Pharos Journal of Theology ISSN 2414-3324 online Volume 107 (1) Regular Issue (2026)

Ecotheology as a Paradigm for the Renewal of Christian Religious Education in Building Ecological Ethics and Responsibility

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https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.107.29

Abstract

The global ecological crisis calls for a theological and pedagogical paradigm that responds to environmental degradation. This study explores ecotheology as a paradigm for renewing Christian Religious Education in shaping ecological ethics and responsibility grounded in faith. Using a descriptive qualitative approach through literature review, the study examines the relationship between creation theology, ecological spirituality, and faith education praxis. Findings show that reconstructing Christian theology toward ecological awareness fosters spiritual and moral transformation. Integrating ecotheology into education encourages contextual learning, environmental care, and ecological character formation. Teachers and institutions serve as agents of ecological transformation, while eco-theological ethics unify faith reflection, prayer, and ecological action. The study concludes that eco-theological-based Christian education is both theologically relevant and practically urgent to address environmental crises, positioning ecotheology as a core element of faith education to nurture faithful, ecologically responsible stewards of creation.

Keywords: ecotheology, Christian Religious Education, ecological ethics, Christian spirituality

Introduction

The issue of environmental crisis has become a global concern that demands more serious theological attention. Various ecological disasters such as global warming, water pollution, and deforestation indicate a disconnection between humanity and the rest of creation. In the context of Christian theology, this relationship should be understood as part of the divine mandate to care for the earth, as written in Genesis 2:15. However, religious practices have often been trapped in an anthropocentric spirituality that neglects ecological responsibility. Therefore, the emergence of the idea of 'ecotheology' is essential to restore Christian faith to an integrated ecological awareness. Ecotheology emphasizes the importance of integrating faith, ethics, and responsibility toward creation (Conradie, 2020).

The concept of ecotheology does not merely concern the physical preservation of nature but also involves the spiritual and moral dimensions of humanity as the image of God. Ecological awareness within Christian faith encourages believers to understand that all creation possesses intrinsic value before God. Ecotheology demands a transformation of theological thinking toward an understanding that salvation encompasses all creation, not only humanity (Drummond, 2008). Within this framework, religious education plays a crucial role in instilling ethical values grounded in love for creation. Christian Religious Education can serve as a medium for shaping ecological character among learners through the integration of faith and

social responsibility toward nature. Thus, theology and education cannot be separated in building a holistic ecological spirituality.

The Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Nasaruddin Umar, recently emphasized that ecotheology should become a new paradigm for Religious Higher Education Institutions in nurturing a generation with both spiritual and ecological awareness (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2025). However, the implementation of this paradigm in Indonesia faces several contextual challenges, including the tension between rapid industrial expansion and community ecological resilience, particularly in regions affected by extractive industries. Additionally, the diverse religious, cultural, and socio-political landscapes across Indonesian provinces often lead to differing levels of receptiveness toward ecological initiatives. These complexities require Christian Religious Education to formulate eco-theological strategies that are context-sensitive and capable of addressing local environmental issues while remaining aligned with national educational policies. This indicates that the government has begun to recognize the vital role of theology in addressing environmental issues. The eco-theological paradigm positions religious education not only as the transmission of spiritual values but also as a means of cultivating contextual ecological ethics. Amid modernity and moral degradation, ecotheology-based education serves as a strategic approach to form individuals who are wise stewards of the earth. Within the context of Christian Religious Education, this paradigm offers new direction for educational praxis oriented toward the renewal of creation. The implementation of ecotheology can thus serve as a bridge linking faith, knowledge, and social action for sustainable living.

Christian Religious Education carries the mandate not only to build theological knowledge but also to nurture moral and spiritual awareness that is responsible toward God's creation. Therefore, the integration of ecotheology into Christian Religious Education represents a concrete expression of faith working through love toward the earth and all its creatures. Ecological spirituality rooted in the biblical text calls humans to see the earth as a living community characterized by interdependence (Habel and Trudinger, 2008). This expands the horizon of theological education from merely teaching doctrine to shaping an ethical way of life that glorifies God through environmental preservation. Contextual Christian education must cultivate the awareness that ecological care is an integral part of faithful obedience. In this light, ecotheology becomes the foundation for transforming education toward a more humanistic and ecological paradigm. In practice, the application of ecotheology in Christian education requires a transformation of both pedagogical and curricular paradigms. Christian teachers and educational institutions need to design learning processes that instill ecological values through faith experiences, social projects, and theological reflection. Integrating science and theology is key to developing ecological ethics that balance faith and scientific rationality (Southgate, 2008). Ecotheology-oriented education also invites students to understand that caring for the environment is an act of service to God. Thus, the Christian Religious Education curriculum can be directed toward fostering ecological awareness rooted in Christian spirituality. This will produce generations who are not only theologically knowledgeable but also ecologically wise.

