Old and New Testament, Dogmatic Theology, Liturgy, etc. These new initiatives need to be strengthened, evaluated and improved in order to serve the ecological transformation of theological education as a whole. From these positive examples of an integration of environmental concerns into the mainstream of theological reflection and education we can learn a lot, so that we move beyond a situation in which eco-theological learning is just understood as an unintegrated and arbitrary annex to a normative mainstream of theological training.



### **17.3 The Pioneering Role of Non-Formal Centers and Agents for Ecological Reflection and Transformation**

An interesting observation should be added: If we compare formal protestant spaces of TE in Latin America (i.e. Universities, Theological Seminars, Theological Faculties) and non-formal spaces of education (NGOs, Online spaces, Multilateral forums, Social Networks, Online research groups, Interreligious groups, etc.) the trend clearly is that it has been mainly the non-formal centers of theological education and ecological learning which have carried on major initiatives for eco-theological awareness-building and theological reflection so far.

It has been in these new spaces of non-formal education that gradually educational processes have led to the formulation of an environmental knowledge that in the long run also sensitizes theological reflection in general. It is in this context that leading specialists like the philosopher Enrique Leff have called for the promotion of a new form of an “environmental rationality” seeking a more intense and critical interaction between the ecological discourse, eco-social movements and networks and established theological thinking and training.<sup>238</sup>

Latin America then, is presented as a region with great challenges in establishing an inclusive dialogue between ecology and TE. In this regard we would like to close our considerations with the following questions, none of them intended to be immediately answered, but on the contrary intended to initiate a new and broad reflection process challenging Latin American theological identities to properly face their responsibility in increased and explore dynamic eco-theological reflection:

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<sup>238</sup> See Smith, P. and A. Tenner (Eds.), *Dimensions of Sustainability, Proceedings of the Congress Challenges of Sustainable Development*, Amsterdam, 22-25 August 1996, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden.

- Is theological education relevant without an ecological epistemology?
- Is it possible to incorporate some of the rich Latin American indigenous ecological resources of religious experience into the current model of theological education?
- Could we rethink and deconstruct classical educational concepts of Latin American theological education in order to integrate ecological dimensions of theological in an interactive and transversal way?
- Could Latin American theology develop a conceptual framework to speak about ecological sins as becoming a recognized part of the Christian body of doctrines?

In concluding we can state that there are some important and creative eco-theological initiatives around in the region, which are an encouragement and a good example further to built upon. But still there is no broader Latin American eco-theological movement yet that makes its voice being heard in the formal spaces of TE. The only and major exception however to this statement is a current movement which has become known under the title “Environmental Multireligious Convergence (Green Faith – Interfaith Partners for the Environment)”, a learning forum of civil society initiatives which will be held in Rio de Janeiro at the end of the year 2016 and will bring together a large number of religious institutions and organizations working towards eco-theological education.<sup>239</sup>

Given the above we conclude that time has come to re-conceptualize Latin American TE in a new epistemological framework taking seriously political, social and environmental concerns and willing to

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<sup>239</sup> <http://www.greenfaith.org/success-stories/convergencia-de-rio-de-janeiro-inscripciones>

contribute a serious and substantial reflection on the current ecological crisis on behalf of the Christian churches.

In this regard we believe it will be necessary to consider a few actions to be initiated for the future, some of these could be:

- The preparation of an Eco-theological collection of articles and resources: “Summa of Latin American ecological theology” which could consist of rewriting some of the theological statements or theological agreements according to the new ecological paradigm.
- The preparation of a major collection of popular practical materials on ecological spirituality.
- The initiation of a series of specialized theological studies on the challenges which the new ecological paradigm brings to world religions, especially to those which arise from a more anti-ecological paradigm, and which have not yet become converted in terms of its traditional symbolic heritage (including Christianity); this initiative should not aim at popular levels, but more to specialized levels of academic institutions and educators.

For more information on some important Latin American resources and networks related to initiatives of eco-theology in this regard one can consult the following websites:

- REPAM (Red eclesial Panamazónica)<sup>240</sup>
- Radial series: *Laudato Si*: about the care of our common home.<sup>241</sup>
- GEMRIP - Program on eco-theology (virtual course).<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> See: <http://redamazonica.org/>

<sup>241</sup> <http://redamazonica.org/multimedia/el-cuidado-de-la-casa-comun/>

<sup>242</sup> [http://gemrip.org/essential\\_grid/nuevo-programa-de-estudios-sobre-eco-teologia/](http://gemrip.org/essential_grid/nuevo-programa-de-estudios-sobre-eco-teologia/)

Finally in concluding our reflections highlighting the new and powerful Papal encyclical “*Laudato Si*”, which is a great document and tool published 2016 by the Latin American Pope Francis and which has found attention and support very much also in protestant churches in Latin America. *Laudato Si* emphasizes (from a roman catholic perspective which could perfectly be translated also for protestant thinking) the need for new, deeper, and interrelated environmental education in Christian churches and beyond as in most parts of the current educational systems there still is not too much in terms of promotion and conceptualizing basic ethical and moral values for care for creation. In words of Pope Francis:

*“Environmental education has broadened its goals. Whereas in the beginning it was mainly centered on scientific information, consciousness-raising and the prevention of environmental risks, it tends now to include a critique of the “myths” of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mindset (individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, the unregulated market). It seeks also to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God. Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care.”*<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Encyclica “*Laudato Si*”, page 210; accessed in: [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)

Therefore we affirm once again: eco-theological education has to be emphasized, deepened and broadened both as a core and compulsory element within the mainstream of protestant theological education in Latin America.

