

NEW INSIGHTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABLE ETHICS

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1. Two Extremes

In his 2012 book, *Learning from the Octopus: How Secrets from Nature Can Help Us Fight Terrorist Attacks, Natural Disasters, and Disease*, Rafe Sagarin turns to nature and to some of its phenomena to gather insights on contemporary questions that challenge us ethically, like security strategies.¹ Trained as a marine ecologist, in 2002 Sagarin was working as a science adviser for a member of the American Congress, when issues of national and global security needed to be addressed urgently and effectively after September 11, 2001. In his volume, he describes how living beings face environmental risks, threats, and challenges. The octopus, for example, with its eight tentacles, blends into the background and each tentacle has the ability of choosing which type of camouflage is more appropriate. Safety is provided by a decentralized and extremely adaptable system. As a consequence, readiness and preparedness is increased. For Sagarin,

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¹Rafe Sagarin, *Learning from the Octopus: How Secrets from Nature Can Help Us Fight Terrorist Attacks, Natural Disasters, and Disease*, New York: Basic Books, 2012.

this successful natural solution could help us to modify our strategies when we face security threats, both natural (e.g., hurricanes² and viral infections) as well as human-made (e.g., terrorist attacks). Efficient decentralization is happening not only in biology. He mentions the US Coast Guard's ability to contain a nine-million gallon oil spill that could have occurred in the aftermath of the hurricane Katrina in 2005. Learning from biology and from our decentralized responses by implementing them further could have reduced the ecological disaster caused by the BP oil spill in 2010.³

Hence, by turning to nature, we can learn from it, if we are critical, inquisitive searchers and creative learners. Sustainable solutions to our environmental challenges could be identified and tested by looking at nature with new eyes. This is the first insight that I highlight. It is not new. Throughout human history, in the various cultures and civilizations, we looked at nature to be inspired in building architectural masterpieces, in learning how to fly and sail, and in studying social dynamics. We did it as human beings and within established religions with a constant discernment and a profound liberty, even boldness.

Looking at nature implies that we examine ourselves and our way of living. In her volume *Plenitude: The New Economics of True Wealth*, Juliet Schor shows how this discerning attitude is already leading many people to experience new ways of living (e.g., by reducing weekly working hours), of producing goods (e.g., by developing gardening), and of consuming.⁴ Concrete practices aim at renewing our daily way of living as individuals, families, and communities. In other words, sustainable solutions to the current and increasing ecological crisis are at our hand. Moreover, they are already

²On the 2011 earthquake in Japan, see Osamu Takeuchi, "What Can We Learn from the Great East Japan Earthquake?," *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church: Newsletter Forum* (2011), <http://www.catholicethics.com/nov2011>.

³On the role of faith communities in responding to the BP oil spill, see G. Reid Doster, "Unique Aspects of a Technological Disaster and Its Effect Upon Community Life: A Pastoral Essay on the BP Oil Spill," *Review and Expositor* 108 (2011) 37-51. See also Richard P. Olson, "Thinking About Ecology-Environment after the Spill: A Reflection from the Beginning of This Conversation," *Review and Expositor* 108 (2011) 9-12. On energy policy and environmental risk, see Chiara Tintori, "Marea Nera, Disastro Globale: Verso Quale Futuro Energetico?," *Aggiornamenti sociali* 61, no. 07-08 (2010) 513-522.

⁴Juliet Schor, *Plenitude: The New Economics of True Wealth*, New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2010.

successfully implemented in many small towns around the world. Schor tells us that, in the developed countries, while we still aim at plenitude, we can rethink growth in new ways, by focusing on projects on a small scale, by experimenting, and by letting people know what is working.

In many parts of the world, however, we are less optimistic. Sister Dorothy Stang, SND, an American missionary in the Amazons, Brazilian by adoption, was killed with six gunshots in Anapu (Pará).⁵ She was engaged in a project of sustainable development that combined protecting family production and the environment. Her commitment challenged the economic interests of some local landowners and loggers. Those who ordered her killing and the killers were condemned, but we might wonder whether she would have approved the national code regulating deforestation that is currently discussed and the Belo Monte dam, under construction, which will create the world's third largest hydroelectric complex, at the expense of the Amazonian forest and of the indigenous people who live there.⁶

In many parts of the world, our commitment for a sustainable environment can be extremely costly, both to individuals, like Sr. Stang, and to groups, like those Amazonian tribes. This second insight tells us that when the economic interests of powerful groups (e.g., multinational corporations and governments) are at stake, their strategies challenge us ethically.⁷ To promote global environmental justice, we need a greater accountability, nationally and globally, together with concrete and careful planning in resource extraction and energy consumption.

These two insights frame the spectrum of the current ethical reflection in environmental ethics. On the one hand, we turn to nature by doing it theologically and by letting ourselves being inspired by it. All our ethical resources help us in doing it, from the Bible to our tradition, from the contributions of many sciences to our

⁵Stefano Femminis, "Terra," *Popoli* 97, no. 3 (2012) 1.

⁶On an Indian dam, see Shaji George Kochuthara, "Over an Ageing Dam," *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church: Newsletter Forum*(2012), <http://www.catholicethics.com/feb2012>.

