

Ecological crisis and the church: A proposal for biblical stewardship as a nexus for environmental protection



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There is a growing global concern for environmental issues, and stakeholders, including governments, are trying to address the situation in various ways. However, not many churches are involved in climate change endeavours, regardless of the prevalence of eco-theologies that challenge them to act as responsible custodians of God's creation. Given this, the aim of this article was to propose and discuss biblical stewardship as a nexus for environmental protection. This literature-based study reviewed existing studies on the current ecological concerns. The study investigated how various stakeholders, including the World Council of Churches (WCC), as a representative voice of many churches, were combating environmental degradation. Further, the article discussed stewardship from a biblical redemptive historical approach, so as to challenge the Church and, consequently, Christians to start partaking in environmental protection initiatives, or continue to do so. The article concluded by advancing that if the Church adheres to its holistic mission, instead of solely focussing on evangelism, it would be possible for society to practise sustainable environmental management.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The article focussed on current ecological crisis and Church responses. It discussed the concept of biblical stewardship from systematic and missional theological perspectives, so as to stimulate the Church to join other stakeholders in seeking ways to address the pervasive environmental concerns. The article contributed to environmental discourse by examining the existing literature on the current ecological concerns and evaluating various stakeholders' efforts in combating related disaster.

Keywords: God; ecosystem; environment; biblical stewardship; global warming; climate change; climate-related disasters; World Council of Churches; Church responses to environmental concerns; Christocentric ethics.

Introduction and study background: Terrain sketch and problem identification

There is no doubt that some faith communities across the world are contributing to the local, national and global efforts to address the current ecological crisis. The Church is viewed as an integral part of the society that cannot afford to ignore multi-layered effects of climate change and global warming. For instance, in a document titled *Climate change: A challenge to the churches in South Africa*, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) (2009:16–17) recognises the existing global Christian responses to climate change. Firstly, it states that some congregations in South Africa and other parts of the world have introduced earth keeping concerns in their services (i.e., the World Environment Day on 05 June) and other diverse facets of worship. Secondly, the idea of an 'eco-congregation', which began in some United Kingdom (UK) churches, is now being adopted by certain congregations in South Africa and other parts of the world. Thirdly, some of these churches have introduced earth keeping projects, such as tree planting, water harvesting, organic vegetable gardens, recycling, indigenous church gardens and graveyard campaigns. The projects include the following (SACC 2009):

[O]f outdoor youth and family activities to promote the love of nature, nature conservation projects focusing on habitat, wildlife or indigenous plants, job creation projects in the field of appropriate technology, the development of teaching material and networks to communicate such work to others. (pp. 16–17)

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned responses, it is apparent that many churches are not doing much to combat climate change and global warming. This point is validated by the SACC (2009), which affirms that:

There may be some who suppose that climate change is scarcely on the agenda of the church, that Christians are 'silent' on climate change and that virtually nothing is being done in this regard. In many

The Church And The Ecological Crisis

Kwasi Nyamekye



The Church And The Ecological Crisis:

