

# Ecotheology: missiological perspective in awareness

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## Abstract

Through this paper, the authors try to explain ecological theology from a missiological perspective. It is a crisis of the whole life system of the modern industrial world. It is a crisis that humans have brought on themselves and their natural environment, driving both humans and climate change more deeply. The ecological crisis of modern civilization is the meaning of the crisis of the whole system with all its parts. The authors collected data from various sources, news, and library research. The result interprets Indonesia's missiological perspective on awareness of climate change. The churches or theologians should involve and be concerned about God's creation environment changing and affecting the land. The Global Impact of Indonesia's climate change and the response of Christians toward this issue is needed as part of the global community. Therefore, loving God means building the wholeness of creation to realize a humane environment and people who care for all creation. This perspective is a balance between Ecology and Theology.

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## Introduction

The earth needs serious attention. Conceiving the earth as the creation of God can elevate man to divine order. In this perspective, man should cultivate nature in the religious order. Abandon the idea of the earth as the creation of God and not produce it in the divine order, and then the earth will collapse (Borrong 2019). When God finished creating the earth and all his creatures on day six, God gave the cultural mandate (Widjaja 2018) to men to replenish the earth and subdue and have dominion over the earth. Three sources of the earth; land, sea, and sky, and God saw everything he had made; behold, it was excellent.

In Genesis 2:15 So, the LORD God took the man [He had made] and settled him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it. But men nowadays destroy everything God has given by greediness. Man's negative attitudes (Kaoma 2015) towards nature have become a boomerang. Green House effect, pollution, illegal logging, and minings threaten the earth and become a crisis that will haunt modern society.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC's) Assessment Report, released on July 20, 2022, bluntly informs us that climate change is no longer a prediction but a present fact. The report details current impacts, including rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and slowing increases in crop yield (Lindwall, 2022). The effects of climate change are vulnerable for both ecosystems and people. Climate change provides evidence that these impacts are primarily affecting the poorest of the world's poor (Pederick 2014).

Natural disasters, pollution, and other negative natural realities should be seen as a "natural voice" (Pihkala 2016) for man's deviation and irregular acts upon nature.

Indonesia is the fourth most populous nation, the 16th largest economy globally, and the tenth largest emitter of greenhouse gasses (GHG). Land use and energy contribute 84 percent of its emissions (USAID n.d.). And a significant emitter of greenhouse gases due to deforestation and land-use change (Baumert, Herzog, and Pershing 2005). However, Indonesia's forested land also supports exceptionally high levels of biodiversity, supporting a diverse array of livelihoods and ecosystem habitats.

Indonesia, the archipelago nation's combination of high population density and high levels of biodiversity, with a staggering 80,000 km of coastline and 17,508 islands, makes Indonesia one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change. Indonesia's geography, topography, and climate varied in many areas, with many biological systems from the ocean and coastal frameworks to peat overwhelm timberlands to montane timberlands. Along these lines, Indonesia has exceptionally high levels of biodiversity, possessing about 10 percent of the world's flowering plant species, 12 percent of the world's mammals, 16 percent of the world's reptile and amphibian species, 17 percent of the world's birds, and at least 25 percent of all the world's fish species (Case, Ardiansyah, and Spector 2007)

## Research Methodology

Library and web research dug up from various sources for narrative and interpretive analysis. The data were compiled

together—authors' critical thinking analysis in the discussion to formulate the conclusion. As far as we know, Indonesia's support in worldwide climate transactions started in 1992 at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. In September 2022, Indonesia upgraded its 2015 Broadly Decided Commitment to the Paris Understanding to decrease GHG emanations by 32 percent (or 43 percent, with international assistance) by 2030 (USAID n.d.). In addition, Indonesia committed to reaching net-zero emanations by 2060 or sooner in its Long-term Technique on Moo Carbon and Climate Versatility. To realize these objectives, Indonesia has banned grants for clearing woodlands, built a peatland and mangrove restoration organization, and fortified its forest fire-battling capabilities. Within the vitality segment, Indonesia's 2021–2030 power supply targets half of its new control era to function on renewable energy. The government has propelled a guide to reach net-zero emanations by 2060 or sooner. At the same time, the arrangement of renewable vitality and vitality productivity advances has been modest, with the country maintaining a heavy reliance on coal for power generation (USAID n.d.)