⁷Peter Knox, "People Power: Take Control of Your Energy," *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church: Newsletter Forum*(2012), <http://www.catholicethics.com/feb2012>.

personal and collective experience. On the other hand, we are aware of the tensions, complexities, power dynamics, and even personal, social, and structural sins that characterize our interaction with nature. It is our longing for justice that leads us to reexamine our Christian tradition and its resources. The most recent contributions in theological ethics can be placed within these two approaches, as I now indicate. Their richness confirms that, within theological ethics, we respond to the current ecological crisis by considering it as an “ethical issue,” as Shaji George Kochuthara, CMI, has rightly affirmed.⁸

2. A Comprehensive Approach

What do we find in our Christian tradition when we aim at articulating an eco-theological ethics? Tobias Winright edited an interesting textbook, quite valuable to teach environmental ethics.⁹ In twenty chapters, *Green Discipleship* offers to its readers a comprehensive approach to discern the signs of the times, in light of Scripture and of the Christian tradition (by focusing on Francis of Assisi and Thomas Aquinas). Moreover, fundamental moral theology (from natural moral law to virtue ethics, to Eucharistic ecology, and the commandment to love our neighbour, including nature) is integrated with social ethics (from Catholic social teaching to feminist and liberation theology), and by the theological dialogue with other religious traditions (i.e., Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism). Finally, practical applications – concerning food, water, and peace – expand our theological reflection and engagement. In other words, the richness and the diversity of Christian theological ethics allows us to face environmental challenges and to promote just living conditions on earth. In being authentic disciples, we protect life on earth.

Discipleship surfaces as a key ethical category in other theological works. In *Green Witness*, Laura Yordy emphasizes it as an essential component of our being witnesses, formed by the virtue of patience

⁸Shaji George Kochuthara, “Re-Discovering Christian Eco-Theological Ethics,” *Hekima Review*, no. 43 (2010) 47-62, at 47.

⁹Tobias L. Winright, ed., *Green Discipleship: Catholic Theological Ethics and the Environment*, Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2011. For a more concise insightful volume, see Richard W. Miller, ed., *God, Creation, and Climate Change: A Catholic Response to the Environmental Crisis*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010. Both books can be complemented by a helpful collection of cases, see Christine E. Gudorf and James Edward Huchingson, eds., *Boundaries: A Casebook in Environmental Ethics*, 2nd ed., Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010.

and by our eschatological longing.¹⁰ The in-breaking of God's kingdom is inspiring. As faithful disciples of the Trinitarian God engaged in and with creation, Christians should commit themselves constructively to protect the wholeness of the environment.

3. Specific Ethical Resources

3.1. Reading the Bible anew

Other authors prefer more a focused approach. The theological panorama shows a renewed reading of the Bible in light of ecological concerns to reflect on the place of all natural living creatures and of human beings in God's salvific project. *The Green Bible* engages its readers to discover how the care for creation is integral to God's word. This New Revised Standard Version of the Bible prints in green all passages deemed relevant to the environment. I argue, however, whether this is sufficient. We are left with the unfulfilled desire of accurate and insightful theological interpretation of these texts in light of the whole biblical narrative and of our ecological concerns.¹¹

A more elaborated theological approach appears to be more promising.¹² In *Nature and Altering It*,¹³ Allen Verhey responds to the 1967 famous accusation of Lynn White, Jr., that Christianity is responsible for the ecological crisis.¹⁴ While acknowledging that defining nature is a complex task, Verhey suggests a narrative approach: stories and myths contribute to shape how we relate to nature and even how we change it. The Christian story, as it is outlined in the Bible, and read in community, plays such a

¹⁰Laura Ruth Yordy, *Green Witness: Ecology, Ethics, and the Kingdom of God*, Cambridge, UK: Lutterworth Press, 2010.

¹¹Michael G. Maudlin and Marlene Baer, eds., *The Green Bible: New Revised Standard Version*, New York: Harper Collins, 2008.

¹²J. Matthew Sleeth, *The Gospel According to the Earth: Why the Good Book Is a Green Book*, New York: Harper One, 2010; Charlotte Sleigh and Bryony Webb, *God's Green Book: Seven Bible Studies About the Environment*, London: SPCK, 2010; Norman C. Habel, *An Inconvenient Text: Is a Green Reading of the Bible Possible?*, Adelaide: ATF Press, 2009.

¹³Allen Verhey, *Nature and Altering It*, Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2010.

¹⁴Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967) 1203-1207. For other recent responses to White's article, see Kochuthara, "Re-Discovering Christian Eco-Theological Ethics," at 48; Richard O. Randolph, "Christian Prophetic Leadership for the Environment," *Review and Expositor* 108 (2011): 73-87, at 74; Dominique Bourg and Philippe Roch, eds., *Crise Écologique, Crise des Valeurs? Défis pour l'anthropologie et la Spiritualité*, Genève: Labor et Fides, 2010; Olson, "Thinking About Ecology," at 11.

constructive and critical role. God creates and sustains nature and invites all creatures to be part of it. Within our Christian communities, we continue our hermeneutical and ethical tasks to address concretely the current ecological challenges.

Some authors focus on chosen biblical texts. Beginning with the Hebrew Bible, the law codes highlight that, within God's creation, together with human beings, plants and animals enjoy rights as well.¹⁵ Even the biblical notion of Zion is a model for sustainable living.¹⁶ Moreover, the prophetic texts can contribute to shape a contemporary environmental ethics by calling us to be just, while we face the 'idolatry' of today's economic system.¹⁷ They also promote prophetic leadership in addressing environmental issues.¹⁸ To achieve it concretely, the Methodist pastor Richard Randolph invites Christians to confess and lament any past and present failure to be good stewards of creation, while we articulate alternative visions of a good life within creation. Finally, even the wisdom biblical literature can nourish our environmental commitment.¹⁹

Within the Hebrew Bible, instead of selected biblical texts, Timothy Gorringer proposes two models: Jonah and Noah. With Jonah, we focus on preaching and we hope for repentance. But this is a limited solution when we face with the urgency of the environmental crisis.²⁰ On the contrary, facing a global emergency Noah built an ark. Hence, today, theological ethics might lead us to 'ark building.' In a virtue ethics perspective, this implies the rethinking of our community life and the construction of new life-styles.²¹ He writes, "Building an ark, [...] involves work which cares for biodiversity, practices which

¹⁵Günther Wittenber, "Plant and Animal Rights – an Absurd Idea or Ecological Necessity: Perspectives from the Hebrew Torah," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 131 (2008) 72-83.