The Church and the Ecological Crisis Henlee H. Barnette, 1972 *The Church and the Ecological Crisis*, By Henlee H. Barnette Henlee H. Barnette, 1972 **The Green Model of the Church** Jose Mathew Vayalil, 2018 The Church is defined in terms of models None of the existing models of the Church have incorporated ecological concerns into its theological framework Therefore there is a lack of a model of the Church that incorporates ecological concerns of the time The Green Model of the Church fills a lacuna in Catholic ecclesiology It is an appropriate theological response to the ecological crisis of our times In other words the book is an attempt to read the Church from the perspective of an eco theologian It is a green reading of the Church dogmas Theology is both faith seeking understanding and faith seeking intelligent action Theology is not for showcasing but for intelligent action aimed at social change The purpose of this scholarly work is to build a bridge between biological sciences and theological sciences towards a meaningful social change It will be of use to those who function at the grass root level in the sphere of ecology and the Church c From book jacket **Religion and Ecological Crisis** Md. Abu Sayem, 2022-09-02 Religion and Ecological Crisis delves into the complex relationship between religions and ecology presenting Christian and Islamic perspectives on ecological issues through the work of John Boswell Cobb and Seyyed Hossein Nasr It examines how faith traditions of the world see and respond to our current unprecedented climate change issues This is the first comparative study of Cobb and Nasr's eco religious understanding and explores how their prescriptions can contribute alternatively to techno scientific initiatives in environmental sustainability Taking Cobb's economism and Nasr's scientism as the key concepts for surveying the roots of the ecological crisis the book offers interdisciplinary and interreligious insights into the debates about ecological equilibrium motivational awareness in human mind and about entanglements between religion and the environment This will be an insightful resource for policy makers faith leaders and for academics working in Environmental Studies and Religious Studies **The Church and Development in Africa, Second Edition** Stan Chu Ilo, 2014-10-20 In this book Stan Chu Ilo offers an integral theology of development and a critical social analysis of different development theories and practices in the world especially in Africa Ilo offers a comprehensive biblical anthropological and theological foundation of the principles and praxis of Catholic social ethics from the Second Vatican Council to Pope Francis Drawing from the social encyclical Charity in Truth Ilo shows how Catholic social teaching responds to some of the challenging questions and concerns of our times in relation to human rights ecology globalization international cooperation development and aid human and cultural development business ethics social justice and the challenges of poverty eradication He creatively applies these principles to the social context of Africa and lays a groundwork for sustainable Christian humanitarian and social justice initiatives in Africa **Living by Surprise** Woody Bartlett, 2003 Woody Bartlett a theologian and environmentalist posits a new Christ centered cosmology founded upon four Dynamics Being Belonging Becoming and Surprise to bring the earth into harmony Being Bartlett proffers is essence

Belonging is the Being's place among other Beings Becoming is the intent of both Being and Belonging Surprise is the unexpected unfolding of the intent Humanity Bartlett explains violates the four dynamics and Jesus is the perfect embodiment of the four Dynamics Geoliturgy and Ecological Crisis Jeffrey S. Lamp, 2024-12-15 Geoliturgy and Ecological Crisis The Spiritual Practice of Caring for Creation examines sources and select practices within Christian tradition Scripture the Nicene Creed the Eucharist and fasting from an ecological perspective in order to develop a practical spirituality for living in an ecologically responsible way in the world This spirituality which Jeffrey S Lamp labels Geoliturgy describes a way to read the Bible ecologically and to understand the doctrinal content of the Nicene Creed in ecological terms Lamp then examines the Eucharist and fasting as liturgical and devotional practices that form the structure of a spirituality that extends from church services into the daily lives of the faithful The resulting vision of this study is the reclamation of the biblical mandate for human beings to function as benevolent priestly co rulers with God in creation to prepare creation to become the dwelling place of God

Christianity and Ecological Theology E. M. Conradie, 2006-10-01 There has been a proliferation of publications in the field of Christian ecological theology over the last three decades or so These include a number of recent edited volumes each covering a range of topics and consolidating many of the emerging insights in ecological theology The call for Christian churches to respond to the environmental crisis has been reiterated numerous times in this vast corpus of literature also in South Africa **Caring for Creation** Max Oelschlaeger, 1996-01-01 Argues that religion blamed for contributing to the ecological crisis provides an ethical context that will help solve the problem The approach suggests that the environmentally positive aspects in various Western creation stories demonstrate religion

Grappling with Societies and Institutions in an Era of Socio-Ecological Crisis Hans A. Baer, 2020-12-10 Grappling with Societies and Institutions in an Era of Socio Ecological Crisis is an autobiographical ethnography of the journey through various societies and institutions and how they function in the midst of an era of socio ecological crises The volume traces the steps of the author in becoming a radical anthropologist namely through the experience of immigration and naturalization from Peru to the United States and then to Australia politicization while working as an engineer in the aircraft industry during the late 1960s socialization in and subsequent exit from Roman Catholicism and experiences as an academic working in the corporate university As well the author illuminates the practices of research and engagement as a scholar activist on various topics such as the Levites of Utah and African American Spiritual churches socio political and religious life in East Germany complementary and alternative medicine the Australian climate movement and democratic eco socialism