## Result and Discussion

Climate change in Indonesia got the world's attention when the Government of Indonesia facilitated and hosted the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali in December 2007. The Conference gathered 10,000 members to examine arrangements for Indonesia's and worldwide climate change concerns. The Conference finished by adopting the Bali Road Map, an assortment of choices and programs to reach a more secure climate future (Measey, n.d.)

Indonesia's economy is intensely dependent on these typical biological systems and their resources, but there are dangers to their sustainability. Current threats to Indonesia's increasing population and quick industrialization include large-scale deforestation, rapidly spreading fires and land conversion, overexploitation of marine assets, and many natural issues. They are related to rapid urbanization. Climate change threatens not as it were, to compound the problems above, but moreover make modern ones, a few of which are as of now taking place.

The government tries to reduce the emission and solve the problem continuously, but the Indonesian government needs support from its people, including the Christians. The government needs to work alongside the church. Indonesia has 384 denominations and 388 theological schools (Lumintang, Nasokhili, and Widjaja 2022), from the local Bible school to Government Institutions that produce theologs and pastors that should have new paradigms on eco-theology toward climate change in Indonesia. The author analyzes eco-theology from the perspective of mission as God's creation. This understanding is hoped to provoke positive attitudes towards nature and as an approach to facing an ecological crisis in modern society, especially in Indonesia. Therefore an eco-theology from a mission perspective, Indonesia's climate is part of Christians' cultural responsibilities. It also aligns with his thinking Maggang (Maggang 2019) by offering a blue color for Christianity in Indonesia from an eco-theological perspective.

Lyn White (White 1967) was the first to criticize and accuse Christianity as the biggest supporter of the ecological crisis in the modern era. For centuries, cosmogonical texts in the bible have been over-exploited under the anthropocentrism paradigm for supporting man's greediness. For Lyn White (White 1967), the cosmogony of Western Christianity in Europe separated themselves or man from nature and God's transcendence upon nature after paganism was conquered. That

Christianity insists that it is God's will for man to exploit and rule over nature for their benefit. Therefore man now destroys the soul, which resulted in an ecological crisis. So Lyn White utters that the ecological worldview must be nature-centered rather than human transcendancy or anthropocentrism (White 1967); however, Lyn White's view is criticized by Jenkins; his view is untested (Jenkins 2008)

Therefore Kavusa (Kavusa 2019) suggested a shift in hermeneutics that has been man-centered to hermeneutics with ecology as its focus. Kavusa's reason (Kavusa 2019) for this is that 1. The occurrence of ecological crisis 2. Marginalization of nature in biblical exegesis 3. Anti-ecology in eschatological readings\_the destruction of the earth in the second coming of Christ, which means man's salvation is more important. Therefore theological construction is needed to shift this paradigm. The interpreter is the one who is responsible for this misleading, not the text. The alteration of hermeneutics must have anthropocentric salvation as its focus to a hermeneutics (Kavusa 2019), with ecology as the primary focus. Then theological construction will take place.

It is noteworthy that Kavusa (Kavusa 2019) doesn't suggest what sort of hermeneutics need to be done to contribute to eco-theology through hermeneutics. Instead, he points out the hermeneutical problems that cause the ecological crisis. He also gives warnings to that hermeneutics for the construction of environmental theology.

In the article *Playing God: Why Religion Belongs in the Climate Engineering Debate* (Clingerman and O'Brien 2014), Clingerman and O'Brien stated that religion must take a role in geoengineering. Pihkala (Pihkala 2016) suggests the enforcement of ecological theology as a gateway to enter the environment from the perspective of Christian theology. Finally, Borrong (Borrong 2019) stresses the emergence of environmental theology as an indicator of change.