¹⁶Edwin Jr. Firmage, "Light in Darkness: Embracing the Opportunity of Climate Change," *Dialogue* 43, no. 3 (2010) 100-127.

¹⁷Hilary Marlow and John Barton, *Biblical Prophets and Contemporary Environmental Ethics: Re-Reading Amos, Hosea and First Isaiah*, Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. See also Robert S. White, ed., *Creation in Crisis: Christian Perspectives on Sustainability*, London: SPCK, 2009.

¹⁸Randolph, "Christian Prophetic Leadership."

¹⁹Arthur Walker-Jones, *The Green Psalter: Resources for an Ecological Spirituality*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009.

²⁰Timothy J. Gorringer, "On Building an Ark: The Global Emergency and the Limits of Moral Exhortation," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 24, no. 1 (2011): 23-33, at 26.

²¹Timothy J. Gorringer, "On Building an Ark , 27-28.

respect, rather than seek to dominate, creation. It recognises that these concerns are not sentimental or simply aesthetic but that they are bound up with our survival."²² It is a virtuous and cooperative work.²³

To address the ethical issues raised by climate change, and in dialogue with economic theory and environmental policy, Carol Robb turns to the New Testament.²⁴ She focuses first on Jesus' life, ministry, teachings, and resurrection, then on Paul. The announce of the reign of God requires healthy communities in healthy ecosystems.

In the New Testament, Paul receives a privileged attention.²⁵ Besides the obvious text of Romans 8:19-23,²⁶ Paul promotes a vision of God's transformation of the whole creation in Christ and invites to live it in actions shaped by Jesus giving himself for others.²⁷

The Bible also guides those who look for inspiration in reshaping economic dynamics,²⁸ by remembering us that "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants" (Lev 25:23).²⁹

Methodologically, the volume *Ecological Hermeneutics* offers an informed and useful collection of essays. It provides insights from the history of biblical interpretation and suggests new hermeneutical

²²Timothy J. Gorringer, "On Building an Ark", 31.

²³Timothy J. Gorringer, "On Building an Ark", 31-32.

²⁴Carol S. Robb, *Wind, Sun, Soil, Spirit: Biblical Ethics and Climate Change*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010.

²⁵David G. Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate, *Greening Paul: Rereading the Apostle in a Time of Ecological Crisis*, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010.

²⁶Cheryl Hunt, David G. Horrell, and Christopher Southgate, "An Environmental Mantra? Ecological Interest in Romans 8:19-23 and a Modest Proposal for Its Narrative Interpretation," *Journal of Theological Studies* 59, no. 2 (2008) 546-579; David G. Horrell, "A New Perspective on Paul? Rereading Paul in a Time of Ecological Crisis," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 1 (2010) 3-30; Mick Pope and Angus McLeay, *The Groaning of Creation: A Pauline Eco-Missiology Based on a Narrative Reading of Romans*, Hawthorn, Victoria: Zadock Institute for Christianity and Society, 2009.

²⁷Horrell, "A New Perspective on Paul?."

²⁸Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

²⁹Quoted by Timothy Gorringer, "Idolatry and Redemption: Economics in Biblical Perspective," *Political Theology* 11, no. 3 (2010) 367-382, at 378; Wittenber, "Plant and Animal Rights," at 81.

possibilities.³⁰ While the attention to the apocalyptic discourse continues,³¹ other authors focus on our relationship with God and on the responsibilities that it entails. Richard Bauckham, for example, stresses how humanity participates in the community of creation, by being interdependent, while it depends upon God the Creator.³² Hence, we are responsible stewards of God's people³³ and of creation,³⁴ animated by profound humility. Concretely, this implies "a limited right to the use of the Earth's resources for human life and flourishing" as well as "a caring responsibility for other creatures that reflects but does not usurp God's own care for his creation."³⁵ Ultimately, humanity should be guided by the eschatological vision that he calls 'ecotopia.'³⁶ Other authors share a similar vision,³⁷ even without his biblical focus.³⁸

Even Margaret Barker focuses on the need for a renewed relationship between the Creator and the whole creation. For her, the environmental crisis is a religious crisis. She provides a biblically based environmental theology that is guided by the vision and the symbols of the Christian community.³⁹

³⁰David G. Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate, and Francesca Stavrakopoulou, eds., *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, London - New York: T&T Clark, 2010. See also David G. Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*, London - Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2010.

³¹Stefan Skrimshire, *Future Ethics: Climate Change and Apocalyptic Imagination*, London - New York: Continuum, 2010.

³²Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*, Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010.

³³Scott C. Sabin and Kathy Ide, *Tending to Eden: Environmental Stewardship for God's People*, Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2010.

³⁴Patrick C. Chibuko, "Forestation – Deforestation – Reforestation: Implications for Ecology and Liturgy in Dialogue," *African Ecclesial Review* 52, no. 2-3 (2010) 190-212. On stewardship, see also Randolph, "Christian Prophetic Leadership.": Verhey, *Nature and Altering It*.

³⁵Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology*, 34.

³⁶The term ecotopia was introduced by Bill Devall, *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends: Practicing Deep Ecology*, Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1988. It indicates perfect or ideal relationships between humanity and creation.

³⁷Richard S. Deese, "Twilight of Utopias: Julian and Aldous Huxley in the Twentieth Century," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2011) 210-240.

³⁸For Barnhill, ecotopia is an "interactive harmony with ecological systems, with humans and nonhuman nature mutually flourishing." David Landis Barnhill, "Conceiving Ecotopia," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2011) 126-144, at 126.

³⁹Margaret Barker, *Creation: A Biblical Vision for the Environment*, London - New York: T&T Clark, 2010.