Considering the development of thought and practice discussed above, it is clear that ecotheology offers a relevant paradigm for renewing Christian Religious Education in this era of environmental crisis. This paradigm demands the integration of theology, ethics, and educational praxis in cultivating the ecological consciousness of believers. Through this approach, Christian faith can be manifested in concrete actions to preserve creation as an expression of love for God. Ecotheology-oriented Christian Religious Education can serve as a transformative agent for both the church and society in fostering sustainable ecological ethics. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze how ecotheology functions as a paradigm for renewing Christian Religious Education in developing ecological ethics and responsibility. The focus lies in exploring the theological, pedagogical, and practical foundations of applying the eco-theological paradigm within contemporary Christian education.

Literature Review

The Development of Ecotheology as a Theological Discourse

Ecotheology emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century as a theological response to the growing global ecological crisis. It seeks to reinterpret Christian doctrines in light of the interdependence between humanity and creation. Jürgen Moltmann, through *God in Creation*, introduced the notion of *panentheism*, emphasizing that God's presence permeates all creation and that nature itself participates in divine reality (Moltmann, 1985). This idea challenges the dualistic worldview that separates God, humanity, and nature. Similarly, Conradie (2020) argues that ecotheology performs two critical tasks simultaneously: providing a theological critique of ecological degradation and offering an ecological critique of traditional theology. These contributions form the foundation for a theological paradigm that views creation as sacred and inherently valuable in God's salvific plan.

In addition, Deane-Drummond (2020) highlights that ecotheology functions not only as environmental ethics but also as a renewed way of knowing God through creation. Her integration of theology and ecological science promotes a participatory relationship between faith and the natural world. John B. Cobb Jr., one of the founders of process theology, reinforces this by proposing a relational ontology that affirms the intrinsic worth of all beings (Cobb, 2002). These thinkers collectively transformed the theological conversation, shifting from anthropocentrism toward a creation-centered worldview in which divine revelation is mediated through the ecological community of life.

Ecotheology and Christian Education

The intersection of ecotheology and Christian Religious Education reflects the growing awareness that faith formation must include ecological responsibility. According to David T. Williams (2021), Christian education should nurture believers who not only know doctrine but also embody ecological spirituality. Theological education that neglects environmental awareness risks producing faith that is detached from social and ecological realities. Theological education that neglects environmental awareness risks producing faith that is detached from social and ecological realities, a concern echoed by scholars who contend that ecological crises are fundamentally moral crises demanding theological engagement (Ojeifo, 2025). Likewise, ignoring the ecological dimensions of human existence results in a theology that fails to address the concrete conditions of life on a threatened planet (McFague, 2008). Christian education should provide opportunities for students to engage in spiritual practices that nurture respect and reverence for all living beings, recognizing that every aspect of creation reflects the presence of the divine (Mahfiana, 2025).

Several studies show that the inclusion of ecological themes in Christian education improves students' environmental awareness and ethical sensitivity. Research by Pangihutan and Jura (2023) emphasizes that Christian education must treat the environmental crisis as a religious issue rather than merely a social one. Their findings indicate that integrating ecotheology within the curriculum helps learners understand faith as both theological conviction and ecological vocation. Furthermore, King (2021) demonstrates that experiential learning activities, such as ecological retreats and service projects, deepen moral reflection and foster lasting ecological ethics among students. Thus, ecotheology provides an essential framework for transforming Christian education into an agent of ecological renewal.

Eco-theological Paradigms in Curriculum and Pedagogy

The pedagogical implications of ecotheology call for reimagining how Christian Religious Education structures its curriculum and learning methods. Traditional models often prioritize doctrinal transmission over transformative learning, resulting in a gap between faith and

ecological action. Butarbutar, et al. (2025) propose a thematic integrated curriculum that connects biblical studies, ethics, and environmental education through experiential projects. This approach aligns with the principle of 'faith-in-action,' where students encounter God's presence through engagement with creation.

According to Edwards (2019), creation theology grounded in ecological spirituality helps students reinterpret Scripture as a call to stewardship rather than domination. Such an approach enables teachers to combine theological reflection with contextual ecological practices. Research by Schade (2019) further supports this pedagogical shift, emphasizing that collaboration between schools, churches, and communities strengthens the integration of ecological theology in both theory and practice. These models suggest that ecotheology should not remain an abstract theological idea but must be embodied in learning experiences that cultivate ecological consciousness, moral responsibility, and faith-based environmental activism.

Research Gap and Theoretical Contribution of This Study

While previous scholarship has established the theological and ethical basis of ecotheology, few studies have systematically explored its integration into Christian Religious Education within the Indonesian context. Most existing works focus on Western theological frameworks or treat ecology as a supplement to moral education rather than as central components of faith formation, as exemplified in works like *For the Beauty of the Earth* (Bouma-Prediger, 2010) and *The Travail of Nature* (Santmire, 1985), which analyze ecological ethics and theology without fully integrating these perspectives into localized Christian educational practices, while traditional moral education theories, such as those of James Michael Lee, often marginalize ecological responsibility. This study contributes by reconstructing Christian theology toward ecological awareness and applying it pedagogically through curriculum, teacher formation, and institutional transformation. It positions ecotheology as a 'paradigm of renewal' that unites theological reflection, educational praxis, and spiritual transformation.