## Eco-theology in the new paradigm

Every creature is unique and has its function in nature or the world. Nature must not be shackled or exploited by man regarding himself as the loftiest creature and his inherent privilege as the image of God. Every single creature requires God's redemptive acts after being exploited or dehumanized.

The cosmological perspective of creation that positioned man as the loftiest creature and as God's image causes nature to be vulnerably exploited. It results in man being higher than nature, thereby dominating and controlling nature. Instead, man and nature should be equally positioned, so their relationship is relational rather than dominant (Maarif 2019). The relational paradigm between man and nature causes a change in the exploitation pattern to the exploration pattern so that spirit can be kept and it benefits man in return. This position must be explained from the missiological perspective to give humans an evident interconnectedness of creation order. That is relational rather than domination.

Meanwhile, creation is the establishment of the world's order, where from day one to day six, a man was created alongside other creatures in a cosmological order. The whole creature derives from God, who speaks. A man was last in the creation and made in the image of God and commanded to subdue and to have dominion. Collins argues that subdue and dominion in Genesis 1:28 are often used as the ethics of natural resources exploitation (Collins 2006). The word

subdue is exercised by nations to dominate through destruction. Meanwhile, the word domination is used as the basis for domination. These things are apparent in the twentieth century, such as destroying and polluting the environment, for example, by the iron curtain countries (Collins 2006)

In Genesis 1:26-27, man, as ruler and dominator, is placed as Lord over nature. Therefore man, as the pinnacle of creation, has the cultural mandate to cultivate nature. Wenham (1987) argues that to subdue or dominate nature, whether over fish, birds, animals, water, or other natural resources, is not to exploit or defeat in an oppressive sense. Here man is regarded as the image of God, a king who embraces the law and justice firmly as divine principles.

The flood indicates that the earth is being purified from bloodshed due to violation. Everything created by God is not purposeless, but each has a purpose, process, and meaning. They are not self-sufficient but depend on each other. Coote and Ord state that, in this perspective, change violates the order God has established from the beginning, except for some covenantal changes (such as animals becoming food besides vegetation and the skin excess cutting off from a male (Coote and Ord 1991)). Every change in the creation order of the cosmos established by God will cause chaos and imbalance. For instance, exploitation of natural resources, deforestation, water, oil, fossil fuel, fish, animals, etc., will cause a natural imbalance for the earth, on which man is highly dependent. Chaos occurs due to the destruction of creation that violates the cosmos' order. The outcome that, initially, goodwill encounters massive change is the change of order or the reduction of the cosmos system.

The corruption of the relationship between man and nature is a consequence of sin caused by the perspectival problem. Man's violation of God's command causes the shift in his perspective towards nature from relational to domination. Person relationship between man and nature is equal or parallel; that's why a man should cultivate, not dominate. From a personal perspective, man becomes aware that God's command is to grow and care for the surrounding things. Genesis 2:15 are often used alongside the phrase "to serve." The word is commonly used to cultivate the soil (Genesis 2:5; 3:23; 4:2; 11:2).

For Coote and Ord, the man carried out his duty of cultivating and keeping not as a servant doing forced labor but as a king (Coote and Ord 1991) or even more as a shepherd. (Jenkins 2008) They find joy and pleasure in carrying it, not sorrow. Man does not do it to exploit nature and animals but rather keep and deeper to serve God.

Eco-theological construction is a cosmic balance for animals in the water, on the land, and the air, nature, natural resources, and man to live in harmony. For the whole creation is intertwined with each other. God's creation is not part that exists in an individualistic and independent manner but rather entangled in a cosmos system. They depend on each other. When this cosmos order is ruined, then chaos takes place. When it happens, restoration is required for the whole creation. Therefore the entire creation lives independently mutual manner (symbiosis mutualism), not in reverse, which is destroying and self-benefiting through exploiting other creatures. Consequently, man and God must shepherd and keep other creatures.