I end this analysis centered on the biblical text and on its interpretations with a lively debate hosted in 2009 by the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* on the pertinence of the Bible in addressing ecological questions and in shaping our ethical responsibilities. James Nash, one of the pioneers in social and ecological ethics, just before dying challenged the Christian assumption that the Bible makes a clear and compelling case for ecological responsibility because of the lacking biblical concern for protecting biological diversity.⁴⁰ Hence, Christianity should not appeal to Scripture, but to the central affirmations of faith (i.e., creation, incarnation, covenant, redemption, sacrament, and sin) and to the all-embracing Christian love.

Eight authors responded to his challenge. Ellen Davis agrees that the biblical writers are more interested in agriculture and the land than in biological diversity, but the Bible may help to articulate our vision of what is good for nature and humankind.⁴¹ Celia Deane-Drummond,⁴² Carol Robb,⁴³ and Norm Faramelli⁴⁴ reject his exclusion of Scripture from ecological moral arguments. Moreover, Deane-Drummond argues that even his appropriation of theological traditions and themes is rooted in a history of interpretation of Scripture.⁴⁵ More positively, Jay McDaniel understands Nash' approach as indicating that Christianity evolves and can become a religious tradition able to articulate a scientifically informed and ecologically sensitive approach to ecological issues.⁴⁶ Bernard Zaleha⁴⁷ and James Childs⁴⁸

⁴⁰James A. Nash, "The Bible Vs. Biodiversity: The Case against Moral Argument from Scripture," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009) 213-237.

⁴¹Ellen F. Davis, "The Agrarian Perspective of the Bible: A Response to James A. Nash, 'The Bible Vs. Biodiversity: The Case against Moral Argument from Scripture'," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009) 260-265.

⁴²Celia Deane-Drummond, "Response to James A. Nash 'The Bible Vs. Biodiversity: The Case against Moral Argument from Scripture'," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009) 271-278.

⁴³Carol S. Robb, "Biblical Authority to Advocate for Biodiversity: A Response to James A. Nash," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009) 238-246.

⁴⁴Norm Faramelli, "Whither the Bible in Environmental Ethics and Moral Argument?," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009) 266-270.

⁴⁵Deane-Drummond, "Response to James A. Nash."

⁴⁶Jay McDaniel, "The Manyness of God: A Tribute to James Nash," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009) 290-294.

⁴⁷Bernard Daley Zaleha, "James Nash as Christian Deep Ecologist: Forging a New Eco-Theology for the Third Millennium," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009) 279-289.

comment on Nash' choice of giving primacy to reason and experience. Finally, Michael Northcott counters Nash by affirming that the Bible contains "a rich narrative of ecological respect and restoration,"⁴⁹ that includes biodiversity, when it is read as a canon.⁵⁰

3.2. Further theological discourse

James Nash' provocative remarks place in tension theological thinking, that focuses on categories and mysteries, and biblical hermeneutics. But such a tension is forced and overemphasized. A more fruitful relation seems to be possible and it can be highlighted by examining the contributions of authors who articulate their insights by relying on relevant theological themes. They focus on creation,⁵¹ including evolution,⁵² Christology and eschatology,⁵³ Incarnation,⁵⁴ redemption and divine action,⁵⁵ grace,⁵⁶ and the communion of saints as a theological example of a Christian intergenerational narrative.⁵⁷

One challenge concerns the chosen theological anthropology and its possible anthropocentrism. To avoid this bias, Hyun-Chul Cho proposes Karl Rahner's evolutionary Christology in light of its ability

⁴⁸James M. Childs, Jr., "The Ecology of Moral Authority: A Response to James A. Nash, 'The Bible Vs. Biodiversity: The Case against Moral Argument from Scripture'," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009) 254-259.

⁴⁹Michael S. Northcott, "Loving Scripture and Nature," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 3, no. 2 (2009) 247-253, at 247.

⁵⁰On the Christian contribution to promote biodiversity, see Kevin J. O'Brien, *An Ethics of Biodiversity: Christianity, Ecology, and the Variety of Life*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010. See also Kyle Schuyler Van Houtan and Michael S. Northcott, eds., *Diversity and Dominion: Dialogues in Ecology, Ethics, and Theology*, Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010.

⁵¹Miller, *God, Creation, and Climate Change*.

⁵²Mary Katherine Birge, Ryan Taylor, Brian G. Henning, and Rodica M.M. Stoicoiu, *Genesis, Evolution, and the Search for a Reasoned Faith*, Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2011.

⁵³Andrew Shepherd, "Creation and Christology: The Ecological Crisis and Eschatological Ethics," *Stimulus* 18, no. 4 (2010) 51-57.

⁵⁴Martha Kirkpatrick, "For God So Loved the World: An Incarnational Ecology," *Anglican Theological Review* 91, no. 2 (2009) 191-212.

⁵⁵Denis Edwards, *How God Acts: Creation, Redemption, and Special Divine Action*, Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2010.

⁵⁶Willis Jenkins, *Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology*, Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

⁵⁷Michael S. Northcott, "Anthropogenic Climate Change, Political Liberalism and the Communion of Saints," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 24, no. 1 (2011) 34-49.

to articulate ecological principles that recognize the nature's intrinsic value and the profound relationship between humanity and nature.⁵⁸

The Christian tradition inspires with patristic insights⁵⁹ and with a renewed attention to Augustine,⁶⁰ that is proposed by Scott Dunham as the patron saint of environmental theology instead of Francis of Assisi. Other authors turn to traditions, in Africa⁶¹ as well as in Asia, where intercultural religious interaction includes dialogue with Hinduism⁶² and indigenous shamanism.⁶³ As Jojo Fung, SJ, writes,

"The discerning process of theological reflection assures us that the shamanic spirits are participating of God's creative *ruah* and these spirits are the gods of the primal religions sitting in the divine council of Yahweh with the other gods of the world religions. These indwelling spirits in nature and in human beings alert us that all of God's creation is sacred as the *cosmos* and *anthropos* are suffused with divine goodness. [...] The theology of sacred sustainability which calls for reverence for the *cosmos* and *anthropos* as the sacred abode of God provides a viable way forward for the sustainability of God's creation in the future."⁶⁴

Moreover, in our global context, religious pluralism could challenge us and lead to renew our understanding of monotheism, while we dialogue with other religious traditions⁶⁵ and with sciences.⁶⁶ Hence,

⁵⁸Hyun-Chul Cho, "Interconnectedness and Intrinsic Value as Ecological Principles: An Appropriation of Karl Rahner's Evolutionary Christology," *Theological Studies* 70, no. 3 (2009) 622-637.

