



# Retrieving a Christian ecological spirituality in response to our contemporary ecological crisis

Dr Newton Millan Cloete  
Research Fellow  
Faculty of Theology  
University of the Free State, South Africa  
E-mail: [CloeteNW@ufs.ac.za](mailto:CloeteNW@ufs.ac.za)

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.104.423>

## Abstract

Ecological spirituality encapsulates the relation between spirituality and nature. Situated within this context, this article offers a Christian response to contemporary ecological threats and draws from existing spiritual traditions to propose a Christian ecological spirituality as the basis of and the means to ecological conversion, reformation, healing and renewal. The Story of Creation in the Book of Genesis, is used in exploring the individual roles of God, nature and humans in creation, the initial harmonious balance between them and the loss of this balance due to sin. Environmental exploitation and devastation are then explained in terms of human sin, followed by the need for an ecological conversion. Finally, it posits how God can be rediscovered through ecological spiritual practices inherent in the covenantal, sacramental, ascetic and wisdom traditions, and how these ultimately enable restoration of the harmonious balance between Creator and creation.

**Keywords:** ecological spirituality, covenantal tradition, sacramental tradition, ascetic tradition, wisdom tradition.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Creation: an amazingly beautiful array of distinct shapes, colours and sizes. Not lifeless, empty objects, but infinite skies, adorned with the radiance of billions of lights, the sun, the moon, endless waters, lands and seas, a rich abundance of marine life, soaring birds, leaping animals, crawling insects and an immense diversity of human beings. All these, created and formed by the Divine Lover, the Giver of Life – God, the Creator. The Story of Creation is filled with celestial reality and is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable tales ever told, and is so very fundamental to Christian spirituality.

In a world where we humans claim to love each other, where we strive to accomplish unity, care for and share with each other, showing kindness, and possessing all the virtues of humanness, and even more, where we claim to love our Creator, how often have we included in that love, unity, caring, sharing and kindness an expression towards nature – such a significant and an inherent part of our existence? Based on The Creation Story it is clear that God, nature and humans are inseparably connected. God existed at the beginning and created the entire universe, first nature and then human beings, all in perfect harmony. But this

---

<sup>1</sup> The research method employed in this article is qualitative in nature. This theoretical study entails an analysis of scholarly publications, including articles, journals and books containing current discourse on Christian ecotheology and -ecological spirituality. It engages literature by contemporary authors who have made substantive contributions relevant to the topic and retrieves insights that could assist contemporary attempts to address environmental challenges through Christian spiritual practices.



harmonious balance was disrupted when humankind fell into sin, bringing a curse onto creation. Because of sin, creation is found in disunity with itself and its Creator.<sup>2</sup>

The world today is in turmoil. Societies all over the globe experience a clash of civilizations due to “identity and otherness”, leading to ethnic and cultural conflict (Volf, 1996:16). Nations are at war, seeking to kill and destroy each other, and have lost all sense of moral consciousness. Humans wrong each other in the most dreadful ways such as dishonouring, coveting, lying, stealing and murdering. The evil that has taken possession of our hearts is not only perceived in human relations, but also in our relationship with nature. We are doing injustice to the earth by harming and exploiting it, consuming and depleting its natural resources in the process. Air, water and soil are contaminated and precious animal and plant species are driven into extinction (Smith, 1997:1). Global warming due to the emission of greenhouse gas has become a commonly used term, and is indicated by phenomena such as melting ice caps, retreating glaciers, a rise in sea level, and the migration and extinction of species (Wilson & Law, 2007:3).

All these wicked acts are committed because of our human greed and desire to be in control. But in the process of mistreating our fellow beings we sin against God, and deprive ourselves of recognising His presence and divine being in all of creation. This largely reveals a lost sense of spiritual awareness, as well as disregard for the human purpose of employing our spiritual gifts and calling to be actively involved in God’s presence and action in the world. We have brought suffering on ourselves, our neighbour and the natural environment. As a result, “creation waits in eager expectation for ... liberat[ion] from its bondage to decay” (Romans 8:19-20) and needs to be reconciled with its Creator and itself. In other words, creation is in desperate need of spiritual healing.

### **In harmonious balance**

According to the Story of Creation, told in Genesis 1-2, God created the world in perfect order. Genesis means *beginning* or *origin*, and indicates the foundation of the earth, of human history, of family, of civilization. Free of problems and full of promise, it stirs the imaginative visions of the future (Beers, 1991:2). This section explores that perfect harmonious balance present at the very beginning by focusing on the distinct roles of, as well as the interrelation between God, nature and humans in creation.

### **God**

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters* (Genesis 1:1-2).<sup>3</sup>

The Story of Creation is our first encounter with the Divine. Before everything else, God was there. He is the loving Creator who called the universe, nature, humans – the entire cosmos – into being. The Christian understanding of spirituality is rooted in God’s existence and authorship of creation. According to Beers (1991:5), the Creation Story teaches us much about God’s nature and being. First and foremost, we learn that He is *creative*. The earth was dark and empty, and like a piece of clay He moulded and shaped it into a beautiful paradise. As Creator, God is *distinct from creation*. While constituting an indivisible part of it, He transcends all elements of creation. He made the earth and everything that dwells in it. Furthermore, we discover that God is *eternal*. He has no beginning and end, but rather *is* the beginning (Alpha) and the end (Omega). Finally, we come to know that He is *in control* of the world. Everything that happened in the past, is occurring now, or any future events are part of God’s will, plan

---

<sup>2</sup> See Genesis 1-3

<sup>3</sup> The New International Version is used throughout article unless otherwise stated.



and purpose for His creation, which is mystical, inexplicable and unfathomable to the human mind.

Wolters (1985:12-13) elaborates on God's control over and His plan for the world. He maintains that the very sovereign power of the Creator that called the world into existence has also continued keeping it into being. His commanding authority by which all things were made is the same today as it has been when creation was formed. God's work of preserving and governing the world now is therefore inseparable from His act of creating it at the beginning of time. Over the years, into eternity, every detail of creaturely existence continues to be made up of "Let there be's" of the Creator's sovereign will. Conradie (2000:113) adds that this radical transcendence does not dissuade knowledge of God, but rather His existence infuses the whole universe and becomes apparent in the blessing of the Sabbath when all of creation rejoices over His presence in it.