The modern world's environmental crisis initially started in modern industrial countries. It is not only about the technical capacity to exploit but also shows man's domination of nature and man's violation of God's given power to man.

## Impact on Climate Change

Climate changes are already apparent in Indonesia and will likely worsen due to human-induced climate change. Rising concentrations of greenhouse gases will raise the surface and ocean temperatures, alter precipitation patterns, increment ocean levels, and cause various other impacts, from more frequent forest fires to increased health risks. Climate change will also continue to influence "natural" climate variability, such as El Niño, and may lead to more frequent and more strongly climatic occasions (Case, Ardiansyah, and Spector 2007).

## Missiological Perspective Ecotheology in Indonesian Context

In the Indonesian context, maximizing the role of religion is required first and foremost, which means that faith takes a vital role in turning public perception about geoengineering as a way to climate change awareness. Clingerman and O'Brien (Clingerman and O'Brien 2014) point to religious leaders as valuable contributors in the geoengineering debate among scientists. Religious narrations and symbols can offer a frame to understand geoengineering and vocabularies for moral discussion. Scholars in theology, ethics, and spiritual study can be mediators between scientific communities and religion. They offered a critical understanding of how faith can engage in climate issues dialogues. Purnomo suggests that religious leaders should take the role of figures in ecological crisis issues (Purnomo 2020). Therefore, if man's domination over nature is the main issue for the environmental crisis, then Christian society has to participate in suppressing domination over nature as a reflection of creation's theological construction.

At this point, information about an ecological crisis can be framed and communicated (Spence and Pidgeon 2010), as well as climate change. The leaders and pastors may use the pulpit to share and teach the congregations regarding climate change as part of the Christian faith. The more climate change communication is made, the more advanced attitudes can be motivated. Preparing it in a significant way can bring affect its receivers.

For example, ecological repentance from the pulpit is appealed to all congregations. The theological issue can be carried out to environmental movement. The movement to bring a drinking water container, get your bag, reduce plastic bags, no stereo form. Create non-smoking areas, green training, tree planting, plant caring movement, planting in narrow land, eco-friendly decoration, water care movement, and rainwater utilization. Appeal for food solidarity, shop at traditional markets, eat food until it runs out, shop for fresh food, save trees, use less paper/tissue, and use LED lights. The movement to save electricity, turn off lights or air conditioners that are not in use, and travel short distances by bicycle or public transport to reduce emissions. Building a waste bank, sorting out recyclable, compost, and plastic waste. Another essential part of theology is

changing the curriculum and adding a new subject in the Christian school and theological seminary will help students and new generations to understand the situation that Indonesian are facing regarding climate change.

## Conclusions

The world is God's masterpiece; his creation was created for glory. Man and nature exist in the creation order to reflect their creator. God created man and nature not as separable or independent beings. But instead, the whole creation exists in interconnectedness or interrelatedness mode. The natural order has a sort of holistic relation (divine relation) or interconnection with each other, impartial, undivided, inseparable, and not individualistic. The greediness of humans and overexploitation caused damage and disaster. Climate change is one of the results.

God is the owner, and the world (nature) is a divine-given entity. Therefore man receives it as a gift and is responsible for it. Ethically, man has to be responsible for nature, for he is created as the loftiest creature and therefore becomes the head of the whole creation. As the head of the invention, man is accountable for nature's salvation and for creating harmony and balance.

Man's success in performing his cosmic responsibility can be seen through the balance in nature. Otherwise, changes in nature, or an ecological crisis, indicate that man fails to fulfill his cosmic commitment. Therefore, the environmental problem is not only a threat and collapse for wildlife (a threat to nature's salvation) but also a threat to man. Therefore endeavors to prevent ecological crisis and climate change have to be made. Indonesia is facing global climate change—the impacts on Indonesia's economy, people, and ecosystem. Religion can contribute to human awareness of the ecological crisis. In this case, Christian society must be aware and become an agent for cosmos salvation (soteriocosmos). Therefore, Ecotheology is needed in Indonesian Christian civilization and the church nowadays.

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