The present research advances the discourse by emphasizing that ecological consciousness in Christian education is not an optional theme but a constitutive dimension of faith formation. By combining theological hermeneutics and educational analysis, this study provides a holistic framework for understanding how Christian Religious Education can serve as a transformative platform for cultivating ecological ethics and spirituality in contemporary society.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method to explore how the eco-theological paradigm can be integrated into Christian Religious Education as a form of theological and pedagogical renewal. Data were collected through a literature review of books, theological journal articles, and relevant educational policy documents. This approach enables the researcher to gain a deep understanding of the theological meanings and practical implications of the ecotheology concept within the context of Christian faith education.

The analysis was conducted using a theological hermeneutical approach, interpreting theological and pedagogical texts within the relational framework between faith and ecological responsibility. Qualitative research is exploratory and interpretive in nature (Creswell, 2018), making it suitable for uncovering conceptual meanings and normative values within religious practices. Thus, this method serves to critically reveal how ecotheology can function as a paradigm of renewal in Christian Religious Education, aiming to build ecological ethics and responsibility amid the global environmental crisis.

Result and Discussion

Reconstructing Christian Theology Toward Ecological Awareness

The reconstruction of Christian theology within an ecological context implies a renewal of theological perspectives that were once anthropocentric toward a paradigm that recognizes creation as an integral part of God's salvific plan. Traditional views often separate humanity from nature and interpret the dominion mandate in Genesis as a license for exploitation. However, the contemporary environmental crisis demands renewed reflection on the doctrines of creation, the fall, and eschatology through the lens of the human–nature relationship. Eco-theological thinkers argue that the relationship between God, humanity, and creation is inseparable, and theology must reconstruct the narrative of creation inclusively. Within this framework, ecological awareness becomes a theological goal to be realized rather than a mere ethical supplement. This transformation must be supported by an interpretive approach to Scripture that is ecologically sensitive.

However, it is also important to acknowledge critiques directed toward ecotheology, particularly from theologians within conservative evangelical circles such as those represented by The Gospel Coalition (Coalition, 2025). Some critics argue that certain strands of ecotheology risk reframing Christian doctrine in ways that dilute essential teachings about sin, salvation, and the uniqueness of Christ by overemphasizing creation themes or expanding theological categories beyond their biblical boundaries. Others caution that ecotheology can unintentionally elevate ecological concerns to a quasi-theological status, thereby shifting Christian attention away from the centrality of the gospel toward a more horizontal ethical agenda. These critiques insist that any ecological reinterpretation must remain accountable to biblical authority, historic confessions, and the theological coherence of Christian doctrine. Engaging these concerns ensures that the reconstruction of Christian theology does not drift toward theological reductionism but remains deeply rooted in the core of Christian orthodoxy. Therefore, incorporating these critical voices strengthens academic rigor and helps ensure that eco-theological development proceeds within a faithful and balanced theological framework.

Critique of Anthropocentrism

One crucial aspect of this reconstruction is a theological critique of anthropocentrism that neglects the intrinsic value of creation. Ecotheology carries a dual critical task: offering an ecological critique of Christian tradition and a Christian critique of ecological destruction (Conradie, 2020). This critique calls for a revision of doctrines that position humanity as the absolute center of creation. The reconstructed theology recalls the understanding that humans are part of an interdependent ecosystem, not limitless rulers. This theological shift creates space for an inclusive theology that recognizes the worth of all created beings. Therefore, Christian theology must reassess humanity's place within the cosmos and broaden its definition of personhood in light of ecological interconnectedness.

Affirming the Intrinsic Value of Creation

Every aspect of creation possesses intrinsic value in the eyes of God, not merely instrumental value for human use. Reconstructive theology integrates the concept of the intrinsic value of creation, as reflected in John B. Cobb Jr.'s participatory ecological theology, which affirms the sacredness of all existence (Cui, 2023). According to the study The Ecological Theological Perspective of John Cobb, Cobb rejects traditional domination and proposes a model of servanthood toward all aspects of nature (Pangihutan and Jura, 2023). Based on this perspective, Christian theology must affirm that nature is not a passive background for human life but a partner in the divine narrative of salvation. This intrinsic value becomes the

theological foundation of ecological ethics that transcends utilitarian motives. The reconstruction thus transforms the human–nature relationship from utilitarian to coexistent.

The Dialectic of Creator, Humanity, and Creation

Furthermore, theological reconstruction calls for viewing the dialectical relationship between Creator, humanity, and creation from an ecological–theological standpoint. In this model, humans are not isolated agents but participants within an interactive web of life. Christian theology must be restructured to acknowledge that human actions affect the whole of creation and that creation itself manifests God's presence, consistent with the idea of natural theology. Humans are called not merely to manage but to steward responsibly within a spiritual–ecological system. From this perspective, ecological sustainability becomes an eschatological aspect of Christian faith. Such reconstruction is likely to invite believers to live out a faith that preserves and restores the harmony of creation.