One last aspect about God illustrated in the Creation Story requires special attention, namely the reference made to the Holy Spirit. God's being manifests in the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – all in accordance and unity. Although the term "God" is more often perceived as referring to the Father, the Bible reveals the presence of all three facets of God at the beginning. Scriptures, for example Job 33:4, "The Spirit of God has made me: the breath of the Almighty gives me life", and Psalm 104:30, "When you send your Spirit, they are created", suggests that the Spirit was actively involved in creation (Beers 1991:5). John 1:1-2 also speaks of the Son as the *Word*: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning". Pope Francis (2015:173) concurs: "The world was created by the three Persons acting as a single divine principal".<sup>4</sup>

Emphasised above is the oneness, indicating *union, harmony, agreement, togetherness* and *wholeness*, and how it may be understood outside the scope of the Trinity. The Creator is therefore a model of these virtues. Especially humans, in our priestly role as custodians of the earth, can draw from these laudable qualities. Reading reality "in a Trinitarian key" (Francis, 2015:174) enables us to recognise God in all of creation, which conquers the divisiveness between fellow humans, between humans and nature, and between creation and God.

## Nature

*And God said, "Let there be light; let there be a separation between the sky and waters; let there be land, seas and vegetation; let there be a sun, a moon and stars; let there be fish and birds; and let there be living creatures of all kinds (Genesis 1:3-25, adjusted).*

All these elements make up the natural environment, which may also be seen as the setting in which all activities of the universe play off. Nature preceded human beings, and is home to them as well as to God (Jung, 1993:2). John Philip Newell (1999) in his work, *The Book of Creation*, searches for the deeper, spiritual qualities of nature. Moreover, he portrays how they silently disclose God's personality, also noticeable in human beings. He maintains that the light, created on the first day, represents the *light of God*. It has a profound meaning in the sense that it springs forth out of His love, and as such is the source of life. This should not be confused with the physical light such as the sun, moon and stars, but should be understood as the divine power that gives life to all of creation. This inspires humans to always let the light shine forth in their earthly lives. Secondly, the separation between the skies and the waters denotes *God's wildness* which is unrestrainable, and also the heart of creativity. Accordingly, true worship of God is not merely confined to a sacred building and walls, but is freely practiced in any setting of the universe, giving rise to passion and resourcefulness. The land, seas and vegetation are manifestations of *God's fecundity* – His capacity to produce in abundance. If

---

<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis (2015:173) elaborates as follows: "The Father is the ultimate source of ... all that exists. The Son ... through whom all things were created, united himself to this earth ... The Spirit ... is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways".



the second day points to wild creativity, then the work of the third day captures the essence of God fashioning the earth in stability and fruitfulness. Furthermore, it pertains to nature's fertility and goodness, appreciated by humans as the source of life. The sun, moon and stars portray *God's harmony*. Shining out of the darkness, each one is assigned a particular place and time, yet they work together and have a common goal: to express something of the inexpressible, a mystery preordained to also be revealed in the image of humankind. Finally, the fish, birds and various living creatures symbolise the *creatureliness of God*. He is not simply in every being, but is also the essence of them all. The creatures are endowed with the five senses, which are also bestowed on humans – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching.

It is important to note that although humans were appointed custodians of the natural environment, it remains God's creation and as such is in perfect balance with humanity. Mystic Helder Camara (1995:91-112) elucidates this through his spiritual journey in which he expresses genuine appreciation for nature's life-giving character. He asks of *Sister Earth* to teach humans to continue creation, to multiply, to be joyful and to show acceptance. He praises *Brother Fire* for his beauty, grace, and simplicity, and thanks him for his warmth and the song in his flames. He commends *Sister Water* for her beauty in stillness, in labour, in her ceaseless travel, and expresses gratitude for her help that assists humans in praising the Creator. Camara extols the enchantment of *Brother Birds'* song, the grace of his flight, his soaring, racing and flying. He gives honour to *Brother Air* who are well familiar with mysteries beyond the earth, and is always instilled with the presence of God. Finally, he delights in *Sister Trees'* peace, harmony, hospitality, and her loving arms that are always raised up in silent prayer.

## Humans

*God said, "Let us make [humans] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth". So God created [humans] in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them* (Genesis 1:26-27 ESV).

Beers (1991:7) emphasises that all humans – both man and woman – reflects God's image. Neither was made more, and neither was made less in His likeness. Furthermore, both were placed at the pinnacle of creation, and none is exalted over the other. Equality prominently features here – between the two sexes, and between people of all kinds. Thus, in the perfectly created order all humans carry God's image and are equal before Him.

Newell (1999:83-85) draws attention to the notion of God's image in humans. According to his understanding, this implies being created out of God's essence. His being is so vital to our existence that humankind would cease to exist if His life was in one way or another extracted from human life. Furthermore, what is deepest in humankind is of God, it is divine: His love, wisdom, creativity, imagination and wildness. But moreover, being formed in the image of God signifies that humans are created in the likeness of the Trinity. The *essence* of humans represents the *creating* mystery of God as the Father. The *expression* of humankind's being is rooted in the Child of God, the utterance of Love, or the *redeeming* facet of God. Finally, the *operation* of humanity's being and capacity for creativity and new beginnings pertains to the Spirit, the *inspiring* aspect of God.

Genesis 2:15 states, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it". This reveals that God not only created humans to have dominion over the earth, but also to care for it. Conradie (2006:77-78) suggests that human dominion over the earth should not be interpreted as domination, but rather in terms of the metaphor of stewardship whereby humans are characteristically portrayed as stewards, guardians, gardeners, priests, custodians or caretakers of the earth. Dominion is thus understood in terms of caring, protecting, nurturing, gardening, cultivating and serving the earth. He further



maintains that proper stewardship necessitates wise using of resources, sound management, reliability, commitment, dedication, hard work, as well as responsibility towards God as owner of creation.

### **The balance lost: creation's suffering**

Our contemporary world, though marked by great discoveries and advancements, faces one downfall: suffering. Humans experience affliction and injustice in countless ways – poverty, hunger, disease, segregation, oppression, to name but a few. The earth, at the mercy of humankind, is also subject to suffering, affecting the various ecosystems as well as humans.

### **The crisis at hand**

While humans are considered the primary cause of the current environmental crisis, they are also affected by it. The suffering of nature and people are thus interlinked. McGrath (2002:53) suggests that Western culture is notorious for its pervasive belief that domination of the natural world – subsequently followed by ecological devastation – brings about human fulfilment and liberation. Environmental hazards include, among others, an increasing human population, scarcity of resources and energy supplies, potential danger of nuclear war, endangered plant and animal species, animal experimentation, -farming and -cruelty, pollution in its various forms, urban-, toxic- and nuclear waste, atmospheric change and global warming,<sup>5</sup> acid rain, deforestation, soil erosion and salination, ozone depletion and overfishing (Conradie, 2006:19). Hayden (1996:6-8) also maintains that human involvement in the ecological crisis should not be downplayed. For the sake of greed, progress and advancement, humankind not only alters the earth's life-sustaining atmosphere in the process, but also causes devastation for their own kind. Even more detrimental is that the effects of such destruction on nature and humans are denied. Apart from current threats, the crisis also holds tremendous danger for future life on earth (Conradie, 2006:19).