⁵⁹Jame Schaefer, *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics: Reconstructing Patristic and Medieval Concepts*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009.

⁶⁰Scott A. Dunham, *The Trinity and Creation in Augustine: An Ecological Analysis*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008.

⁶¹Menanga Kizito Yves, "Ecological Crisis: The Quest for a Biblical and Traditional African Ecosophy," *African Ecclesial Review* 53, no. 2 (2011) 333-352.

⁶²Kochuthara, "Re-Discovering Christian Eco-Theological Ethics."

⁶³Jojo M. Fung, "An Asian Liberation Theology of Sacred Sustainability: A Local Theology in Dialogue with Indigenous Shamanism," *Asian Horizons* 4, no. 2 (2010): 401-415.

⁶⁴Jojo M. Fung, "An Asian Liberation Theology of Sacred Sustainability," 414-415.

⁶⁵Solomon Victus, "Monotheism, Monarchy, Monoculture: Ecological Concerns and Nature Worship," *Asian Journal of Theology* 24, no. 2 (2010) 179-196. See also Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *Religion and the Environment*, 4 vols., London - New York: Routledge, 2010.

⁶⁶Russell A. Butkus and Steven A. Kolmes, *Environmental Science and Theology in Dialogue*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011; Birge, Taylor, Henning, and Stoicoiu, *Genesis, Evolution, and the Search for a Reasoned Faith*.

Paolo Carlotti, SDB, proposes an interdisciplinary approach that is articulated in two moments: first, an accurate description of the environmental situation in light of scientific data; second, the theological interpretation of those data.⁶⁷ James Peterson focuses on our responsibility in changing nature, including human nature, by improving it, even by using genetic technology because “genetic intervention may be an expression of our love of God, one another, and the rest of creation entrusted to us.”⁶⁸

Finally, the attention to tradition and traditions demands an historical consciousness. An impartial environmental history could lead us to acknowledge that humankind is not inclined to sustainability.⁶⁹ Moreover, besides continental historical accounts (e.g., in Asia),⁷⁰ it seems urgent an historical study exploring which intellectual and religious traditions contributed to the Christian attitude toward nature. Clifford Cain’s comprehensive list includes the Greek philosophy (particularly Plato and Aristotle), early scientific thought (i.e., Bacon, Descartes, and Newton), indigenous Native American religions, and ecofeminism.⁷¹ Somehow echoing Lynn White, Jr., Cain affirms that “the Christian church does bear some guilt for the environmental crisis.”⁷² Hence, “the Church must repent of its silence and failure to protest.”⁷³

3.3. Practices

The appeal to tradition and traditions in our multireligious, plural, and global world ultimately aims at influencing our way of life,

⁶⁷Paolo Carlotti, “Il Gemito della Creazione: Per un’etica Teologica della Creazione Nuova,” *Salesianum* 71, no. 3 (2009) 521-559.

⁶⁸James C. Peterson, *Changing Human Nature: Ecology, Ethics, Genes, and God*, Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2010, 240.

⁶⁹Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment*, Cambridge - New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

⁷⁰Peter Boomgaard, *Southeast Asia: An Environmental History*, Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2007; Christopher V. Hill, *South Asia: An Environmental History*, Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008. See also Albertina Nugteren, “The Reciprocal Relationship of Culture and Environment in Asia: Two Recent Environmental Histories of South and Southeast Asia,” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2009) 239-248.

⁷¹On ecofeminism, see Lisa Kemmerer, *Sister Species: Women, Animals and Social Justice*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

⁷²Clifford C. Cain, *An Ecological Theology: Reunderstanding Our Relation to Nature*, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009, 85.

⁷³Clifford C. Cain, *An Ecological Theology*.

personally and socially. It leads us to transformative practices, including repentance – as Cain suggested. Virtue ethics plays an important role in focusing on the moral agents, in identifying the ethical goals, and in discerning how to strive to achieve them. As we have seen above, Timothy Gorringer argues that because the eco-problems confronting humanity constitute a global emergency, they cannot be addressed simply with moral exhortation (i.e., the Jonah model), but by the community building ‘arks’ (i.e., the Noah model). Concretely, the cultivation of the virtues is a key aspect of such ark building.⁷⁴

Specific virtues are also suggested. Among them, justice⁷⁵ and hope⁷⁶ are indicated as essential. They might contribute to address some of the questions concerning ecological resources (e.g., forests)⁷⁷ and the economic issues that they raise at the micro and macro level, locally and globally,⁷⁸ maybe shaping a ‘green economy’⁷⁹ and influencing public policy.⁸⁰

Virtues have concrete implications. An interdisciplinary group of Italian and international scholars⁸¹ suggests that specific ecological

⁷⁴Gorringer, “On Building an Ark,” at 23 and 31.

⁷⁵Kemmerer, *Sister Species*; Matteo Mascia and Lucia Mariani, eds., *Ethics and Climate Change: Scenarios for Justice and Sustainability*, Padova: CLEUP, 2010.

⁷⁶Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*, 2nd ed., Engaging Culture, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010; Anne Marie Dalton and Henry C. Simmons, *Ecotheology and the Practice of Hope*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010. The Kenyan Nobel Prize Wangari Maathai has affirmed that “The planting of trees is the planting of ideas. By starting with the simple act of planting a tree, we give hope to ourselves and to future generations.” Quoted in Robert Pierson, “Trees and the Forest: Story and Trustori in Quaker Faith and Practice,” *CrossCurrents* 61, no. 2 (2011) 150-160, at 150.