In practice, reconstructed Christian theology involves re-reading biblical texts through an ecological lens that highlights themes of creation, preservation, and renewal. For example, Genesis 1 can be reinterpreted as a call to "tend" rather than "dominate" the earth (Gen. 2:15). Psalms and prophetic writings are seen as the voices of creation, both in praise and lament, so theology recognizes nature as a communicative subject before God. Argues that the ecological crisis is not merely a technical issue but a religious one requiring a reinterpretation of faith (Duc, 2023). Such textual re-engagement forms the theological foundation for developing an environmentally conscious doctrine. Thus, ancient texts become sources of contemporary ecological awareness and spiritual renewal.

Reconstructing Christian theology also carries direct ethical consequences: faith must include concrete actions to protect creation as an essential expression of belief. The ecological consciousness formed through this renewed theology gives rise to tangible ecological ethics such as simplicity, sustainable consumption, and environmental advocacy. These values do not deviate from Christian tradition but enrich its understanding of love, justice, and mercy in the context of creation. Through this reconstruction, Christian faith becomes transformative, calling both the Church and individuals to act ecologically. Authentic faith, therefore, cannot be separated from the practice of caring for the earth. Christian theology thus bears ecological responsibility as part of its divine vocation.

In conclusion, reconstructing Christian theology toward ecological awareness provides the theological, ethical, and spiritual foundation for renewing Christian Religious Education. This renewed theology establishes a framework in which Christian education moves beyond a human-centered focus toward an inclusive ecological perspective. Ecological awareness becomes an intrinsic motivation for faith-based education that fosters ethics and responsibility toward creation. The educational paradigm emerging from this reconstruction prepares a generation that is both theologically grounded and ecologically wise. Beginning from this theological foundation, Christian Religious Education gains a robust conceptual basis for integrating faith and ecology into transformative learning practices. The next section of this study will discuss concrete strategies for embedding this reconstructed theology into curriculum design, pedagogy, and church practice.

Integration of Ecotheology into the Christian Religious Education Curriculum

The integration of ecotheology into the Christian Religious Education curriculum requires a systemic change in curriculum design so that ecological themes become an inseparable part of the content of faith instruction. Existing curricula often separate doctrines of faith, moral values, and environmental dimensions, causing ecological awareness to appear as an "addition" rather than a core element. Christian education must treat the environmental crisis as a religious issue in order to achieve a deeper integration of ecological values (Pangihutan

and Jura, 2023). The curriculum should include content on the theology of creation, moral responsibility toward creation, and concrete practices such as environmental restoration ministries. This curricular adjustment also requires teacher training so that they can contextualize environmental themes effectively for learners. In addition, learning evaluation and assessment must include indicators of ecological behavior, not only cognitive outcomes.

In addition, assessment should include clear indicators of ecological behavior rather than measuring cognitive understanding alone. These indicators may include measurable practices such as consistent waste reduction habits, participation in school-based ecological projects, responsible use of water and electricity, engagement in creation-care ministries, and the ability to articulate ecological ethical reasoning in reflective journals. Such behaviors can be assessed using rubrics, observation checklists, and reflective portfolios over a defined timeframe, for example, across a semester or through multi-week project cycles to ensure that ecological values are not merely understood but embodied in daily practice.

Thematic Integrated Curriculum Model

The thematic integrated curriculum model incorporates the theme of ecotheology into various subjects of Christian Religious Education, such as the Bible, Christian ethics, and character education. Research by Imelda Butarbutar et al. demonstrates that the use of real-world projects as part of the curriculum significantly increases students' ecological awareness (Butarbutar, et. al., 2025). This thematic curriculum allows students to see the relationship between faith and the environment in everyday life, not merely as an abstract concept. The implementation of this model requires interconnected lesson planning and flexible scheduling for field-based learning activities. In addition, the thematic curriculum encourages collaboration among teachers from various disciplines (e.g., ethics, Bible studies, science, environmental education) to design shared themes. The main challenges in implementing a thematic integrated curriculum include resistance to syllabus changes and the need for adequate learning resources.

Experiential and Project-Based Learning Approach

This approach actively involves students in environmental projects such as tree planting, church garden management, or local restoration, allowing the theory of ecotheology to directly engage with real contexts. It was found that project-based learning facilitates deeper moral reflection and ecological ethics compared to lecture-based teaching (Butarbutar, et. al., 2025). Such experiential approaches also strengthen students' emotional connection with nature and foster a sense of responsibility and care. Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as facilitators of field experiences and guides for reflection. To be effective, action programs must be adapted to the students' local environmental and cultural contexts. The evaluation should consider changes in attitude and ecological behavior, not merely knowledge.