According to Birch and Rasmussen (1978:21), our “no-limits” mentality is the product of a consumerist belief in affluence and success. The West, particularly America, adopted terms such as “new frontier” into the language of this unbounded culture. Traditionally implying “limit”, “frontier” assumes the opposite meaning – the starting place, instead of the stopping place. Furthermore, it represents a challenge to overthrow and control. Ultimately, it stands in complete opposition to contentment: acquiring more – more land, resources, wealth, space and more opportunities. The closing of one frontier implies the opening of a “new frontier”. Northcott (1996:41) believes that according to this culture of “ecologically damaging consumerism”, human comfort and the advancement of material fulfilment have become contemporary society's paramount goals. It is therefore not surprising that it is widely agreed that the natural world's objectification and subsequent degradation stem from our consumer society's commitment to material growth. The latter is overvalued while the former is undervalued, and the primary goal is “goods and services” for *humans*, which is essentially anthropocentric in nature (King & Woodyard, 1999:18).

Viewed holistically, the various conditions discussed above are “signs of the same disease – a disease which may yet prove fatal ... It seems we are locked into a spiralling pattern of self-destruction”, argue Rajotte and Breuille (1992:1). Martin-Schramm and Stivers (2003:10, 17-23) conclude that environmental degradation is a product of five (human) interrelated causes:

---

<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon is the result of carbon dioxide becoming entrapped in the earth's atmosphere, causing a gradual rise in the global average temperature. Greenhouse gas emission is primarily caused by human activity: heating and lighting homes, food production, manufacturing, construction, and use of aeroplanes and cars (Wilson & Law, 2007:20). The effects are devastating: extreme weather conditions, biodiversity loss, declining food security, flooding and progressive disappearance of small islands, as well as polluted air, water and soil which adversely affect human and environmental health (Wilson & Law, 2007:46-52).



an overpopulation of humans on earth; many of whom are over-consuming natural resources; using powerful technologies that result in persistent damage to the various ecosystems; supported by political and economic systems sanctioning degradation. Anthropocentric attitudes tend to exalt human beings above nature, and constitute sub-approaches, i.e. dualistic, hierarchical, dominating, as well as atomistic and individualistic attitudes towards the natural environment. But are these the true origins of the problem? Perhaps a more profound interpretation of its *spiritual* cause will prove helpful.<sup>6</sup>

### **A spiritual perspective on the roots of the crisis**

*To Adam he said, "Because you ... ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:17-19).*

Wilkinson (1991:289-290), in his analysis of the "curse on nature", argues that this text has often been used to validate exploitation of the natural environment. "Thorns and thistles", or anything else that "get in the way" are not considered part of the good creation but a consequence of human sin. In Wilkinson's view the curse does not describe a quality of the earth itself, but rather human misuse of dominion. The ground is cursed because humankind is set against it. *Adamah*, translated as ground, suggests that the curse on *Adam* essentially describes a division within himself – the inability to be at harmony with the earth. "Cursed is the ground *to you*" thus represents a more accurate reading of the Hebrew text.

Through sin, the created order assumed an entirely new dimension, as Wolters (1985:47) affirms: "There is no sense in which sin 'fits' in God's good handiwork". The harmonious balance was lost, estranging creation from itself and its Creator. Baillie (1962:167) believes that suffering is the punishment inflicted on ourselves, others and creation due to our sinful acts. Subsequently the root of evil, in this case societal evil – manifested in the earth's suffering – is sin, including pride, selfishness, greed, desire, disobedience, idolatry, and an enmity or alienation from a relationship with God, apparent in human estrangement from the rest creation, human supremacy over other species, as well as domination and exploitation of the natural environment for the sake of control and progress (Conradie, 2006:52-55). In the process, our covenant with God is relocated out of nature as we adopt a god that is separate from the earth, permeating the latter with feelings of pain and suffering (Hayden, 1996:2, 75). De Witt (1998:58) describes it as dismembering the concept of God as Creator:

To cover for this dismemberment of our Creator, we lessen our singing of the psalms, reduce references to creation in our hymns, and move toward even more abstract praise. Today we are more likely to praise God abstractly "for his excellent greatness" than we are to praise God concretely as the one who "sends the cheering rain", who "to beast and bird his goodness their daily food supplies".

### **The need for an ecological conversion**

*At that time [people] began to call on the name of the Lord (Genesis 4:26).*

The above sections illustrate the perfect balance at the very beginning, its abolition through sin, and creation's consequent subjection to suffering. This human-induced degradation of the earth may appear to be a lost cause. God's love for the world, however, is so deep and true that He takes on material flesh (De Witt, 1998:37-38). Through that we know that salvation has come through the cosmic redemptive power of Jesus Christ who restores the whole of

---

<sup>6</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion on the environmental predicament, see for example Conradie (2017), Martin-Schramm & Stivers (2003) and McDaniel (1995).



creation (Wolters, 1985:57). Viewing the world through the sacramental principle we understand that the world is *good but fallen*, yet *redeemed* through Christ's incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection (Chryssavgis, 2007:38-41).

Our current environmental crisis, according to Pope Francis (2015:158-159), thus calls for a deep interior conversion of which the impact is clearly noticeable in our connection with the natural world. Chryssavgis (2019:175-176) holds that our worldview – our perception of the world and ourselves– needs transformation. A conversion of heart and change of mindset, essentially amounting to repentance, is necessary if we want to establish an attitude- and lifestyle change to regulate or reverse the ecological crisis at hand. Ruether (1995b:90-92; 1994:250) also believes that such a conversion directs us towards understanding the web of life and accordingly inhabit it as sustainers rather than slayers of it. We are moved to stand in awe of God's intimate relationship with all creatures, and into a liturgical process of repenting our neglect and misuse of God's bounty, seeking His grace to transform our ways (Ruether, 2003:232). Pope Francis (2015:151) states that "human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start".