Claiming Earth as Common Ground Andrea Cohen-Kiener, 2012-05-10 Can religious people save the environment Can the environmental challenge save religion Our planet is in trouble and it will take an amazingly large and powerful force to shift into a more sustainable way of living Spiritual leader and environmental activist Andrea Cohen Kiener tells us that people of faith have the numbers the passion and the mandate to do it and that nothing else is strong enough to counterbalance

business as usual In this urgent call to action Cohen Kiener gathers insights from ecology coalitions emerging theologies and spiritual and environmental activists to rally and inspire us to work across denominational lines in order to fulfill our sacred imperative to care for God's creation Cohen Kiener and contributors clearly outline the shared values of our faith traditions that drive our commitment to care for the earth Acknowledging the challenges in working together to implement positive change they present steps both big and small for individuals and groups for reversing our direction from consumption to sustainability Contributors include Rev Woody Bartlett founder Georgia Interfaith Power and Light Rev Tom Carr National Council of Churches Working Group on the Environment Rev Donna Schaper senior minister Judson Memorial Church New York City Rev Margaret Bullitt Jonas Religious Witness for the Earth Eboo Patel executive director Interfaith Youth Core Dr Lowell Rusty Pritchard national director of outreach Evangelical Environmental Network

African Ecological Ethics and Spirituality for Cosmic Flourishing Stan Chu Ilo, 2022-06-16 This is the definitive African text on ecological ethics African environmental spirituality a theology of creation and climate justice The contributors to this important volume explore the common threats facing this earth our common home and the particular threats facing Africa because of our sick environment unsustainable development practices and the false narratives and programs of modernity in the African Motherland Here African environmentalists theologians and peace advocates in conversation with Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* develop a roadmap for pastoral local and global education on ecological consciousness in order to bring about ecological conversion African ecological wisdom is also offered as indispensable resources for recovering the intimate connection of all creatures and all peoples and as a praxis of solidarity for the poor and our fragile earth [Inhabiting Eden](#) Patricia K. Tull, 2013-11-18 In this thoughtful study respected Old Testament scholar Patricia K Tull explores the Scriptures for guidance on today's ecological crisis Tull looks to the Bible for what it can tell us about our relationships not just to the earth itself but also to plant and animal life to each other to descendants who will inherit the planet from us and to our Creator She offers candid discussions on many current ecological problems that humans contribute to such as the overuse of energy resources like gas and electricity consumerism food production systems including land use and factory farming and toxic waste Each chapter concludes with discussion questions and a practical exercise making it ideal for both group and individual study This important book provides a biblical basis for thinking about our world differently and prompts us to consider changing our own actions Visit inhabitingeden.org for links to additional resources and information

Globalization and the Mission of the Church Neil J. Ormerod, Shane Clifton, 2009-11-26 Various social political economic and cultural commentators are presently arguing that human history is reaching a decisive stage in its development a stage marked by increased interconnection between peoples the compression of space and time a sharing of ideas at unprecedented levels global trade and finance and so on The shorthand word used to encompass these phenomena is globalization Some embrace it others reject it while still others dispute its existence But with the abundance of literature and debate that it generates the topic

cannot be ignored From its inception in the missionary mandate of Jesus Matthew 28 Christianity has had a global dimension to its mission Christianity is not a spectator to globalization but one of its agents one of the forces at work which have extended interconnection between peoples shared ideas and promoted social political and cultural links The purpose of the present work is not to provide a complete response to the question of the mission of the church in a globalizing world but to establish a framework within which answers may be sought Grounded in the writings of Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran it develops a theology of history and addresses the churches response to the impact of globalization on vital social cultural personal and religious values The project brings together the perspectives of Catholicism and Pentecostalism the former providing a depth of wisdom and tradition the latter drawing on the insight of a newly emerging movement that has taken root in every continent with remarkable energy and enthusiasm