A Christian Religious Education curriculum that integrates ecotheology must also consider local cultural contexts and wisdom so that the environmental values included are relevant and not perceived as foreign by students. The use of local wisdom such as traditional forest management, river preservation practices, or local agricultural traditions can serve as concrete means to convey ecotheology. For example, several Christian communities in North Sulawesi and Papua integrate customary forest protection rituals into church-based environmental programs, demonstrating how indigenous ecological ethics can strengthen faith formation. In East Nusa Tenggara, congregations have begun incorporating traditional water-source protection practices into Sunday school lessons, linking biblical stewardship with local ecological customs. These contextual examples show that ecotheology becomes more meaningful when rooted in real practices familiar to learners. Integrating local contexts enriches students' understanding of the relationship between faith and nature (Pangihutan and Jura, 2023). A culturally sensitive curriculum also helps shape an ecological identity that is

contextual and sustainable. Teachers must be trained to understand local values and to integrate natural practices into teaching materials. This approach helps reduce the gap between educational theory and students' social realities.

In addition to content and learning approaches, teaching instruments and learning materials must be developed to support eco-theological integration. Textbooks, modules, digital resources, visual media, and outdoor activities should reflect the principles of ecotheology. For example, using media that illustrate ecosystems, videos on environmental restoration, or creative assignments involving the community. These materials not only convey ecological facts but also guide theological reflection and concrete action. Collaboration with environmental organizations and local churches can provide experiential learning resources. Challenges in developing teaching materials include limited local content, production costs, and unequal access to technology.

Strengthening Ecological Literacy and the Spirituality of Nature

The integration of ecotheology into the Christian Religious Education curriculum requires learning that focuses not only on doctrinal knowledge but also on ecological literacy deeply rooted in Christian spirituality. Ecological literacy helps students understand the interconnectedness between humans and God's creation as a theological, not merely biological, relationship. Ecological spirituality cultivates an awareness that all creation reflects the divine presence and therefore possesses a sacred value that must be respected (Godsey, 2020). Christian education that neglects this dimension risks producing a faith disconnected from ecological responsibility. Therefore, learning should be designed to nurture ecological empathy through faith reflection and direct experience. By intentionally connecting faith reflection, prayer, and concrete ecological actions, Christian learning environments ensure that ecological ethics are not treated as an external or nonspiritual component. This holistic triadic approach embeds ecological responsibility deeply within Christian spirituality, rather than positioning it as an optional moral supplement. Such an approach highlights the crucial role of Christian education institutions and teachers as transformative agents who guide learners toward integrated spiritual–ecological awareness. Thus, ecological literacy becomes a means of reviving spiritual awareness toward creation.

Ecological spirituality in the context of Christian education requires an approach that connects Scripture with the ecological realities of life. Creation theology grounded in ecological spirituality must encourage humanity to see the earth as a common home, not merely an economic resource (Edwards, 2019). Through Christian Religious Education, biblical texts such as Genesis 2:15 or Psalm 24:1 can serve as a foundation for reflection that caring for the earth is an act of obedience to God. Teachers can apply an ecological hermeneutical approach to help students grasp the spiritual meaning behind every-day ecological actions. This approach combines biblical reading with contextual ecological reflection. Hence, ecological spirituality serves as a bridge between theology, ethics, and social responsibility.

Beyond theoretical understanding, ecological literacy must be realized through concrete experiences in reflective and participatory learning activities. Research by Öhlmann & Stork shows that direct experiences in nature, such as ecological retreats or environmental service projects, strengthen students' spiritual understanding and ecological ethics (Öhlmann & Stork, 2024). In these activities, students are invited to contemplate God's presence through interaction with creation and to understand their responsibility as stewards of the earth. Teachers serve as facilitators who guide faith reflection on ecological experiences. This approach not only develops ecological knowledge but also shapes character and spiritual commitment to environmental preservation. In this way, ecological literacy and the spirituality of nature become living components of Christian faith education.

The integration of ecological literacy into the Christian Religious Education curriculum also requires assessment that measures spiritual and behavioral aspects, not just cognitive ones. Successful learning that builds ecological spirituality is always followed by changes in lifestyle and ecological habits among students. Assessment can be carried out through reflective journals, community projects, or observations of ecological practices within the school environment (Steibel, 2010). These activities help students reflect on the meaning of faith through concrete actions in caring for the earth. Education focused on ecological spirituality ultimately not only transfers knowledge but transforms faith consciousness toward a life in harmony with creation. Thus, ecological literacy and the spirituality of nature become essential pillars in realizing ecotheology as a new paradigm in Christian education.