### **Restoring the balance between God and Creation**

*Spirituality* is a broad concept and are defined in various ways based on context. Generally, it involves beliefs and values that give purpose and meaning to our lives and relate it to the sacred or divine.<sup>7</sup> *Christian spirituality*, accordingly, is focused on the Christian's relationship with God. McGrath (1999:3) defines it as "the way in which the Christian life is understood and the explicitly devotional practices which have been developed to foster and sustain the relationship with Christ". *Christian ecological spirituality* thus encapsulates the relation between spirituality and nature. For Christians it is a way of life – our attitude towards creation – influenced and informed by our Christian values (Duke, 2020:35). Such a spirituality offers an alternative understanding of the quality of life – one that motivates a contemplative and prophetic lifestyle, capable of profound enjoyment without the preoccupation with consumption (Francis, 2015:162).

### **Why ecological spirituality?**

Christian ecological spirituality responds to environmental threats and injustices, and simultaneously endeavours to reinvestigate, rediscover and renew spiritual traditions in the light of our contemporary crisis. It therefore offers opportunities for spiritual renewal and reformation (Conradie, 2006:3). In the Christian tradition spirituality is a celebration of the fullness of life – not merely human life, but of all that is alive in and with the creative Spirit of God (Rakoczy, 2009:116).

Ecological spirituality's major source of healing and renewal is derived from the environment. Common experiences include feeling close to nature, having a sense of transcendence in its midst, being aware of the biosphere as a community, and experiencing overwhelming emotions in nature's presence such as fear, friendship, beauty, power and trustworthiness (Jung, 1993:52-53). Renouncing destructive and exploitative habits, we develop bio-centric, egalitarian, cooperating, connected and holistic attitudes toward nature (Martin-Schramm & Stivers, 2003:23).

Through ecological spiritual practises humankind becomes the interpreters of creation and singers of God's praise. We learn to be the voice of all creation – the mountains, waters, trees, animals, birds, the light (Camara, 1995:29). As the Father and the Spirit are recognised in ordaining creation, the Son holds equal recognition. Jesus Christ is the one through whom all things are reconciled to God, and acknowledging Him as Lord of the universe indeed means good news for all of creation (De Witt, 1998:59). All of these are vital for our own renewal

---

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed discussion on spirituality see Kourie (2006).



whereby the world around us is also renewed, and that original perfect harmony with ourselves, the earth and our Creator is regained, as George Hegel makes clear:

Everything that from eternity has happened in heaven and earth, the life of God and all the deeds of time simply are the struggles for Spirit to know itself, to find itself, be for itself, and finally unite itself to itself; it is alienated and divided, but only so as to be able thus to find itself and return to itself (in Wilber, 1995:409).

### **Ecological spiritual practices: A Christian perspective**

According to Rasmussen (2013:236), Earth-honouring practices are needed to mediate the transition from “the creature we are, the world we have, the faith we seek, and the ethic we need” in offering “a constructive response that takes the form of renewed deep religious traditions speaking to Earth-destructive forces”. We understand that we are fallen, sinful creatures, yet created in God’s image; endowed with the task of caring for His creation, yet living in a sinful, suffering world – in need of a common faith-based ethic to address contemporary environmental challenges through ecological practises. As Ruether (1995b:93) points out, we need an ethic of eco-justice that recognises the interconnection between domination of people and that of nature.

Such practises, according to Rasmussen (2013:234-235), represent a spiritual-moral guidance system for alternative ways of life, and apart from them “beliefs, creeds, theology, and cosmology are all empty”. Fundamental to any religion are the practises of gathering for a sacred meal, the wisdom to accept or decline, keeping Sabbath, honouring the body, feasting and fasting, and gathering in testimony and praise. He notes that “creation justice begins at home”, and for the individual the home, neighbourhood, educational institution, place of worship, and the company we keep are the first schools of justice (and injustice) (Rasmussen, 2013:243). Ruether (1994:206) observes that past traditions do not offer a ready-made ecological spirituality due to the relative newness of the contemporary crisis to human experience. She, however, believes that any ecological spirituality should be founded on three basic principles, namely accepting the transience of personal selves, recognising our interdependence with all other beings, and valuing the personal in communion by expressing this kinship through communal and personal devotions. These principles are evident in the covenantal, sacramental, ascetic and wisdom traditions, described below.

### **Covenantal tradition**

“Covenant” is the biblical term for *relational living*. God established covenantal bonds between Himself and the entire universe, including humankind, between fellow humans, as well as humans and the rest of creation (Rasmussen, 2013:17). According to the covenantal worldview, God created the cosmos, alive and engaging in lively relation with its Creator, who delights in creation (Ruether, 2011:356). The Maker of all things is the eternal being, independent and omnipotent, while the world is dependent and limited – “always understood in reference to and in communion with God, without whom it remains incomplete” (Chryssavgis, 2019:41). Rasmussen (2013:17) sums up the relation in which all things exist:

All that is, is kin and born to belonging. All is relational. Humankind and otherkind live in one another’s lives and die into one another’s deaths in relationships that either sustain or subvert creatures and the land. Nothing is without the other. ... The way of covenant, for better and worse, is the way things are. ...So also is the way of justice. Biblically, justice is right relation with all that is.

Covenants belong to a moral order authored by God, and manifests an existence rooted in Him (Rasmussen, 2013:139). The covenant with Noah, for example, is regarded a covenant “with all peoples together with ‘every living creature of all flesh’ and Earth itself ‘for all future





generations”<sup>8</sup> (Rasmussen, 2013:161). According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, the vocation and covenant to care for creation is the primary reason why humankind was created (Chryssavgis, 2019:152). As servants, they are to build up the whole creation and thereby contribute to its wellbeing and wholeness (Wirzba, 2003:136-148). Humans are to assume the role of stewards, guardians, caretakers, gardeners, priests and custodians, assigned to care for, protect, nurture, garden, cultivate and serve the earth (Conradie, 2006:77-78). Ruether (1994:227) holds that a covenantal vision of our relation to other life forms reserves a special place for humans, responsible for its welfare and ultimately accountable to God, the authentic life source. It recognises our interdependence in community and restrains our “otherness from being translated into destructive hostility”. We are therefore tasked with maintaining right and just relationships in creation’s established order.