⁷⁷Davide Pettenella, “Investire in Foreste: Una Via Efficace per Mitigare i Cambiamenti Climatici?,” *Aggiornamenti sociali* 61, no. 1 (2010) 28-37; Michael J. Sheridan and Celia Nyamweru, eds., *African Sacred Groves: Ecological Dynamics and Social Change*, Oxford - Athens, OH - Pretoria: James Currey - Ohio University Press - Unisa Press, 2008; William A. Clark, “Clarifying the Spiritual Value of Forests and Their Role in Sustainable Forest Management,” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 5, no. 1 (2011) 18-38; Chibuko, “Forestation – Deforestation – Reforestation.”

⁷⁸Partha Dasgupta, “Natural Wealth,” *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 4 (2010) 637-647.

⁷⁹Chiara Tintori, “Green Economy,” *Aggiornamenti sociali* 62, no. 7-8 (2011) 541-544.

⁸⁰James B. Martin-Schramm, *Climate Justice: Ethics, Energy, and Public Policy*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010; Giacomo Costa, “Dopo Copenaghen: Desolazione Ambientale?,” *Aggiornamenti sociali* 61, no. 2 (2010) 85-90.

⁸¹Mascia and Mariani, *Ethics and Climate Change*.

issues (e.g., global warming), first, need to be accurately interpreted. Second, concrete ethical criteria to promote a greater environmental justice are urgent. Finally, communities demand help to adapt and respond to the living challenges raised by climate change.

Global warming⁸² is already affecting nations (e.g., in the Pacific Ocean) and forced relocation has already started under the United Nations' supervision and support.⁸³ Environmental degradation directly affects the most vulnerable populations, particularly women, in the work place and at home, and it worsens in militarized contexts.⁸⁴ Concrete changes (e.g., in resource management) could help some indigenous populations (e.g., in Papua New Guinea) to promote sustainability more effectively by integrating traditional resource management practices.⁸⁵

Ethical principles also contribute to promote eco-friendly practices. Cathriona Russell proposes solidarity and subsidiarity in the context of intercultural and interfaith dialogue.⁸⁶ Aiming at an ecologically sustainable and socially just socioeconomic development in the global South, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda and Daniel Spencer suggest that principles focused on economic dynamics should allow: to stimulate production, equitable distribution, and ecological regenerativity; to avoid unchecked concentrations of economic and state power; and to promote the freedom to thrive in communities, by contributing to individual well-being and the common good.⁸⁷

⁸²Roy W. Spencer, *The Great Global Warming Blunder: How Mother Nature Fooled the World's Top Climate Scientists*, New York: Encounter Books, 2010.

⁸³Maryanne Loughry and Jane McAdam, "Kiribati: Relocation and Adaptation," *Forced Migration Review* 31 (2008) 51-52; Elizabeth Ferris, Michael M. Cernea, and Daniel Petz, *On the Front Line of Climate Change and Displacement: Learning from and with Pacific Island Countries*, London: The Brookings Institution - London School of Economics, 2011.

⁸⁴Heather Eaton, "The Ethics of Gender and Globalization: Military Madness and Ecological Stress," *Political Theology* 10, no. 4 (2011) 671-684.

⁸⁵Jerry K. Jacka, "The Spirits Of Conservation: Ecology, Christianity, and Resource Management in Highlands Papua New Guinea," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2010) 24-47.

⁸⁶Cathriona Russell, "Burden-Sharing in a Changing Climate: Which Principles and Practices Can Theologians Endorse?," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 24, no. 1 (2011) 67-76.

⁸⁷Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda and Daniel T. Spencer, "Free Trade Agreements and the Neo-Liberal Economic Paradigm: Economic, Ecological, and Moral Consequences," *Political Theology* 10, no. 4 (2009) 685-716, at 714.

Steve de Gruchy poignantly shows how the availability of sewage stands at the intersection of economics and ecology. Any theology concerned about the poor must therefore address it in order to protect the limited supply of fresh water.⁸⁸

Other concrete issues require practical proposals and solutions: from food,⁸⁹ to energy resources⁹⁰ to sustainable development (e.g., in Europe⁹¹ and in USA⁹²) to biosecurity⁹³ and social transformations⁹⁴ in today's globalized context.⁹⁵

3.4. Ecclesial and religious commitments

Ecclesial contributions are quite significant. Within the Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI has urged to protect creation in order to promote peace in his 2009 encyclical letter *Caritas in veritate*⁹⁶ and his January 1, 2010 address to the world.⁹⁷ In discussing Benedict XVI's important contribution, Maura Ryan affirms that "Pope Benedict XVI has been called the 'greenest pope in history.'" ⁹⁸ She also highlights

⁸⁸Steve de Gruchy, "Dealing with Our Own Sewage: Spirituality and Ethics in the Sustainability Agenda," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 134 (2009) 53-65.

⁸⁹Roger S. Gottlieb, *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future*, Oxford - New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

⁹⁰Martin-Schramm, *Climate Justice*; Gruppo di studio sull'ambiente, "Energia e Sostenibilità: Strumenti per la Riflessione," *Aggiornamenti sociali* 63, no. 1 (2012) 14-31.

⁹¹Marco Morosini, "Crisi Ecologica e Sociale: Un Futuro Sostenibile per l'Europa?," *Aggiornamenti sociali* 62, no. 9-10 (2011) 581-592.

⁹²Robert H. Nelson, *The New Holy Wars: Economic Religion vs. Environmental Religion in Contemporary America*, University Park, PA - Oakland, CA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.