Community and Church Collaboration in Implementing the Eco-theological Curriculum

The successful integration of ecotheology into Christian Religious Education cannot be separated from active collaboration among schools, churches, families, and local communities. However, such collaboration often faces practical challenges, including differences in institutional priorities, limited ecological literacy among community members, and inconsistent commitment between schools and churches. Some communities also struggle with economic pressures that make ecological initiatives seem secondary compared to immediate livelihood needs. These complexities require intentional coordination and long-term partnership building to ensure that collaborative efforts can be sustained. The synergy among these institutions expands the scope of ecological learning so that it does not stop in the classroom but becomes a faith movement with social impact. The church has a strategic role as a center of spiritual formation that can strengthen eco-theological practice through liturgical and environmental ministries. A church that adopts eco-theological principles can transform worship into a profound ecological reflection space for the congregation (Nche, 2023). In this way, ecological spirituality becomes not only an academic discourse but also a lived religious practice within the community of faith. This collaboration creates synergy between formal education and communal spirituality, strengthening Christian ecological awareness.

Christian schools serve as bridges between academic learning and community action through cross-institutional cooperation. Teaching environmental theology becomes more effective when accompanied by students' active involvement in church and community-based ecological projects. Programs such as green ministry or creation care week can serve as collaborative media uniting students, congregations, and communities in environmental service (Schade, 2019). These activities cultivate ecological responsibility as an expression of contextual faith. With the support of the church, schools can instill ecological spirituality in students' daily lives and within their families. This reinforces the purpose of Christian Religious Education as a means of shaping faith that has both social and ecological impact.

In addition to schools and churches, local communities play an important role in enriching the context of eco-theological education. Collaboration with local communities enables the application of eco-theological principles that align with social and cultural realities (Drummond, 2020). Christian schools can partner with indigenous communities, environmental organizations, or local governments to carry out joint conservation projects. This approach not only teaches ecological responsibility but also builds social solidarity across religious and cultural boundaries. Thus, integrating ecotheology into the curriculum strengthens the missiological dimension of the church in caring for God's creation. This collaborative model positions education as a means of sustainable spiritual and social transformation.

Effective collaboration also requires institutional policy support and visionary spiritual leadership. Spiritual leadership that is ecologically aware shapes church and school cultures oriented toward sustainability (Runtuwene, 2025). Churches can develop liturgical and pastoral policies emphasizing ecological responsibility, such as the use of environmentally

friendly resources and creation-themed worship. Christian schools can align their vision and mission statements to support ecological transformation as part of faith education. With the guidance of eco-theologically conscious spiritual leaders and educators, ecological education movements become more structured and impactful. Cross-institutional collaboration ultimately strengthens ecotheology as a spirituality lived collectively within the Christian faith community.

The implementation of ecotheology in the curriculum also requires institutional policy and religious education regulations. Schools, churches, and Christian educational institutions must establish vision and mission statements that formally include environmental awareness as part of the curriculum. Governments or religious organizations should provide regulations, curricular guidelines, and standards to ensure that the theme of ecotheology is taken seriously. Additionally, teacher training and professional development are essential to enable educators to implement new materials and pedagogies effectively. Systematic monitoring and evaluation are needed to assess how well integration is functioning and its impact on students. All curriculum components, including syllabi, learning activities, and assessments, must consistently support the eco-theological paradigm so that integration becomes a practical transformation rather than mere discourse.

The Role of Teachers and Christian Educational Institutions as Agents of Ecological Transformation

Christian Religious Education teachers hold a strategic position as agents of ecological transformation because they not only teach the content of faith but also shape students' character in the human–nature relationship. Christian Religious Education teachers build ecological awareness among young Christians through the integration of ecological material into lessons, the teachers' own environmentally friendly behavior, and school-based environmental care activities (Biaf and Tari, 2024). Teachers serve as crucial role models because their concrete practices strengthen the learning message and help students internalize the value of responsibility toward creation. Christian educational institutions (schools, churches, and mission organizations) also possess institutional capacity to support teachers through policies, facilities, and curricular structures that enable systematic environmental action. Ecological transformation cannot succeed on an individual level alone; institutional support ensures continuity and legitimacy in ecological initiatives. However, securing strong institutional support is often challenging due to competing administrative priorities, limited financial resources, and varying levels of ecological awareness among leaders. Some Christian institutions may also be hesitant to adopt ecological programs if they perceive them as secondary compared to traditional doctrinal instruction. These barriers highlight the importance of sustained advocacy, leadership formation, and strategic policy development to ensure that ecological initiatives receive long-term commitment. Therefore, teachers and institutions must work together so that the integration of ecology into faith becomes an essential part of Christian education.

Developing Teacher Competence in Stewardship and Ecological Sensitivity

The role of teachers in ecological transformation requires strong theological and ecological competence. Research about Christian Religious Education teachers in Sirombu practice theological competence in stewardship and translate it into thematic teaching and environmental project activities (Daeli and Pardede, 2025). Competent teachers not only understand biblical texts containing the mandate to care for creation but also know how to connect them to the local context and the students' ecological conditions. Such competence includes the ability to design teaching materials, faith reflections, and relevant field activities. Teachers must be trained to evaluate the ecological impact of both their lessons and students' actions. Without these competencies, integration efforts may become mere formalities without transformational impact on students' attitudes and behaviors.