For Ruether (1994:211-213), sabbatical legislation according to the Hebraic tradition serves as model of redemptive eco-justice: rest and restoration of land, animals, and humans at the end of each successive cycle to maintain a balance between prosperity and justice. Humans exploiting land, overworking animals, and drifting into unjust relations with fellow humans should be recognised as “a disorder that must be corrected periodically”. Both the Jubilee and Sabbath represent a “periodic righting of unjust relations” (Ruether, 1994:213) and are intent on “institutional forgiveness and atonement, breaking the cycles of accumulation and impoverishment and putting in place a way to start afresh toward a more just order” (Rasmussen, 2013:307). Although the Christian tradition largely failed to uphold the Jubilee principles,<sup>9</sup> Ruether (1994:214-215) states that strong elements of this vision reflect in Jesus’ teachings, such as the reference to ‘forgiveness of debts’ in the Lord’s Prayer as well as the reference to ‘the Year of the Lord’s favour’ in Jesus’ ministry inauguration sermon. In the midst of our ecological predicament such references should let us heed the call for right relations and justice on earth. This likewise holds true for Sabbath-keeping, as Rasmussen (2013:343) points out: “Sabbath and its remembrances are a projection, not of ourselves, but of creation and creation’s God. Keeping the Sabbath holy is a weekly, Earth-honoring practice that joins a mystery surpassing us and a purpose outstripping us”.

Contemporary society is faced with an educational crisis, as Pope Francis (2015:153-156) points out, and the younger generation has become accustomed to a culture of excessive consumerism and affluence. He suggests we start “educating for the covenant between humanity and the environment” to change consumer habits, awaken ecological sensitivity and increase environmental responsibility. Families, schools, churches, seminaries, social groups, political institutions, the media, etc. all represent settings and communities in which such ecological education can transpire. Teaching and raising awareness on our duty to care for creation through small daily actions, for example reducing water consumption, avoiding the use of paper and plastic, consuming less, avoiding unnecessary electricity usage, recycling, re-using containers, car-pooling or using public transport, planting trees and expressing authentic regard for other beings carry great nobility, can establish significant lifestyle changes and positively impact the world around us. Pope Francis (2015:157) believes that our efforts will only be adequate and effective if we adopt a fresh way of thinking about life, society and our relationship with nature. Likewise, Ruether (1995a:80) claims that restoring our relations with God and fellow creatures rectifies the covenant of creation, heals nature’s enmity and re-establishes beauty, peace, and harmony in natural environments.

### **Sacramental tradition**

In the sacramental tradition the entire cosmic community is regarded a living whole, with which human beings inter-commune. God is not only the Creator of this cosmic body, but also fills it

---

<sup>8</sup> Based on Genesis 9.

<sup>9</sup> Ruether (1994:214-215) ascribes this loss of unity between justice and right relations to a spiritualised understanding of various covenantal concepts, for example “forgive us our *debts*” as “forgive us our *sins*”, the “Year of the Lord’s Favour” as “good news to the poor”, “the promised land” as “heaven”, etc. The eco-justice intention of the Hebrew law thus essentially faded.



with His presence. While not reduced to it, He is incarnate in it, thus “the visible universe is the emanational manifestation of God, God’s sacramental body” (Ruether, 2011:360). In the view of Bruteau (1997:14-15), the concept of “universe” implies a sense of all constituting one thing. Being the original Adam, the universe is a large figure of dust, systemised, energised and sustained by the breath of God, and exhibits the holy “Oneness of Being”. Chryssavgis (2019:87-88) affirms:

In this way, the sacramental principle<sup>10</sup> becomes the way that we perceive the world around us as sacred, a tangible mystery revealing and reflecting the invisible divine; the spiritual in matter and the eternal in time. It is a mystery concealed and comprehended in the flowers and the forests, the rocks and the mountains, as well as the rivers and the oceans.

A sacrament is a symbol through which either a natural or humanmade reality is the means by which the divine is experienced – “hidden in creation, wrapped in nature, present to the senses” (Rasmussen, 2013:258). Through the sacraments we reflect on the creation of the universe and the Incarnation, and look forward to its redemption and restoration. “[E]verything created adopts an uncreated perspective; and everything purely mundane becomes deeply mystical, rendered both timely and timeless” (Chryssavgis, 2019:91). Understanding creation as a sacrament is the precise way we should relate to it – the heavenly manifested and revealed in the earthly (Chryssavgis, 2019:85). McFague (1993) goes further to suggest that the world be seen as the body of God Himself, and that each and every component intrinsically represent divine embodiment. This “body” metaphor helps to overcome our fear and hostility towards creation. We are liberated from envisaging our kind as the crown of creation, entitled to subdue it, to perceiving ourselves in communion with it (Chryssavis, 2019:94, 97). Pope Francis (2015:169) maintains that the ideal is to discover God in all things:

Throughout history people have continued to meet the Creator on mountaintops, in vast deserts, and alongside waterfalls and gently flowing springs. In storms and earthquakes, they found expressions of divine power. In the cycle of the seasons and the courses of the stars, they have discerned signs of God’s fidelity and wisdom (U.S. Catholics Bishops in Rasmussen, 2013:261).

In the sacramental worldview “the entire material creation is transformed and sanctified, representing the body of Christ [and] is solemnly declared as God’s gift, and human beings act as priests of creation, rather than its proprietors” (Zizioulas, 2019:xi). If this is the case, Chryssavgis (2019:87) maintains, then “the actual number of Christian sacraments ... can never be limited to the seven conventional rites of baptism, chrismation, the Eucharist, marriage, confession, unction, and ordination”. Two of these, however, hold great significance for an eco-spirituality based on justice: baptism and the Eucharist.

“Baptism ... is a re-creation of humanity and the world in the light of Christ” (Chryssavgis, 2019:92). In this context, water as a sacrament symbolises purification, restoration and renewal.<sup>11</sup> In a world where water is privatised and have become a mere commodity, where we are faced with diminishing freshwater supplies, water is being over-pumped, wastefully used in agriculture and production, overconsumed by an ever-growing human population, and even carelessly polluted, we desperately need to start recognising the sacramental wonder in water (Rasmussen, 2013:278-284). Baptism as sacrament, argues Chryssavgis (2019:92), “reflects the profound action of the Spirit of God brooding over the ‘face of the world’ in the

---

<sup>10</sup> Chryssavgis (2019:97-98) emphasises sacramentalism as “a symbol of both divine transcendence and divine immanence” and claims that this concept dismisses “the slightest suspicion of theism or pantheism”. Furthermore, as Rasmussen (2013:258-260) remarks, *web-of-life sacramentalism* is not be confused with *Great Chain sacramentalism*, which is built on principles of androcentrism, hierarchy, inequality, subjugation and alienation (Rasmussen, 2013:258-260).

<sup>11</sup> Water as a sacrament is not limited to the Christian tradition. Rasmussen (2013:276) poses the question: “Who has met a religion without water rites sitting near its sacramental center ...?”



first moments of Genesis”. We are impelled to recognise water as an object of awe, as a mystical medium as “a ‘thou’ and not *only* an ‘it’” (Rasmussen, 2013:282). Ultimately, we can all take this Puebloan prayer<sup>12</sup> to heart:

... Lord ... Creator of heaven and earth ... We ask you to keep this life-giving source always flowing ... This water is our recreation and a beauty for our eyes to see. May we use it wisely and never take it for granted ... May we always respect this gift ... which continually returns to you and which you continually return to us ... remind[ing] us of the very gift of life itself that comes from you and returns to you (quoted in Rasmussen, 2013:278).