The Spirit Shaped Church Swarup Bar,2021-02-23 In *The Spirit Shaped Church* Swarup Bar argues that the church is defined by its relationship with others A relational church depends on the porousness of its borders which means that while a church has its distinctiveness it ought to be open to negotiate relational engagements with the world around it This sort of relationally distinct permeable church is found to be possible through the leading of the Spirit and the work of Christ Such engagement is found to be relevant in a plural religious cultural context and in situations of marginalization in India The *Spirit Shaped Church* reflects an ongoing commitment on the part of Fortress Press to engage the needs of Christian communities around the world The book is aimed at teachers clergy students and anyone with an interest in the lived experience of Christians in India

Eco-Reformation Lisa E. Dahill,Jim B. Martin-Schramm,2016-10-31 In 2017 Christians around the world will mark the five hundredth anniversary of the Reformation In the midst of many appeals for reformation today a growing number of theologians scholars and activists around the world believe Reformation celebrations in 2017 and beyond need to focus now on the urgent need for an Eco Reformation The rise of industrial fossil fuel driven capitalism and the explosive growth in human population endanger the fundamental planetary life support systems on which life as we know it has evolved The collective impact of human production consumption and reproduction is undermining the ecological systems that support human life on Earth If human beings do not reform their relationship with God's creation unspeakable suffering will befall many especially the weakest and most vulnerable among all species The conviction at the heart of this collection of essays is that a gospel call for ecological justice belongs at the heart of the five hundredth anniversary observance of the Reformation in 2017 and as a if not the central dimension of Christian conversion faith and practice into the foreseeable future Like Luther's Ninety Five Theses this volume brings together critical biblical pastoral theological historical and ethical perspectives that constructively advance the vision of a socially and ecologically flourishing Earth

Foundations for African Theological Ethics James Nkansah-Obrempong,2013-05-14 Having taught on ethics in Africa for almost a decade James Nkansah Obrempong presents a work that goes some way to addressing the dearth of materials on ethics that combine African social religious cultural and

moral values with biblical and theological values Integrating these from African Western and biblical contexts Nkansah demonstrates how important they are for dealing with contemporary moral and social issues facing the church in Africa and African societies The book develops a theoretical biblical and theological foundation for Theological Ethics and uses this to address the broader issues that affect the socio political and economic life of African people and the church **Toward an Ecology of Transfiguration** John Chryssavgis, Bruce V. Foltz, 2013-06-03 Can Orthodox Christianity offer spiritual resources uniquely suited to the environmental concerns of today This book makes the case emphatically that it can indeed In addition to being the first substantial and comprehensive collection of essays in any language to address environmental issues from the Orthodox point of view this volume with contributions from many of the most influential theologians and philosophers in contemporary world Orthodoxy will engage a wide audience in academic as well as popular circles resonating not only with Orthodox audiences but with all those in search of a fresh approach to environmental theory and ethics that can bring to bear the resources of ancient spirituality often virtually unknown in the West on modern challenges and dilemmas **Managing the Environmental Crisis in Ghana** Kwasi Nyamekye, 2014-11-19 Due to the strong inroads that Western scientism and Western Christianity have made in Africa as a result of colonialism post colonial African governments have tended to rely solely on Western scientific conservation epistemologies and models to the neglect of those of the Indigenous African peoples in addressing their environmental problems However there is enough evidence that neither modern scientific nor indigenous epistemologies and modes of addressing current ecological problems are **Fragile World** William T. Cavanaugh, 2018-05-22 In *Fragile World Ecology and the Church* scholars and activists from Christian communities as far flung as Honduras the Philippines Colombia and Kenya present a global angle on the global ecological crisis in both its material and spiritual senses and offer Catholic resources for responding to it This volume explores the deep interconnections for better and for worse between the global North and the global South and analyzes the relationship among the physical environment human society culture theology and economics the integral ecology described by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* Integral ecology demands that we think deeply about humans and the physical environment but also about the God who both created the world and sustains it in being At its root the ecological crisis is a theological crisis not only in the way that humans regard creation and their place in it but in the way that humans think about God For Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* the root of the crisis is that we humans have tried to put ourselves in God's place According to Pope Francis therefore A fragile world entrusted by God to human care challenges us to devise intelligent ways of directing developing and limiting our power

The Enigmatic Realm of **The Church And The Ecological Crisis**: Unleashing the Language is Inner Magic

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