## ANNEXES

## 18.1 List of Participants

<b>Participant's Name</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Country</b>
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Mrs Natallia Vasilevich boorbalka@gmail.com	Bonn University	Germany / Belarus

Rev. Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dietrich Werner dietrich.werner@brot-fuer-die- welt.de	Bread for the World – Protestant Development Service	Germany
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## 18.2 Conference Agenda

### **Eco-theology, Climate Justice and Food Security – International Ecumenical Consultation**

*10-13 March 2016, Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Greece*

#### **Thursday, March 10**

Arrival in Volos

#### **12:00 – 14:00 Lunch**

14:00 – 14:30	Welcome and Introduction
14:30 – 16:00	Keynote Speech (Ekaterini Tsalampouni, University of Thessaloniki)
16:00 – 16:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
16:30 – 18:30	Presentation of the Survey (Raphael Sartorius)

#### **18:30 Dinner**

#### **Friday, March 11**

8:30 – 9:00	Morning Prayer
9:00 – 10:30	Keynote Speech (Ernst Conradie, University of the Western Cape)
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:00 – 12:30	Contextual Case Studies – Organisations – (Hong-Eyoul Hwang (Oikos), Peter Pavlovic (ECEN) and Jochen Motte (UEM))



**12:30 – 14:00 Lunch**

- 14:00 – 16:00 Thematic Presentations (Christoph Stückelberger, Globethics.net and Kapya Kaoma, Boston University)
- 16:00 – 16:30 *Coffee Break*
- 16:30 – 18:30 Panel on Theological Education – Higher Education Representatives – (Deivit Montealegre (Argentina), Natallia Vassilievich (Belarus) and Dennis Solon (the Philippines))

**18:30 Dinner**

- 20:00 – 21:00 The Greek Orthodox Church and the Challenges of the Current Economic and Refugee Crisis (Optional)

**Saturday, March 12**

- 8:30 – 9:00 Morning Prayer
- 9:00 – 10:30 Contextual Case Studies – Countries – (Gloriose Umuziranenge (Rwanda), Laima Geikina (Latvia) and Dany El-Obeid (Lebanon))
- 10:30 – 11:00 *Coffee Break*
- 11:00 – 12:30 Group Work

**12:30 – 14:00 Lunch**

- 14:00 – 15:30 Plenary and Main Recommendations
- 15:30 – 20:00 Excursion and Dinner on Mountain Pelion

**Sunday, March 13**

8:00 – 10:00	Holy Service
11:30 – 12:00	Closing Plenary
12:00 – 12:30	Closing Prayer

***12:30 – 14:00 Lunch and Farewell***

Departures

### **18.3 Global Survey**

Global Survey on Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security (ETCF) in theological education and Christian leadership development

This survey was part of a Research Project on Eco-Theology, Climate Justice and Food Security (ETCF) in theological education and Christian leadership development. The project was organised by Bread for the World, Globethics.net, the United Evangelical Mission and the World Council of Churches, in cooperation with the Orthodox Academy of Crete and Volos Academy for Theological Studies

The project was designed to gather data and perspectives on the place of eco-theology, climate justice and food security in theological education, particularly (ETCF) from the churches of the South both in formal theological education as well as in non-formal programmes of Christian and development training. The input was very important for the project as a whole.

More information is available in the associated project description which was circulated with this questionnaire.

The final version of the survey was available in three languages: English, French, Spanish.

For the purpose of this survey, we understood eco-theology in a broad perspective, as a theological reflection which, taking into account the ecological crisis, develops a discourse on God, human beings and the cosmos and their relationships. In our understanding eco-theology is not limited to a particular theological discipline (Systematic theology, Bible, Ethics, etc.) but can be related to many of them. As the title of the survey suggests, a special consideration was given to theological insights on climate and food issues but other topics will be most welcomed.