The Eucharist too “is pregnant with endless possibilities” for a profound sense of communion (Chryssavgis, 2019:92). In the view of Pope Francis (2015:172), “it is also a source of light and motivation for our environmental concerns, directing us to be stewards of all creation”. In our present “dog eats dog society” (Wallace in Chryssavgis, 2019:166), food consumption – in addition to its consequential vices of gluttony, greed, waste and indifference – “comprises the single, most striking factor in ecological exploitation and economic inequality”, argues Chryssavgis (2019:125). The Eucharist<sup>13</sup> leads us to adopt gratefulness as our guide for living (Rasmussen, 2013:263), illuminates food as a symbol of communion and relationships, and challenges us to work toward a just society with adequate basic food supplies for everyone (Chryssavgis, 2019:92-93, 126). We engage in “food-web thinking”, considering the flow of food – from production to our plates – and carefully reflect on how “we fit into *it*, not just it into us” (Rasmussen, 2013:265). We also understand the value of a meal prepared together<sup>14</sup>, being wholesome for both body and soul – being a sacrament (Rasmussen, 2013:26). Finally, we offer thanks to God before and after each meal whereby we remind ourselves of our dependence on Him, strengthen our appreciation for creation’s gifts, acknowledge those labouring to ensure its provision, and re-affirm our solidarity with the needy (Francis, 2015:165).

The above discussion demonstrates that web-of-life sacramentalism is “the antithesis of the working cosmology and theology of the institutions and practices that created the modern world” – domination, objectification, commodification, greed, ingratitude and alienation (Rasmussen, 2013:262) – and it embraces communion (Chryssavgis, 2019:166). Referring to the U.S. Catholic Bishops, Rasmussen (2013:262) declares: “In a time when humans are estranged from ‘the natural scale and rhythms of life on earth’ by economic and technological super-development, ‘a vision of a sacramental universe ... can contribute to making the earth a home for the human family once again’”.

### **Ascetic tradition**

According to an ascetic worldview “[t]he spirit of restraint or renunciation places essential and fundamental limits on human greed ... which accounts for the ... exploitation and devastation of the earth’s resources” (Zizioulas, 2019:xi). The conviction that “less is more” is an ancient lesson found in various religious traditions (Francis, 2015:162). As corrective practice we repent from only taking, to return to a world in which we also give (Bartholomew in Rasmussen, 2013:247). The opposite of consumption, extravagance and waste, ascetism<sup>15</sup> is built on the

---

<sup>12</sup> An early morning prayer by the Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo (from northern New Mexico), starting their annual feast with a procession to the Chama River, blessing the waters, desert and people (Rasmussen, 2013:277).

<sup>13</sup> Or *Eucharistia*, the Greek word for *thanksgiving* (Rasmussen, 2013:263).

<sup>14</sup> As opposed to a “commodious TV dinner” or a “convenience ready-made meal” (Rasmussen, 2013:269).

<sup>15</sup> Rasmussen (2013:249-250) makes it very clear that ascetism’s “not of this world” trait does not imply a sense of “anti-creation”, and as Bartholomew (in Rasmussen, 2013:247) states, “not a flight from society and the world” either. Referring to Eagleton, Chryssavgis (2019:176) notes that keeping nature “at a distance, at arm’s length” suggests not a separation between the latter and humankind, but an understanding that all created beings exist in itself and for its Creator, over and above its benefit to the



principles of generosity and fairness, resulting in compassion and communion (Chryssavgis, 2019:169). It thus implies a revert to egalitarian, simple lifestyles, rejecting excess and exploitation, and living harmoniously with nature and fellow humans – in short, it represents “a restoration of paradise” (Ruether, 1994:188).

Ascetism, according to Zizioulas (2019:xi), “springs from a loving heart and the conviction that between the natural world and ourselves there is an organic unity and fundamental interdependence that makes us share a common fate just as we have the same Creator”. We are convicted to respect and treat creation through resignation, repentance and restoration (Chryssavgis, 2013:124, 179). We need to re-socialise ourselves spiritually – “away from our present materialistic consumer spirituality and toward a new ‘materialistic’ (in the sense of matter-respecting) creation spirituality” (Becker, 1992:159). Sacrifice, generosity, a spirit of sharing and a focus on creation’s needs instead of our own liberate us from consumption, greed and wastefulness (Bartholomew in Francis, 2015:8). Pope Francis (2015:163) puts this into perspective:

[T]hose who enjoy more and live better each moment are those who have given up ... always [being] on the look-out for what they do not have. They experience what it means to appreciate each person and each thing, learning familiarity with the simplest things and how to enjoy them. So they are able to shed unsatisfied needs, reducing their obsessiveness and weariness. Even living on little, they can live a lot ... (Francis, 2015:163).

In on our contemporary overpopulated world, ascetic self-denial is “a mandatory pathway to sustainability”, according to Rasmussen (2013:248-249). Yet, renunciation and annunciation are equally important: by saying “no” to our present destructive lifestyle we say “yes” to one lived in gratitude. He further holds that such moral freedom, self-restraint and self-control can only be attained through practise, striving and discipline – it is “a daily contestation and search for the genuine self in God” which can be attained through frugality, abstinence, asserted poverty, solitude, prayer, fasting and a community communism of love and labour.

Apart from being less self-centred and more focused on others and God, detachment<sup>16</sup> teaches us to relinquish destructive commodious habits and shedding “excess luggage in order to travel and tread more lightly” (Chryssavgis, 2019:178). Fasting entails sharing with joy and gratitude, living for communion as well as recognising God’s face in creation (Chryssavgis, 2019:124-125). Contemplative rest – away from work and personal gain – arranges everything into perspective, enables us to see the bigger picture, makes us sensitive to others’ needs and motivates our concern for the rest of creation (Francis, 2015:173). Modern society placed special emphasis on human privileges for way too long – we now have to simplify our lives and lessen our use of resources (Delio, 2008:79). A return to simplicity nurtures our appreciation for the small things in life and averts us from succumbing to unhappiness over the things we do not possess (Francis, 2015:173). In summary, then, the ascetic life is about “travelling light<sup>17</sup> ... letting go<sup>18</sup> ... opening up<sup>19</sup>... softening up<sup>20</sup> ... treading light<sup>21</sup> ... living simply<sup>22</sup> ... [and] simply living<sup>23</sup>” (Chryssavgis, 2003:28-29).