Institutions as the Foundation for Environmentally Friendly Educational Structures and Culture

Christian educational institutions play a vital role in providing the structures, culture, and resources that support ecological transformation. Research that although teachers and students often have good intentions, school culture and socioeconomic conditions frequently become real obstacles to ecological practice (Cholila and Parker, 2021). Franciscan schools have tried to translate the eco-theology of St. Francis into practice, yet a significant gap remains between the teachings and local realities. Institutions need to create internal regulations such as waste reduction policies, the use of green spaces, and collaboration with local communities so that environmental action does not remain the sole responsibility of teachers. Infrastructure such as sanitation facilities, school gardens, and environmental laboratories also enhances the effectiveness of teachers who seek to implement ecological practices. An institutional culture that values nature and respects creation should become part of the transformative identity of Christian schools.

Teachers and institutions must develop learning models and activities that bridge faith and concrete ecological action. Examples include school greening projects, plastic waste management, or water conservation practices incorporated into extracurricular and curricular activities. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia notes that activities such as maintaining school cleanliness and conducting ecology-based extracurricular programs significantly enhance students' ecological awareness. Such models provide students with direct experience so that ecological values are not merely abstract concepts. Teachers act as facilitators and guides for reflection on these experiences, while institutions provide material and logistical support to ensure that activities are sustainable. Experiential practice fosters the formation of students' ecological identity as an integral part of their faith.

Christian institutions also have the responsibility to establish educational policies that sustain ecological transformation. These policies include curriculum development, operational school policies on the environment, and institutional ethical guidelines that incorporate the principle of creation care. Christian Religious Education should emerge as a cognitive and moral source for students on ecological issues, not merely as doctrinal teaching (Simon, 2021). With clear policies, institutions can ensure that the theme of ecology is not neglected or treated as an optional supplement. Regulatory support and strong commitment from institutional leaders are decisive factors in determining whether ecological initiatives will thrive or remain temporary. Policies should also include teacher training, provision of facilities, and implementation of environmental monitoring and evaluation.

Teachers and Christian educational institutions as transformative ecological agents must also serve as moral examples within the wider community. The example of teachers and schools in real actions such as waste management, the use of environmentally friendly energy, and community engagement makes the ecological message more credible. Teachers have a significant influence when they act as models of environmental behavior not only at school but also in external interactions such as community projects or public campaigns (Makrooni, et al. 2025). When institutions open opportunities for collaboration between schools and the community, ecological transformation extends beyond the school environment. Teachers and schools become centers of change that integrate faith, education, and social responsibility. Therefore, their effectiveness as agents of transformation depends greatly on the integrity and consistency of their concrete actions.

Eco-theological Ethics as the Foundation of Modern Christian Spirituality

Eco-theological ethics emphasizes that modern Christian spirituality is incomplete without responsibility toward creation as an expression of holistic faith. Ecological awareness within faith should not be treated as a mere supplementary moral activity but must become central to contemporary Christian spirituality. Such spirituality combines prayer, liturgy, and concrete

action to care for nature rather than functioning as religious ritual without ecological impact. Teresa Messias argues that ecological spirituality emerging from the eco-theological framework can expand Christian faith practices to include inner conversion and tangible action. Kathleen Fischer's study on Christian Spirituality in a Time of Ecological Awareness also highlights that genuine spirituality should engage both inner life and ecological practice (Messias, 2024). Therefore, eco-theological ethics forms the foundation that enables Christian faith to respond to environmental crises with spiritual and social integrity.

Changes in Values and Beliefs in Christian Spirituality

Eco-theological ethics demands fundamental changes in Christian values and beliefs, including how humans perceive themselves, creation, and their position within nature. Anthropocentrism has long dominated Christian theology, prioritizing humans as the center of creation. Critiquing this view opens space for a theocentric approach that respects creation as God's possession (Maulana et. al., 2024). With this shift in values, Christian faith acknowledges that humans have a moral responsibility to care for and preserve the environment as part of their spiritual duty. This new understanding encourages spiritual practices that include simplicity, environmental justice, and solidarity with other living beings. Transformed Christian spirituality does not focus solely on personal salvation but also on the salvation of creation as a whole. Awareness of these revised values and beliefs becomes the ethical foundation for ecological action.

Spiritual Practices Realized in Environmental Ethics

Eco-theological ethics requires concrete practices that reflect ecological spirituality in the daily lives of Christians. "Green Church" communities, and environmental faith education as tangible expressions of Christian ecological ethics (Sabdono, 2024). Through these practices, Christians are invited not only to cognitively understand creation doctrine but also to participate in environmental restoration and preservation. Engagement in activities such as forest conservation, waste management, water conservation, or tree planting strengthens faith spirituality through concrete action. Liturgy that incorporates environmental elements encourages reflection on creation as part of worship. Evaluating ecological spirituality must also consider attitudes, actions, and responsibility toward nature.