⁹³Peter Katona, John P. Sullivan, and Michael D. Intriligator, *Global Biosecurity: Threats and Responses*, London - New York: Routledge, 2010.

⁹⁴Simone Morandini, ed., *Ethics in the Spheres of Life*, Albignasego: Proget, 2011; Simone Morandini, *Abitare la Terra, Custodirne i Beni*, Albignasego: Proget edizioni, 2012.

⁹⁵Peter Boomgaard and Marjolein C. 't Hart, eds., *Globalization, Environmental Change, and Social History*, Cambridge - New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

⁹⁶Benedict XVI, "Caritas in Veritate," (2009), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html.

⁹⁷Benedict XVI, "If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation," (2010), http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliiii-world-day-peace_en.html.

⁹⁸Maura A. Ryan, "A New Shade of Green? Nature, Freedom, and Sexual Difference in *Caritas in Veritate*," *Theological Studies* 71, no. 2 (2010) 335-349, at 335. She quotes: Woodeene Koenig-Bricker, *Ten Commandments for the Environment: Pope Benedict XVI Speaks out for Creation and Justice*, Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2009, 8.

his specific “pro-life environmentalism.”⁹⁹ In commenting on the encyclical, she writes that “Benedict grounds ecological responsibility in a thick theology of creation, and extends the moral and epistemological relationship between ‘physical ecology’ and ‘human ecology’ to encompass a host of social issues, from mismanaged financial markets to abortion, contraception, and same-sex marriage.”¹⁰⁰

From the Latin-American continent, in their 2012 Lenten Pastoral Letter, the Conference of the Bolivian Catholic Bishops articulates a theological and ecclesial approach that is based on the analysis of the environmental crisis; incorporates indigenous traditions and wisdom; is centered on creation, Jesus, and the principles of Catholic social doctrine (i.e., the person, human dignity, solidarity, subsidiarity, justice, common good, and sustainability); and aims at making of each of us responsible guardians of the whole creation.¹⁰¹

Ecological concerns can also be traced within the Orthodox Church, with a focus on the Eucharistic praise, sin, and the needed collaboration between sciences and religion.¹⁰² An attention both to theological creativity¹⁰³ and how it can impact on concrete practices can also be found within the Anglican Church. A study focusing on the Church of England, for example, indicates how, despite developing many institutional resources to foster theologically informed environmental knowledge, the local ecclesial context shows very little ethical awareness.¹⁰⁴ In her book *Green Church: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rejoice!*, the Methodist Rebekah Simon-Peter agrees on the importance of developing concretely the congregations’

⁹⁹Ryan, “A New Shade of Green?,” at 335 and 349.

¹⁰⁰Ryan, “A New Shade of Green?,” 336.

¹⁰¹Conferencia Episcopal Boliviana, *El Universo, Don de Dios para la Vida: Carta Pastoral Sobre Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo Humano en Bolivia*, La Paz: Fundación Jubileo, 2012.

¹⁰²Bartholomée I^{er}, “De «La Divine 'Ignorance'» à la Sauvegarde de la Planète: Allocution de Sa Sainteté Bartholomée I^{er}, Patriarche Oecuménique De Constantinople,” *Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale*, no. 264 (2011) 89-97, at 96; Bartholomée I^{er}, *À a Rencontre du Mystère*, Orthodoxy, Paris: Cerf, 2011.

¹⁰³Dasgupta, “Natural Wealth.”; Marion Grau, “Elements of Renewal: Fourfold Wisdom,” *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 4 (2010) 687-706; Kirkpatrick, “For God So Loved the World’.”

¹⁰⁴Michael W. DeLashmutt, “Church and Climate Change: An Examination of the Attitudes and Practices of Cornish Anglican Churches Regarding the Environment,” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 5, no. 1 (2011) 61-81.

environmental consciousness because it could lead to lifestyle changes with positive impact on the environment.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, believers are contributing to preserve the environment and to promote sustainable development, particularly through faith-based non-governmental organizations, local presence (e.g., parishes), and religious communities. Interactions with secular organizations further expand the efficacy and incisiveness of these commitments.¹⁰⁶

Religious congregations have recently showed their willingness to promote sustainability. Concrete projects include the renovation of major community residencies to make them more eco-friendly.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, Sarah McFarland Taylor analyzes the greening movement of “environmentally activist Roman Catholic vowed religious women”¹⁰⁸ in the United States by portraying ‘green sisters’ and how they help us to promote the greening of the Catholic Church.¹⁰⁹

The Jesuits too, since their 35th General Congregation in 2008, have committed themselves more resolutely to promote sustainability. The website “Ecojesuits,”¹¹⁰ a special report on ecology,¹¹¹ and regional meetings of Jesuits involved directly in the ecological concerns exemplify this commitment.¹¹² We recognize a style of ethical reflection

¹⁰⁵Rebekah Simon-Peter, *Green Church: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rejoice!*, Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2010. See also Rebekah Simon-Peter, *7 Simple Steps to Green Your Church*, Nashville: Abingdon, 2010.

¹⁰⁶Shonil A. Bhagwat, Alison A. Ormsby, and Claudia Rutte, “The Role of Religion in Linking Conservation and Development: Challenges and Opportunities,” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 5, no. 1 (2011) 39-60.

¹⁰⁷Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, “Sustainability Community,” (2011), http://www.ihmsisters.org/www/Sustainable_Community/sustaincommunity.asp.

¹⁰⁸Sarah McFarland Taylor, *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007, ix.

¹⁰⁹See also Randy J.C. Ochigie and Eric Marcelo O. Genilo, eds., *Reimagining Christianity for a Green World*, Quezon City: Catholic Theological Society of the Philippines (DaKaTeo), 2011; Jonathan Merritt, *Green Like God: Unlocking the Divine Plan for Our Planet*, New York: FaithWords, 2010.

¹¹⁰Society of Jesus, “Ecology and Jesuits in Communication,” (2011), <http://ecojesuit.com/>.