---

rest of the ecosystem. He affirms: “Ascetism, then, aims at refinement, not ... destruction. Its goal is moderation, not repression. Its content is positive, not negative. It looks to service, not selfishness – to reconciliation, not ... escape” (Chryssavgis, 2003:29).

<sup>16</sup> In Chryssavgis’ view, detachment is “the starting point and ending point of authentic living and authentic action, a state where we are no longer conditioned by the burden of necessity but prepared for the novelty and surprise of grace” (2019:78-179).

<sup>17</sup> Managing with less (Chryssavgis, 2003:28).

<sup>18</sup> Renouncing our desire to control (Chryssavgis, 2003:28).

<sup>19</sup> Creating bonds, reuniting and reconciling (Chryssavgis, 2003:28).

<sup>20</sup> Making our communities more inhabitable (Chryssavgis, 2003:28).

<sup>21</sup> Refraining from hurting our environment (Chryssavgis, 2003:28).

<sup>22</sup> Refraining from complicating relationships and consuming less (Chryssavgis, 2003:29).

<sup>23</sup> Refraining from competing against nature and others for survival (Chryssavgis, 2003:29).



Chryssavgis (2019:29) concludes: “Without ascetism none of us is authentically human”.

### Wisdom tradition

Wisdom traditions are embedded in all religions and cultures (Rasmussen, 2013:335). In Christianity, *sofia* – the personification of wisdom – “includes the issue of God’s relationship with creation, [and] is inextricably linked to a sense of wonder, perceived as an expression of fascination with the mystery of nature and a corrective to the folly with which we have treated creation” (Chryssavgis, 2019:69). Wisdom may thus be understood as God’s presence speaking in revelation (Ruether, 1994:231). It is built on the premise that everything bears the seed of God, representing His immanence in creation. The world exists outside of God, yet is in Him. It is wholly other than God, while also belonging to Him (Chryssavgis, 2019:74-75).

Wisdom, in the view of Eliot (in Rasmussen, 2013:332), “may be *the* biblical eco-theology and ethic. Creation is a teacher of wisdom; measured human responsibility follows”. Careful, patient observation of and learning from nature’s patterns are therefore necessary in order to act accordingly (Rasmussen, 2013:334). Such acts include “[d]iscernment, insight, clear eyes, acquiring skills ... learning prudence ... acquiring a sense of the worth and dignity of all life ... suffering and sacrifice” (Rasmussen, 2013:335).

The Bible itself is an exhaustive source of wisdom.<sup>24</sup> Pope Francis (2015:49) heeds the dangers of scriptural misinterpretation, such as dominion understood as domination, and draws particular attention to correct interpretation of Scripture considering earth-keeping. He holds that the biblical wisdom tradition calls for a retrieval of and respect for nature’s rhythms inscribed by the Creator. The latter can be perceived, for example, in keeping the law of the Sabbath, as well as the Jubilee celebration (Francis, 2015:52-53). Rasmussen (2013:343) concurs: “Sabbath is Wisdom’s word of life that comes by opening ourselves to God”. He notes that such “repeated practices that tap something essential about human experience and creation’s ways to give direction and meaning” may be illustrated through any religious practice “associated with weekly, seasonal or annual festivals and the liturgical marking of time and meaning” (Rasmussen, 2013:340).

Rasmussen (2013:333) also observes the deep earth-healing wisdom traditions contained in various biblical writings, including the book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Job and Psalms. Newell (1999), for example, draws from the latter two books and compiles practical contemplative exercises aiding the connection between prayerful awareness of God and the mystery of creation. The seven exercises are derived from the seven days of Creation. Day one’s exercise, celebrating God’s light, is a meditation on Psalm 43: *Send out your light; let it bring me to your dwelling*. The second exercise, embracing God’s wildness, calls for reflection on Psalm 104: *You ride on the wings of the wind*. Exercise three, emphasising God’s fecundity, calls for a silent repetition of the words, *The earth is full of your goodness*, drawn from Psalm 33. *You give birth to the lights of the skies*, contained in Job 38, pertains to reflection on God’s harmony. Day five’s exercise rejoices over God’s creatureliness, and requires contemplation over Job 12: *Ask the creatures, they will tell you*. The sixth exercise, celebrating the image of God, requires prayerful meditation on Psalm 8: *I have crowned you with dignity*. The seventh and most important exercise relates to God’s stillness, and calls for silent repetition of words derived from Psalm 46: *Be still and know that I am God*. This particular exercise shows an authentic expression of appreciation for the work of the Creator, and assists in establishing a more desirable balance with God, the self, nature and other human beings.

Focusing on the book of Job, Hayden (1996:78-81) believes that we can also gather an immensity of spiritual wisdom from Job’s ecological consciousness. He regards it a remarkable story that humbles us before the mystery of creation: an eco-centred universe is exalted over

---

<sup>24</sup> Rasmussen (2013:336) adds: “The forms of Sophia’s instruction vary widely. The form may be, and often is, a collection of didactic sayings and stories or questions that teach life lessons. They are practical, accessible, easily remembered, pithy and to the point”.



an ego-centred one. After losing his children, wealth and health for no apparent reason, Job curses the day he was born. God accuses Job of arrogance, of only considering human life and not understanding the complex functioning of the cosmos. After pausing and listening to God's voice encapsulated in the whirlwind and discerning His presence in the interdependent elements of creation – clouds, thunderstorms, lightning, lions, antelopes, oxen, ostriches, horses, hawks, vultures, bulls and serpents – Job confesses and repents of his ingratitude of and disregard for nature's beauty and complexity, and is converted from an ego-centred to an eco-centred consciousness.

Apparent from the above examples, the importance of the wisdom tradition for ecological healing is clearly discernible. The words of Brown (in Rasmussen, 2013:256) therefore holds true: "Wisdom seeks both the common good and the common God; it fosters reverence of the creator of all and cultivates 'justice, righteousness and equity'".<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusion

Exploring contemporary ecological threats in the context of human sin grants us a renewed understanding of our relation to God and creation and directs us toward tapping into existing spiritual traditions to appropriately respond to such threats. We learn that a comprehensive ecological spirituality is needed to call us to conversion and to rethink the state of our present relationships – with God, fellow humans and nature – and employ this as foundation in awakening our ecological consciousness, reshaping our attitudes and transforming our lifestyles, bearing the centrality of eco-justice in mind. Environmental care stretches beyond religious-, denominational-, confessional- and doctrinal boundaries. In fact, we need to delve deep into each other's diverse traditions to discover the ideal practises for our individual contexts, as Ruether (2011:363) states, "We need to learn to reread these great traditions", applying them in our worship, liturgy, sacraments, preaching, bible study, education, doing business, and our everyday life and relationships. Through these practises we learn the art of showing deep respect and gratitude for all of God's work, which supports us in our spiritual journey to effectively carry out His purpose for our lives.