<b>1. Personal Background</b>	
Family name(s):	
First name(s):	
Organization:	
Position:	
Email:	
Website:	
Country:	
World Region:	Choose from the dropdown list below
<b>2. Denominational or Confessional Background</b>	
What is your faith, denomination or tradition (if applicable) ? Please select all that apply.	<input type="checkbox"/> Adventist <input type="checkbox"/> African Instituted <input type="checkbox"/> Anabaptist <input type="checkbox"/> Anglican <input type="checkbox"/> Baptist

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Evangelical</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Independent</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Methodist</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Orthodox</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Oriental Orthodox</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Pentecostal/Charismatic</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Post-denominational</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian/Reformed</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Roman Catholic</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> United &amp; Uniting</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please add below)</li></ul>
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<b>3. Institutional Data (if from Institutions of Theological Education)</b>	
Category of Respondent	Please indicate your category from the dropdown list below:
I am completing this questionnaire as an:	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Member/Representative of a theological education institution <input type="checkbox"/> Student at a theological education institution <input type="checkbox"/> Member /Representative of an ecumenical agency of faith-based organisation <input type="checkbox"/> Member/Representative of a non-governmental organisation
If you belong to an institution to which kind of institution do you belong?	Click here for institutional type
<b>4. Context of in Relation to Ecology, Climate Change and Food Security</b>	
On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10	0 ... 10

<p>(heavily) please indicate whether your region is affected by ecological, climate change or food related problems:</p>	
<p>If you believe your region is affected by ecological, climate change or food related problems, please indicate the ecological problems your region is facing:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Deforestation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Desertification</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Drought</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Effects of Climate Change</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Floods</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Food scarcity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of drinking water</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Loss of biodiversity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Rising sea levels</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please add below):</li> </ul>
<p>On a scale from 0 (not at all) to 10 (most) please indicate what in your opinion is the urgency of ETCF</p>	<p>0 ... 10</p>

<b>5. Institutional Involvement in Issues Related to ETCF</b>	
<b>Questions for theological education institutions</b>	
Is ETCF a subject in your theological institution or theological courses?	Yes/No
If yes, please indicate in which discipline/s of your institute ETCF are dealt with (several answers possible)	<input type="checkbox"/> Biblical studies <input type="checkbox"/> Church History <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics <input type="checkbox"/> Ecumenical theology or studies <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral/Practical theology <input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy <input type="checkbox"/> Religious studies <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Theology/Dogmatics <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please add below):
Are courses related to ETCF compulsory, optional or not available?	Choose from the dropdown list
Please give names of courses concerning ETCF	



<p><b>Questions for all respondents</b></p>	
<p>Please indicate the areas in which eco-ethological perspectives are discussed in your institution, organisation or agency:</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Eco-feminism</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Eco-mission</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Eco-spirituality</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Indigenous/Aboriginal theologies</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Integrity of creation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Theology of Creation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Theology of life</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Public theology</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable development</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please add below):</p>
<p>Is there interdisciplinary dialogue concerning ETCF?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>
<p>If yes, please give an example</p>	
<p>Is there interfaith or interreligious dialogue concerning ETCF?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>
<p>If yes, please give an example</p>	

Is Eco-theology a special research topic in your institution	Yes/No
Please indicate if your institution has resources available on ETCF	<input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum models <input type="checkbox"/> Theological monographs <input type="checkbox"/> Journals <input type="checkbox"/> Research articles <input type="checkbox"/> Statements from churches and church organizations <input type="checkbox"/> E-learning-courses <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please add below):
Liturgies, Eco-Congregations / Green churches, Eco-spirituality, Eco-diakonia, Creation day / Time for Creation	
If you know of examples of good practice in relation to ETCF issues please indicate	<input type="checkbox"/> Liturgies <input type="checkbox"/> Eco-Congregations / Green churches <input type="checkbox"/> Eco-diakonia <input type="checkbox"/> Creation day / Time for Creation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please add below):

If yes, please give examples	
Please indicate whether theological education, training and research on ECTF is not needed at all, not really a need, needed only for a few, or an urgent need in your context of theological education	Theological education, training and research on ETCF is:
Is your research work/ theological formation connected with project work:	Yes/No
If yes, please indicate the areas of project work	<input type="checkbox"/> Diakonia <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral work <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy <input type="checkbox"/> Mission and Evangelism <input type="checkbox"/> Research <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please add below):
If yes, please give examples	
<b>6. International Partnerships</b>	
Please indicate international partnerships with churches/agencies/programmes in	Please list names of churches, agencies, etc:

other countries and regions that have helped to deepen and improve engagement in issues of ETCF:	
Please indicate the international partnerships with churches/agencies/programmes in other countries and regions that you would like to see to deepen engagement in issues of ETCF:	

### 7. Visions for the Future

On a scale from 0 to 10 please indicate whether EJCF should have greater/less/equal priority in theological teaching, ecumenical formation and Christian leadership development (where 0 means least priority and 10 greatest priority):	0 ... 10
What are your key visions, hopes or suggestions concerning collaboration, sharing of resources and other key topics to be deepened in the area of ETCF training?	



<b>Research Essays:</b>
<b>Statements from Churches and Church Organizations:</b>
<b>Online Collections and Web Resources:</b>
<b>E-Learning-Courses:</b>



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