¹¹¹Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat, “Healing a Broken World,” *Promotio Justitiae*, no. 106/2 (2011) 1-67.

¹¹²On the meeting that occurred in Patna (India) in March 2012, see http://www.jesaonline.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=557:south-asian-ecojesuit-meet-2012&catid=911:documents-a-reports&Itemid=79

and action that combines analysis and recommendations, that focuses on reconciliation, and that aims at defending the faith and promoting justice in dialogue with cultures and religions through concrete projects.

A more in depth exploration of the commitment of believers of different faiths could highlight how believers in mosques, temples, churches, and synagogues are actively putting green initiatives into practice all over the world. This is consoling and inspiring. Together, we can learn to chart a more Earth-friendly course. Both religious communities and theological reflection contribute in promoting it.

3.5. Liturgy and spirituality

I stressed how the current ecological crisis challenges us ethically. Other authors add that it is also a spiritual crisis.¹¹³ They invite us to remember that the Christian tradition never separated our ethical commitment from our spiritual experience.

Within Catholic liturgical reflection, the Eucharist plays an essential role because "*Eucharistic practice, when thoughtfully reflected upon, is a formation into the divine ecology of the Triune God.*"¹¹⁴ Hence, it contributes to personal and communal flourishing and transforms our desires.¹¹⁵

Liturgical practices can also be renewed in light of a revisited theology of Creation, as Gloria Schaab proposes by highlighting six 'lenses' that articulate the key concepts of: dominion; *imago dei*; apocalyptic discourse; the relational approach between God, cosmos, and human beings; sacramentality;¹¹⁶ and incarnation informed by the Genesis narrative and by Jesus' ministry.¹¹⁷

¹¹³Bourg and Roch, *Crise Écologique, Crise des Valeurs?*, 25; K.C. Abraham, "Ecology: Some Theological Challenges," *Asian Christian Review* 3, no. 1 (2009) 39-49, at 39.

¹¹⁴Timothy O'Malley, "Catholic Ecology and Eucharist: A Practice Approach," *Liturgical Ministry* 20 (2011) 68-78, at 71. (Italic in the original.) See also Prisco A. Cajés, "The Eucharist and Ecological Crisis," in *Reimagining Christianity for a Green World*, 81-112.

¹¹⁵O'Malley, "Catholic Ecology and Eucharist," at 70. On the role of the Nicene creed in forming the Christian communities and challenging us to act on behalf of justice for the earth, see Sarah Ann Faibanks, "Greening the Nicene Creed: Liturgical Grounding for Ecological Crisis and Action," *Liturgical Ministry* 20(2011) 79-86.

¹¹⁶See also Randy J.C. Ochigüe, "Sacramental Relationality: Eco-Theological Possibilities," in *Reimagining Christianity for a Green World*, 113-133.

¹¹⁷Gloria L. Schaab, "Environment, Ecology, and Creation Theology: Visions and Revisions in the Christian Tradition," *Liturgical Ministry* 20(2011) 57-67, at 61-65.

In dialogue with William R. Jordan III, one of the leading advocates of ecological restoration, Nathaniel Barrett argues for the role of rituals in promoting ecological restoration.¹¹⁸ By rituals, he means

“the aesthetic enhancement of an activity normally undertaken primarily for instrumental purposes, though not necessarily to the extent that these instrumental purposes are compromised. For example, regular prairie burns can be enhanced by holding them at night and adding music and spectators. The prairie burn thus becomes a public spectacle that calls attention to the meaning of fire, holding it up as a symbol of the local community’s complex relationship with the prairie ecosystem.”¹¹⁹

The values that he indicates are relevant. Rituals contribute to deepen our liturgical and spiritual sensibilities and both shape our practices, but I highlight the ethical risk that the aesthetic dimension overshadows ethical concerns and priorities.

Marion Grau invites to experience deeper practices of embodied ecospirituality, calling for a profound coherence of faith and practice. They express what she defines as ‘divine economy.’ She writes, “‘Divine economy’ moves on a cosmic scale, referring to God’s involvement in the world as it relates to the cosmic workings of divinity in all aspects of planetary and human life.”¹²⁰ Such a broad definition indicates how we “all are deeply integrated with our spiritual lives, our daily practices and the way we live on the earth, our consumption, our trash, our sewage, our gardening projects, our food production and composting.”¹²¹

Finally, within spirituality, mystical experience receives a renewed attention¹²² as well as the focus on the spiritual values of living creatures (e.g., forests).¹²³

¹¹⁸Nathaniel F. Barrett, “The Promise and Peril of Ecological Restoration: Why Ritual Can Make a Difference,” *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 32, no. 2 (2011) 139-155.

¹¹⁹Nathaniel F. Barrett, “The Promise and Peril of Ecological Restoration,” 145.

¹²⁰Grau, “Elements of Renewal,” at 688.

¹²¹Grau, “Elements of Renewal,” 689.

¹²²Carl Von Essen, *Ecomysticism: The Profound Experience of Nature as Spiritual Guide*, Rochester, VT: Bear & Co., 2010; Oliver L.G. Smith, “Is Humanity King to Creation? The Thought of Vladimir Solov’ev in the Light of Ecological Crisis,” *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 2, no. 4 (2008) 463-482.

¹²³Chibuko, “Forestation – Deforestation – Reforestation.”

4. Conclusion

Environmentally, we face an ethical crisis with spiritual implications. Theological ethics answers by reaffirming our ability to address all its critical challenges. We have the human resources to respond, ethically and spiritually. Maybe it is a matter of personal, social, and political will, by making individual and collective choices, by promoting technological advancement and concrete commitments aimed at reducing inequalities and at strengthening justice globally. The many theological contributions come from all continents. Theological discourse seems to be well equipped to join other forces – scientific, religious, cultural, social, and political – in contributing to shape a renewed sustainable ethos.