Jung (1993:54, 89-105) maintains that the earth is God's home and our home. As the appointed stewards, we need to carry out some serious homemaking. In relation to God, we must continually allow Him to lure us into His presence and work on earth. In relating to our inner selves we must never be self-destructive but always build ourselves up in the wisdom of the Creator. In relation to other species we should respect animals, plants, and non-sentient life, as our flourishing depends on theirs. Finally, in relation to others we should treat them with respect, equality, always prepared to forgive and heal broken relationships. Much destruction and devastation could have been prevented had we adjusted our worldview according to this vision ages ago, yet there is not a more perfect time to start than the present: "Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life" (Earth Charter, 2000).

## References

- Baillie, D.M. (1963). *God was in Christ. An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement*, Faber and Faber: London.
- Becker, W.H. (1992). Ecological Sin, *Theology Today*, 49(2), 152-164.
- Beers, R.A., et al. (Ed.) (1991). *The Life Application Study Bible*, Tyndale House: Wheaton.

---

<sup>25</sup> Based on Proverbs 1:3.



- Birch, B.C. & Rasmussen, L. (1978). *The Predicament of the Prosperous*, Westminster: Philadelphia.
- Bruteau, B. (1997). *God's Ecstasy: The Creation of a Self-Creating World*, Crossroad: New York.
- Camara, H. (1995). *Sister Earth. Creation, Ecology & The Spirit*, New City Press: London.
- Chryssavgis, J. (2007). *Beyond the Shattered Image*, Light & Life Publishing: Minneapolis, Minnesota.
- Chryssavgis, J. (2019). *Creation as Sacrament*, T & T Clark: London.
- Chryssavgis, J. (Ed.) (2003). Introduction. *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch*, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI.
- Conradie, E.M. (2000). *Hope for the earth*, UWC: Bellville.
- Conradie, E.M. (2006). *Christianity and Ecological Theology: Resources for Further Research*, Sun Press: Stellenbosch.
- Conradie, E.M. (2017). *Redeeming Sin: Social Diagnostics amid Ecological Destruction*, Lexington Books: London.
- De Witt, C.B. (1998). *Caring for Creation. Responsible Stewardship of God's Handiwork*, Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Delio, I. (2008). *Care for Creation: A Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth*, St. Anthony Messenger: Cincinnati.
- Duke, E.O. (2020). From Christian spirituality to eco-friendliness, *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation*, 3(1), 34-38.
- Francis, St. (2015). Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* of the holy father Francis on care for our common home, [Available online at [https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si\\_en.pdf](https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf)] (21 August 2021).
- Hayden, T. (1996). *The Lost Gospel of the Earth*, Sierra Club Books: San Francisco.
- Jung, S. (1993). *We are Home. A Spirituality of the Environment*, Paulist Press: New York.
- King, P.G. & Woodyard, D.O. (1999). *Liberating Nature: Theology and Economics in a New Order*, The Pilgrim: Cleveland.
- Kourie, C. (2006). The "Turn" to Spirituality, *Acta Theologica Supplementum*, 8, 19-38.
- Martin-Schramm, J.B. & Stivers, R.L. (2003). *Christian Environmental Ethics: A Case Method Approach*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books: New York.
- McDaniel, J.B. (1995). *With Roots and Wings. Christianity in an Age of Ecology and Dialogue*, Maryknoll, Orbis Books: New York.
- McFague, S. (1993). *The Body of God: An ecological theology*, Fortress Press: Philadelphia.
- McGrath, A.E. (1999). *Christian spirituality*, Blackwell Publishers: Oxford.
- McGrath, A.E. (2002). *The Re-Enchantment of Nature*, Hodder & Stoughton: London.
- Newell, J.P. (1999). *The Book of Creation. An Introduction to Celtic Spirituality*, Canterbury Press: Norwich.



- Northcott, M.S. (1996). *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Rajotte, F. & Breuilly, E. (1992). What is the Crisis? In E. Breuilly & M. Palmer (Eds.), *Christianity and Ecology*, Cassell: New York.
- Rakoczy, S. (2009). Ecofeminist Spirituality – Of and For Life. In M. Pillay, S. Nadar & C. Le Bruyns (Eds.), *Ragbag Theologies. Essays in Honour of Denise M. Ackermann. A Feminist Theologian of Praxis*, Sun Press: Stellenbosch.
- Rasmussen, L. (2013). *Earth-Honouring Faith*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Ruether, R.R. (1994). *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, Harper-Collins: New York. (First published in 1992).
- Ruether, R.R. (1995a). The Biblical vision of the Ecological Crisis. In M.H. MacKinnon & M. McIntyre (Eds.), *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*, Sheed & Ward: Kansas City.
- Ruether, R.R. (1995b). Toward an ecological-feminist theology of nature. In M.H. MacKinnon & M. McIntyre (Eds.), *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*, Sheed & Ward: Kansas City.
- Ruether, R.R. (2003). Ecological theology: Roots in Tradition, Liturgical and Ethical Practice for Today, *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 42(3), 226-234.
- Ruether, R.R. (2011). Ecology and Theology: Ecojustice at the Center of the Church's Mission, *Interpretation*, 354-363.
- Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright, 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission.
- Smith, P. (1997). *What are they saying about Environmental Ethics?* Paulist Press: New York.
- The Earth Charter Commission (2000). The Earth Charter. Available at [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org).
- The ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version), copyright 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission.
- Volf, M. (1996). *Exclusion and Embrace. A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, Abingdon: Nashville.
- Wilber, K. (1995). *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality*, Shambala Publications: Boston.
- Wilkinson, L. (Ed.) (1991). *Earthkeeping in the 90s: Stewardship of creation*, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Wilson, J. & Law, S. (2007). *What's It All About? Global Warming. Heavyweight issues, lightweight read*, Magpie Books: London.
- Wirzba, N. (2003). *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age*, Oxford University Press: New York.
- Wolters, A.M. (1985). *Creation Regained. Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*, Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Zizioulas, J. (2019). Foreword. *John Chryssavgis: Creation as Sacrament*, T & T Clark: London.





**Conflict of Interest Statement:** *The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.*



**This article is open-access and** distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence. The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.