Developing Ecological Awareness and Spiritual Conversion

Eco-theological ethics stimulates a deeper spiritual conversion that goes beyond outward behavioral change to transform the heart and mind. "Ecological conversion" reflects a shift in how humans view creation as valuable from a divine perspective, not merely as a resource (Messias, 2024). This conversion involves acknowledging past mistakes such as environmental exploitation and committing to living in harmony with creation. Modern Christian spirituality should foster awareness that the human–nature relationship is part of a religious mission. This ecological awareness is not merely social responsibility but a faith response to the divine call to care for the earth. Spiritual conversion also involves the faith community as a shared space for reflection, repentance, and ecological action.

Eco-theological ethics as the foundation of Christian spirituality carries theological implications. One implication is that doctrines of salvation and eschatology must be reconsidered in light of a polluted creation and the call for its restoration. Emphasizes the need to move beyond strong anthropocentrism and to recognize that creation is not merely a backdrop for human salvation but part of the divine narrative awaiting restoration (Deckers, 2004). This perspective encourages the church and its members to maintain eschatological hope not as an escape from a damaged world but as active engagement in creation's restoration. Understanding creation as a theological vocabulary also helps Christians recognize that caring for the environment is an act of worship. Eco-theological ethics fosters

dialogue between faith and environmental science, enriching modern Christian spirituality with scientific insights on environmental crises.

Eco-theological ethics implies that modern Christian spirituality must be lived in community, not only as an individual experience. Healthy environmental spirituality requires local churches, Christian educational institutions, and faith communities to provide contexts for shared ecological practice. Church traditions have historical potential to build theological cultures that support environmental preservation, but this must be reinforced by consistent leadership within faith communities (Purwanto and Silalahi, 2024). Churches that incorporate natural elements in worship, environmental programs, and community engagement provide tangible spaces for practicing eco-theological ethics. Community involvement allows collective learning, mutual support, reflection, and moral responsibility toward creation. Such spirituality fosters a shared ecological identity that goes beyond doctrinal theology to lived daily experience.

Eco-theological ethics as the foundation of modern Christian spirituality integrates faith, values, and action into a holistic unity of belief. Ecological spirituality is inseparable from Christian faith, encompassing doctrines of creation, salvation, and moral calling. Changes in values, spiritual practices, inner conversion, theological consequences, and community engagement all form part of this foundation. With eco-theological ethics as a base, modern Christianity can offer spirituality relevant to contemporary environmental challenges. It also opens space for Christian Religious Education to apply this renewed paradigm concretely in faith education. The following section will examine how eco-theological ethics translates into pedagogical and curricular implications.

Conclusion

Based on the entire discussion, it can be concluded that ecotheology represents a fundamental paradigm for the renewal of Christian Religious Education in addressing the global environmental crisis while simultaneously fostering a contextual and transformative Christian spirituality. This paradigm requires a reconstruction of Christian theology toward ecological awareness that affirms the intrinsic value of all creation, shifts the traditional anthropocentric orientation to a theocentric perspective, and positions humans as responsible stewards of the earth, where humans are no longer viewed as unrestricted rulers exploiting nature but as part of an interdependent web of creation, in which every action carries ecological and spiritual implications. The integration of ecotheology into the Christian Religious Education curriculum through thematic and experiential learning models enables students to perceive the connection between faith and the environment concretely, while instruction that combines ecological literacy, eco-spirituality, and direct experiences in nature fosters ecological awareness rooted in faith, moral values, and social responsibility. Teachers and Christian educational institutions play strategic roles as agents of ecological transformation through theological and pedagogical competencies that link faith with tangible action, alongside structural and cultural support for environmentally friendly education. Moreover, eco-theological ethics forms the foundation of modern Christian spirituality, emphasizing that true faith cannot be separated from responsibility toward creation, integrating prayer, faith reflection, liturgy, and concrete action as expressions of holistic faith, while ecological conversion transforms not only external behaviors but also the heart and mind, promoting awareness of the human–nature relationship. Therefore, ecotheology is not merely a theological concept but an educational, spiritual, and social movement guiding Christians toward an ecologically just, sustainable, and responsible life, cultivating a generation that is theologically knowledgeable, ecologically wise, able to internalize responsibility for creation, and lives out their faith in practical actions that preserve the earth as an expression of love for God.

Although this study provides a comprehensive conceptual exploration of ecotheology within Christian Religious Education, it remains limited by its reliance on literature-based analysis without empirical field data. The absence of case studies or classroom-based observations means that the practical effectiveness of eco-theological approaches in diverse educational settings still needs to be verified. Future research could explore how ecotheology is implemented in actual school or church contexts, including ethnographic studies, teacher training evaluations, or student behavioral outcomes. Further investigation may also examine cross-denominational differences in ecological theology or develop measurable frameworks for assessing ecological spirituality among learners. These directions would strengthen the empirical foundation of eco-theological pedagogy and broaden its applicability in Christian education.

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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.*